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The American Obsession: The Continuing Influence of the American Civil War on Popular Culture and the Evolution of Lost Cause Mythology

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The American Obsession

The Continuing Influence of the American Civil War on Popular Culture and the Evolution of Lost Cause Mythology

by

David Latella

A thesis submitted to the Department of History at the State University of New York College at Brockport in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of History
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Abstract

America is obsessed with its Civil War. Within months of its end, those who won and lost the war began fashioning their own mythologies as to its cause and the reasons for its outcome. Of these, the Myth of the Lost Cause is, perhaps, the best known Civil War myth. Lost Cause mythology provides a framework which both explains or refutes the acknowledged causes for the American Civil War and disputes the causes for the war’s end. Lost Cause mythology deifies the Southern soldier and idealizes the Southern way of life including its “peculiar institution” of slavery. The Myth of the Lost Cause and other Civil War mythologies are not confined to dusty shelves and arcane historical studies, however. In fact, the Civil War is a part of every-day American life. It influences the American zeitgeist with its pervasive presence in popular culture, literature, film, and television.

The effects of this influence, however, and their extent, have changed over the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The Lost Cause mythology, so popular at the beginning of the twentieth century, has faded from prominence. While many continue to cling to its beliefs, Lost Cause mythology is waning in popular culture. It has been replaced in two ways. First, the Civil War has become a trope, a storytelling device used in everything from car chase movies to cooking shows. Second, the “what if” question that wonders why the South lost—the hidden core of the Lost Cause mythology—has become mainstream. The Civil War is, now, as much an exercise in speculative and alternative history as it is an example of traditional historical study.
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One – Introduction, Terms, and Defining the Myth of the Lost Cause

Overestimating the influence of the American Civil War on popular culture is difficult in the least. Almost one-hundred and fifty years in the past, the influence of the American Civil War is pervasive, its legacy still hotly debated. The war continues to occupy the minds and influence the thoughts of many into the Twenty-first century. The Civil War is one of the pantheon of pivotal moments in American history—Pearl Harbor, September 11, the Great Depression, and the calamity of the Dust Bowl are just a few of the myriad of other examples. These events linger in America’s social and cultural consciousness, its zeitgeist. One or another of these events may, under circumstances like an anniversary or a new event reminiscent of the past, leap temporarily to the forefront of the American consciousness, boiling to the top of the zeitgeist for a time. The American Civil War is different, however. It is the chief ingredient in the American cultural stew. Its influence spans more than a century and affects so many elements of the zeitgeist that it has become ubiquitous. The nature of this influence has changed over through the course of the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-first—it has never vanished completely, however. Overt or hidden, blatant or subtle, the influence of the American Civil War into popular culture is pervasive and ongoing.

America is in love with its Civil War. Every summer, fields and plains around the nation crackle and boom with musket and cannon fire as thousands of re-enactors gather to replay famous battles. Many of the once-Confederate states reveal their previous affiliation with Confederate iconography in their state flags.\(^1\) Gone with the Wind remains the most popular movie in terms of inflation-adjusted earnings in American

\(^1\) See Appendix 1, Figures 1, 2, and 3.
cinema. The Dark Knight, Star Wars: Episode IV, and even Titanic—the first billion-dollar movie—all fall more than $100 million short.\(^2\) Beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the Twenty-first Century, sports teams all across the South—high school, intramural and, especially, college—rouse their fans with calls of “Go, Rebels! Go!” or use Confederate iconography in their mascots, uniforms, or banners.\(^3\) The hallowed names of Lee, Jackson, and Forrest adorn shopping malls, apartment complexes, streets, and gymnasiums. Throughout the South stand commemorative statues, heroic icons in marble and granite that celebrate the generals and the common soldiers of the Confederacy,

More importantly, however, many do not consider the Civil War to be solely an historical event, locked in the past. It continues to occupy the minds and influence the thoughts of many well into the Twenty-first Century. Historians such as Tony Horwitz, Charles Wilson, and Gary Gallagher have all explored this continuing presence of the American Civil War in the popular mind and culture. Tony Horwitz, for example, uncovered a considerable degree of lingering hostility amongst so-called Neo-Confederates. One of the many neo-Confederates he interviews, for example, states, “In school I remember learning that the Civil War ended a long time ago ... folks [in the South] don’t always see it that way. They think it’s still half-time.”\(^4\) The social questions, moral debates, and economic consequences of the Civil War continue to resonate. In many respects, the war is still being fought. Not with guns, armies, or valiant charges with banners unfurled, but rather in popular culture, with words, images,

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\(^2\) Box Office Mojo, All Time Box Office Adjusted for Ticket Price Inflation, http://boxofficemojo.com/alltime/adjusted.htm

\(^3\) Tony Horwitz, Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War (New York: Vintage Departures, 1998), 95.

\(^4\) Horwitz, 22.
and interpretive re-imaginings—or whole revisions—of history. "It seems peaceful out there," another neo-Confederate Horwitz interviewed states, "but don't be fooled. The War is emotionally still on ... it'll go on for a thousand years, or until we get back into the Union on equal terms." 5

The American Civil War is, and has been, a powerful influence on American literature, the mass media of television, movies, and music, and on popular culture as a whole throughout the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-First. It has waxed and waned in the cultural zeitgeist, but it never fades entirely. The Civil War's influence, however, is not confined to its historical reality. In many respects, it is the ahistorical Lost Cause mythology rather than the literal history that defines the presence of the American Civil War in the cultural zeitgeist.

There are several elements to the Myth of the Lost Cause. Many of these elements, like those found in any mythology, are contradictory. Others build upon each other, forming a framework of rationalization, the sole purpose of which is to support the primary belief of the Lost Cause. That primary belief, put simply, is that secession was justified. Lost Cause mythology preaches the belief that secession was more than justified—rather, it was a legitimate, even constitutionally recognized right. Additionally, as such, those supporting secession were neither rebels nor traitors, but nationalists who believed they could, legally, withdraw from the compact of the Union. 6

The first element of Lost Cause mythology, and the one many that follow seem to contradict, is that slavery was not the dominant issue that resulted in the Civil War. Lost Cause mythology trivializes the slavery debate, instead favoring such topics as tariff

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5 Horwitz, 67.
disputes, the control over investment banking and cash flow, cultural differences, and the unavoidable conflict between industrialization and agrarianism as, in conjunction with one another, the sum primary causal factor resulting in the Civil War.\textsuperscript{7} The next several elements of Lost Cause mythology, however, seem to contradict this belief that slavery was not, itself, the key issue. For example, Lost Cause mythology portrays abolitionists as agents provocateur, troublemakers who manufactured a disagreement between the North and the South that had little or no interest, or substance for that matter, to those the abolitionists sought to provoke.\textsuperscript{8} Additionally, Lost Cause mythology preaches that the South would have abandoned slavery of its own accord, given time. Neither incentives nor sanctions were required to induce the South to abandon the peculiar institution, merely patience.\textsuperscript{9} A final contradictory element, and one of the most relevant, is the rationalization of the contented slave.

Specifically, Lost Cause mythology characterizes slaves as faithful and compassionate towards their masters, the so-called “Happy Darky” stereotype.\textsuperscript{10} This particular element, along with one other, is central to the influence of Lost Cause mythology on popular culture. The other element, the “moonlight and magnolias” concept of the Idealized South, covers a wide-ranging group of perceptions and non-historical beliefs. The Idealized South includes, for example, the plantation lifestyle epitomized in \textit{Gone with the Wind}, the nobility of the Southern Soldier and, by extension, the deification of Southern military leaders. Other elements of Lost Cause mythology,

\textsuperscript{7} Nolan, 15.
\textsuperscript{8} Nolan, 15.
\textsuperscript{9} Nolan, 16.
\textsuperscript{10} Nolan, 16.
such as the nationalistic and cultural bases for the War, for example, are of strictly secondary importance to this investigation.\textsuperscript{11}

Of course, the Myth of the Lost Cause is just that—a myth. Like all myths, it seems consistent on the surface, but is full of inconsistencies, fallacies, and contradictions on closer examination. For example, the majority of historians agree that there is little or no evidence the South would have voluntarily abandoned slavery.\textsuperscript{12} Historically, the Myth of the Lost Cause has relevance only in how it clouds interpretations of facts and causations. The Lost Cause itself has no basis in fact. For this examination, however, that lack of factual basis is not relevant. Indeed, it is for this very reason that the Myth is so significant. The Myth of the Lost Cause is, for example, the dominant theme for both \textit{Birth of a Nation} and \textit{Gone with the Wind}, the two films and Mitchell’s novel dominate the presence and influence of the Civil War in popular culture well into the late Twentieth century.

Additional elements of the Civil War creep into songs, stories, film, and television programming that, on the surface, seems to have little or nothing to do with the Civil War itself. The 1960s television program \textit{The Twilight Zone}, for example, is not known for its historical retellings. However, in its fifth season, the episode “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” written by Ambrose Bierce, departs—however slightly—from \textit{The Twilight Zone}’s typical fare of the creepy and the supernatural to present what is, in effect, a Confederate ghost story.\textsuperscript{13} Later, at the end of the Twentieth Century and into

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\textsuperscript{11} Nolan, 15-18.
\textsuperscript{12} Nolan, 21.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{The Twilight Zone}, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” DVD, directed by Robert Enrico (1964; Chatsworth, California: Image Entertainment, 2005). This episode is unusual in several ways. First, it began as a French film, winning the Cannes Film award for outstanding short film in 1962, and was not originally intended for an American television audience. The producers of \textit{The Twilight Zone} purchased the short film, making it the only episode to that point purchased from an outside source. Previously (and following), \textit{Twilight}
the early Twenty-First, Civil War elements appear all over the spectrum of pop culture, from cooking shows to cartoons, from comic books to *Star Trek*.

Throughout it all, however, Lost Cause mythology continues to exert an influence. Blatant in some cases—as in *Gone with the Wind* or *The Birth of a Nation*, for example—and subtle in others, elements of Lost Cause mythology continue to echo through the cultural *zeitgeist* more than a century after Confederate apologists first proposed it. Lost Cause mythology may have faded as the Twentieth Century ended, but it did not vanish entirely.

It is, for example, easy to spot the Civil War references in movies such as *Gettysburg* or *Gone with the Wind*. These films are set during the Civil War, after all. That similar Civil War references and thematic elements exist in the 2005 release of *The Dukes of Hazzard*, is far less obvious and far more surprising. As the following chapters will show, however, elements of Lost Cause mythology persist throughout popular culture to a greater or lesser extent, even in a film more devoted to car chases and half-naked co-eds than political commentary or historical allusion.

Indeed, it is not difficult to find the influence of the American Civil War almost anywhere in contemporary American pop culture if one tries. In some cases, it lurks, subtle and covert, beneath the surface of the *zeitgeist*, hiding in the most surprising places. In others, the presence of the American Civil War is obvious, almost vulgar in its conspicuousness. Put simply, the presence of the Civil War in American pop culture is not merely an elephant in the room, noticed but not discussed. No, in this case the

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*Zone* episodes were either written and produced in-house or on commission specifically for the show. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" was neither. Second, while not a silent film, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" contains very little dialogue, most of which is spoken by the Union troops in an eerie, distorted tone. The imagery and story is all the more haunting since it lacks the narrative insight traditional dialogue provides.
influence of the Civil War is so pervasive, so ubiquitous, that the elephant has grown to more than dominate the room, it has swallowed it. It is everywhere, even when not noticed as such—perhaps, nowhere more so than precisely when it is not noticed as such. The elephant has become the room, and the American cultural zeitgeist lives within it.

This examination of the presence of the American Civil War and its influence on popular culture will focus on three specific periods during the Twentieth and early Twenty-First centuries. The first covers the period from 1915 through 1940. During this period, three pivotal works—the controversial film *The Birth of a Nation*, Margaret Mitchell’s seminal novel *Gone with the Wind*, and the David O. Selznick movie production of the same—set the tone for the Civil War’s influence on popular culture. The film *Gone with the Wind*, for example, continues to hold the high-water mark for inflation-adjusted box office receipts seventy years after its release. Moreover, these works are critical to understanding the continuing influence of Lost Cause mythology and public reaction to it. The second period begins in 1950 and continues through the mid-1970s, crossing the centennial anniversary of the Civil War itself. During this period, there is a gradual waning of the Civil War’s influence in film—it is not a rapid decline by any means, but it does herald a shift in the nature of the Civil War’s influence on popular culture. Additionally, while the Civil War fades from the silver screen, it grows in influence on both the small screen and, more importantly, in the new realm of speculative or alternative historical fiction. The third and final period under examination covers the early 1980s through the present. During this period, the Civil War’s influence on popular culture resurges, reappearing on the silver screen as well as appearing on the small screen in documentaries, films, and television mini-series. The Civil War during this period
influences literature in a variety of forms as well, from the novel to the comic book. It is in this period that the extent of the Civil War's omnipresence in the cultural zeitgeist becomes clear.

Additionally, this examination takes advantage of the efforts of a number of historians and journalists who have, in some fashion, also considered the same subject. Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic* and Gaines Foster's *Ghosts of the Confederacy* serve as but two excellent examples of other efforts into the topic. These and other secondary sources address as wide number of the various aspects of the cultural omnipresence of the American Civil War.

What makes this omnipresence of the American Civil War in pop culture more than an interesting exercise in cultural studies, however, is the evolution of both its presence as a whole and of Lost Cause mythology specifically. The presence of historical analogy and iconography in contemporary pop culture, while interesting and relevant to the study of who Americans are as a people and a nation, is not strictly history. How the presence and themes of the Civil War have changed over the past century-plus is, however. Lost Cause mythology has not remained static—it has evolved, accepted by some elements of culture and society yet rejected by others.

For example, Civil War symbols and iconography that people accepted almost without question from the 1920s through the 1960s became topics of inflammatory debate in the late 1990s. Many now see the statues and flags that once evoked pride as emblems of racism and national shame. For some of the population, however, those statues and flags still evoke pride and a sense of regionalism. Participation in Civil War re-enactments, despite the rapidly approaching sesquicentennial of the start of the war, is
waning. The St. Andrew's Cross battle flag, once considered merely the symbol for all things Dixie, now evokes either militant pride or an aggrieved sense of hostility. Despite the continual mainstreaming of the Southern lifestyle into the American cultural mosaic, tension between Northern and Southern culture remains prevalent. Eighty-three percent of re-enactors interviewed in a survey for this research, for example, believe there is a still cultural tension between the North and South. Southerners—"rednecks" specifically—remain, for example, one of the few groups it is socially acceptable to bash in denigrating humor. Nazis are one of the others.

One of the challenges in examining such a wide and diverse source base is the difficulty of seeing the forest for the trees. Ubiquity is just that—ubiquitous, and, as such, infrequently discussed and often completely unremarked. What does one look for when seeking out the cultural influence of the American Civil War? There are, in fact, several indicators. First and foremost is the war itself. Obviously, any book, film, or television show about the Civil War itself is clearly a representation of that war in popular culture. Popular conceptions and misconceptions about the Civil War, notably those of Confederate apologist and scholar Shelby Foote, shaped much of Ken Burns' landmark Public Broadcasting documentary, *The Civil War*. It helped shape those that followed as well. As discussed below, several of the films and novels used in this analysis make direct reference to the war itself and are either set during the war, or immediately following it. Second, there are the various symbols and icons of the war, notably those of the Confederacy. The presence, blatant or subtle, of Confederate iconography, such as the St. Andrew's Cross battle flag or language, using the term

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15 David Latella, survey conducted in 2008. See Appendix 1, figure 4.
"rebel" as a positive approbation, for example, are just two examples. Third, there is the presence of physical or living history such as monuments, statues, groups and organizations such as the UDC (United Daughters of the Confederacy) for example, or re-enactors who consider themselves to be "living historians." Fourth—and at once both the greatest challenge to, and most significant result of this analysis—is the presence of the Civil War masquerading as something else. This latter category has gained prominence in the third period under consideration, but begins in the second with Kantor's If the South Had Won the Civil War.

One must be careful, however, not too read too much into popular culture sometimes. The term "Civil War" is a popular trope in storytelling. It does not always indicate a reference, oblique or obvious, to the American Civil War. Clearly, many stories about civil wars refer to those in other nations—the English Civil War, for example. Others, however, use the term to refer to an internal struggle within a culture—often confusing national revolution with civil war. The popular Star Wars film franchise, for example, begins its explanatory crawl with "It is a period of civil war." The theme of an internal struggle for political and ethical control of a nation, albeit one spanning hundreds of worlds and species across a galaxy, does not, in any of the six films in the series, refer to the American Civil War. Nor does the series betray any influence of the war on deeper examination. Many works of science fiction use a civil war as a backdrop. This does not

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17 Forty-three percent of those interviewed for the survey considered themselves physical or living historians. While many of those surveyed considered themselves as more than one of the categories offered, this category had the largest response. The next nearest (a tie between Civil War Devotee and Casual/Hobbyist) was a mere 30%.

necessarily make them about, or influenced by, the American Civil War, however. The mere words do not make the fact.

Finally, one can define and discern Civil War influence through a series of specific themes or tropes. Historian Gary Gallagher defines the four most significant of these themes in his insightful *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten*, in which he analyzes the presence of the American Civil War in Hollywood films and popular art. The theme, or myth, of the Lost Cause is the most significant of these themes. Put simply, the Myth of the Lost Cause "[offers] a loose group of arguments that cast the South’s experiment in nation-building as an admirable struggle against hopeless odds," one which downplays the significant negative aspects of the war’s cultural basis.¹⁹

To fully the influence of the Civil War on Twentieth and Twenty-first popular culture, one must look at the works most clearly associated with the Lost Cause and its representation to the mass audience. The iconic *The Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind*, film and novel alike, set the example for both the Civil War's impact in popular culture as well as the influence of Lost Cause mythology on its portrayal to audiences. Put simply, seductive as Lost Cause mythology may have been in the South at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, these works took the Lost Cause nationwide.

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¹⁹ Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shapes What We Know about the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2. Gallagher also details three other themes that which are less significant to this body of research. Specifically, those of the Union Cause—the need to preserve the nation, the Emancipation Cause—the moral rectitude of freeing the slaves, and the Reconciliation Cause—that dealing with the need for both South and North to consider the war through extolling the unique American values both sides exhibited before, during, and after the war. While several of the sources referenced for this work later will refer to these other themes, no theme is as significant in the extent or duration of its influence as the Lost Cause has been.
Two – The Rise of the Civil War Epic and the Popularization of the Lost Cause Myth, 1900-1940

It is safe to say that the American Civil War has fascinated filmmakers since the dawn of the motion picture. Indeed, one can go further than that. The American Civil War was the first major war documented on film. Matthew Brady’s photographs of the war itself, while often staged after the fact, brought the reality of the war into the homes of Northern urbanites. These aging, haunting photos continue to fascinate and intrigue Civil War historians and amateur buffs alike. This fascination did not end with the rise of the motion picture. If anything, it increased.

From the very end of the Nineteenth Century up through the beginning of the 1940s, American filmmakers produced more than 450 films on the Civil War. Many of these films were so-called one-reelers, films lasting an average of only eleven minutes. Few were longer than 30 minutes. A notable exception to this preference for brevity, though by no means the only one, was the monumental—and controversial—The Birth of a Nation.

Based on the Thomas Dixon novel The Clansman, The Birth of a Nation follows two families through the turmoil of the Civil War. At well over three hours in length, The Birth of a Nation does what few Civil War films are able to do—it tells the entire story, from shortly before the war all the way through reconstruction and the rise of a resurgent South. The Birth of a Nation is unabashedly pro-Southern in emphasis and sentiment. Director D.W. Griffith makes this clear with the opening title card:

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We do not fear censorship, for we have no wish to offend with improprieties or obscenities, but we do so demand, as a right, the liberty to show the dark side of wrong, that we may illuminate the bright side of virtue—the same liberty that is conceded to the art of the written word—that art to which we owe the Bible and the works of Shakespeare.  

Griffith continues in a further attempt to blunt criticism and controversy by stating, “If in this work we have conveyed to the mind the ravages of war to the end that war may be held in abhorrence, this effort will not have been in vain.” Griffith’s attempts to deflect criticism and controversy were largely unsuccessful. In spite of this controversy, however, *The Birth of a Nation* remains the most popular and successful silent film in American motion pictures, running 44 weeks in New York City movie houses during its first run alone. Griffith’s film continues to enjoy a sense of notoriety and controversy even today that few films can match—or, likely, would want to. There is a saying about some motion pictures of the past that claims, “It could not be made today.” About few films is such a claim truer than *The Birth of a Nation*.

*The Birth of a Nation* centers its storytelling on two key themes—race, and state sovereignty. Griffith uses the device of two families united in friendship and love, but divided by war that is so common in Civil War films. In this case, the two families in question are the Stonemans of Pennsylvania and the Camerons of South Carolina. The various events and trends of the Civil War and, especially, reconstruction, hinge around the relationships between the various members of these two families and, interestingly, their servants.

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21 *The Birth of a Nation*, DVD, directed by D.W. Griffith (1915; Chatsworth, California: Image Entertainment, 1992).
22 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.
Additionally, two of the lesser elements of the Lost Cause mythology are central to *The Birth of a Nation*. Specifically, Griffith plays with both the idealized, “moonlight and magnolias” imagery for the South and Southerners as well as the idealization of Southern soldiers. By extrapolation, this also includes the demonizing of Union soldiers, especially Negro soldiers. Nowhere in the film is this comparison more clear than in the ill-named Silas Lynch, patriarch Austin Stoneman’s friend.

Griffiths presents the Stoneman family with a clear bias. Austin lounges, smoking and making pronouncements from his opulent library. The first time Griffith presents the Stoneman sons to the audience, they are foppish, dandies bedecked with lots of ruffles and frippery. They, like their father, lounge about, indolent and over-dressed. When standing, they slouch, wearing the quintessential urban affectation of bowler hats.24 Worse still, the elder Stoneman has a mulatto domestic servant as well as a second mulatto as friend and confidant, the ill-named Silas Lynch. Neither of these two latter characters comes off well in the film.25

In contrast, the Camerons of South Carolina embody all that is good and noble about the South, the idealized “moonlight and magnolias” image so common to Lost Cause mythology. The Cameron home is elegant rather than imposing. It is not a plantation house, but rather is ensconced in a small farming town. The Camerons, unlike the Stonemans, are well dressed, but not opulently so, carrying themselves erect in a stately manor. The elder Cameron affects a cane and all wear good, top hats. They are well

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24 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
25 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.
mannered and seemingly careful of their appearance.\textsuperscript{26} Their servants are equally important—well kempt and loyal throughout the film.\textsuperscript{27}

Just as Griffith uses visible carriage and manner of dress to compare and contrast Northern and Southern societies, with the North clearly coming off as the lesser of the two, so too does he portray most African-Americans—with the notable exception of the Cameron servants—and mulattos as shifty, untrustworthy, lecherous, and, often, animalistic.\textsuperscript{28} For example, the Stonemans' female domestic servant and probable mistress—a mulatto, which is made clear both by her “deep tan” not quite black-face makeup as well as text presented in a title card—acts up on the few occasions she is on screen.\textsuperscript{29} She puts on airs, daydreams when she should be attending her duties, and intentionally drops a guest’s hat onto the floor.\textsuperscript{30} Unlike the Cameron servants, the Stoneman domestic servant is disrespectful of both her employer and his guests—she even spits, surely a shocking event in 1915 cinema.\textsuperscript{31}

Silas Lynch, however, is an even less reputable character. Throughout the film, Griffith shows Lynch with lecherous intent towards the Stoneman daughter. Lynch

\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, the carriage of both the Cameron sons and the Stoneman boys is important during the actual War portion of the film (roughly the first hour). For example, the younger two sons, fast friends at the beginning of the film, fulfill one of the clichés of Civil War filmdom by meeting on the battlefield one last time before dying by each other’s side. Likewise, the elder Stoneman and Cameron brothers, in another cliché, meet at one of the later battles, each serving as officers (the younger brothers were presumably privates, certainly not in any position of command). Cameron, called “the little colonel” throughout the film, leads an assault on a defense line held by troops under Stoneman’s command. After being wounded, Cameron leads his men through the Union line, stuffing a Confederate battle flag into the muzzle of a Union cannon before, nobly, succumbing to his wound. Of course, he does not die, but, instead, ends up in a Union run hospital under the care of his beloved, Elsie Cameron. This latter connection trumps Austin Stoneman’s vision for a racially unified South by encouraging Austin’s son to side with the Camerons, the Southerners, and the KKK against Black injustices.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{The Birth of a Nation}, 1915.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{The Birth of a Nation}, 1915.

\textsuperscript{29} Many of the primary African-American or Mulatto characters in \textit{The Birth of a Nation} are actually played by white actors in blackface. Notably, Silas Lynch, Gus (the soldier who menaces Flora Cameron), and Lydia the housekeeper are all played by white actors, as are several of the prominent Cameron servants. Michele Faith Wallace, “The Good Lynching and \textit{The Birth of a Nation}: Discourses and Aesthetics of Jim Crow,” \textit{Cinema Journal} 43, No. 1 (2003), 89-92.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{The Birth of a Nation}, 1915.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{The Birth of a Nation}, 1915.
becomes the pivot point around the many decisions Stoneman makes during the Reconstruction period of the film, a period that comprises nearly two-thirds of the film’s three-hour running length. According to Russell Merritt, film scholar, writer, and producer of the "Making of The Birth of a Nation" documentary, the elder Stoneman represents Thaddeus Stevens, even down to his appearance.32 Despite the modern historical view of Stevens as having a far-sighted view of race relations, at the turn of the Twentieth Century, opinions were far different. Clansman author Dixon clearly blames Stevens for many of the excesses of reconstruction, excesses where Northerners or those Southerners duped into working with or for them attempted to put their own stamp on the Southern culture while appropriating or absconding with what little Southern wealth remained after the war. This view of Stevens, as translated through the device of Austin Stoneman, is evident in Griffith’s The Birth of a Nation. Indeed, Griffith uses Stoneman’s association with the inherently untrustworthy people of mixed race to increase the audience’s negative perceptions of him.33

By focusing on race, The Birth of a Nation runs counter to many traditional Lost Cause arguments. Traditional Lost Cause mythology claims that slavery was not the reason for Southern secession—if anything, it was Northern abolitionists who trumped up racial and regional tensions over slavery to foster dissent and conflict, conflict which would lead to the occupation of the South and the appropriation of its wealth and property including the slaves themselves.34 The Birth of a Nation argues otherwise. "The bringing of the African to America," Griffith states, "planted the first seed of disunion."35

32 Merritt, The Birth of a Nation, 1915, Special Features.
33 Wallace, 90.
34 Nolan, 15-18.
35 The Birth of a Nation, 1915.
Griffith repeats this theme, that the Africans are directly responsible for many of the ills following the war, if not necessarily the war itself, throughout the film.

Indeed, there are many scenes where Griffith offers up this negative opinion of African-Americans. In many scenes, Griffith portrays them as animalistic, dancing queer little dances that seem to mate the movements of apes and chickens, or as childish and, in the case of the Stonemans’ house servant, petulant. Later, after the war’s end, African-Americans elected—fraudulently, as Griffith makes abundantly clear—are no less primitive. In the Assembly, the African-American statesmen are more concerned with eating, drinking spirits or taking off their shoes and putting their feet up with a great lack of decorum. This scene in particular was, presumably, most repellant to popular public sentiment common in 1915—especially with Prohibition not five years away. In contrast, Griffith shows those few whites in government as well behaved and resigned to this lack of propriety.

One element of race that is common to Lost Cause mythology is the so-called Happy Dark myth. Specifically, Lost Cause apologists often claim that most slaves, if not all, were loyal to their masters, often fiercely so. The Birth of a Nation does not avoid this myth during its racial denigrations—instead, it celebrates it. While Austin Stoneman’s mulatto friends and servants seem to do little more than chase after white women or act out, the Cameron servants, pure African-Americans, are loyal and well behaved.39

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36 The Birth of a Nation, 1915.
37 The Birth of a Nation, 1915.
38 Nolan, 16.
39 This theme of anti-miscegenation is one of the other “great themes” of The Birth of a Nation. There is a continual presence of lecherous intent by not just the Silas Lynch character, but by many African-American characters throughout the movie. For example, when the mostly black South Carolina Assembly passes a pro-mixed race marriage bill over white opposition, many of the African-American assemblymen leer at the white women in the attendance gallery. Earlier in the film, one of Austin Stoneman’s own servants acts in a decidedly lecherous manner towards one of the Cameron’s female, African-American house slaves. In this case, however,
Indeed, early in the film, just after the war’s inception, a large group of slaves dance and cheer behind a parade of marching Confederate soldiers passing before the Camerons’ home. Later, the film claims that South Carolina, not any Northern state, raised the first African-American regiments of the Civil War. This controversial, and unsubstantiated, claim is typical of Lost Cause mythology. Like the Happy Darky myth, the belief that slaves would have fought for the South, or, indeed, that some even did, is a significant component of the racial mélange in the Myth of the Lost Cause. While it is probable that individual blacks or Southern freedmen did fight against the Union, there is little evidence for a concerted effort by Confederate leaders to raise entire Negro regiments. Later still, after the war’s end, the Cameron servants remain loyal and subservient. Indeed, after the youngest of the Cameron daughters leaps to her death to avoid the sexual predations of a black soldier in the wilderness outside of town, the Cameron servants are at least as aggrieved as the Camerons themselves are. It is important to note, however, that this decorum and loyalty on the part of the Cameron servants does not render them immune to the film’s anti-African-American bias. The male Cameron servant speaks, as it were, one of the few lines of dialogue attributed to an African-American in the film. “Dem free-niggers, f’un de nof am sho’ crazy,” he says in

the woman, large and of decided competence and strength, fends off her would-be suitor with the disdain and violence such an assault deserves. This component of the racial argument in The Birth of a Nation is not truly part of the Myth of the Lost Cause, but rather remains a component of the decidedly pro-Ku Klux Klan message inherent in Dixon’s original The Clansman.

40 The Birth of a Nation, 1915.
41 The Birth of a Nation, 1915. Indeed, by making this claim, The Birth of a Nation establishes a major element of Lost Cause mythology in popular culture, applying “contemporary social circumstance” and historical revisionism to the early Twentieth Century zeitgeist, a legacy that would continue through much of the century that followed. Everett Carter, “Cultural History Written with Lightning: The Significance of The Birth of a Nation,” American Quarterly 12, No. 3 (1960), 456.
42 The Birth of a Nation, 1915.
reference to the recently freed black acting out on the street and in the state assembly. Such mangled English, common enough to portrayals of African-Americans at the time, Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* provides more such examples, while potentially accurate, was also a clear marker of inferiority on the part of African-Americans.

Apart from those above, *The Birth of a Nation* does evince a strong loyalty to one other aspect of the Lost Cause mythology—specifically the legitimacy of secession. It evinces the belief that the Southern experiment in nation building was a noble endeavor. Not fifteen minutes into the film, Griffith establishes the primacy of state sovereignty. Indeed, in a later scene, even Lincoln seems to regret the coming of the war and the need to impose Federal sovereignty over those of the Southern states. In the scene where he calls for 75,000 volunteers, Lincoln wipes his eyes in regret. Only a few minutes later, Griffith presents the audience with a new logo for the seceded South Carolina, “Conquer we must for our cause is just.”

Just as with the Stonemans and Camerons, Griffith uses the visual appearance cue to evoke sentiment when portraying Union and Confederate soldiers and citizens. During a raid by Northern soldiers, the Union raiders burn, despoil and pillage a Southern community, killing without provocation and evident glee; they are only driven off by the honest, armed men of the town serving in some sort of ad hoc militia. By presenting them this way, Griffith both touts the nobility of the Southerners—an elements of the Idealized Southern Soldier myth—as well as denigrating and demonizing the Union troops. That the Union soldiers are so cowardly and incompetent in the art of war that a

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43 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
44 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
45 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
46 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
47 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.
rabble of angry Southern civilians is able to drive them off is just another Lost Cause element—the South did not lose to Northern armies, it wore itself out defeating them.  

Later, at Appomattox, Griffith gives the audience a slouching, smoking Ulysses S. Grant in a stained, badly kempt uniform accepting the surrender of a tall, stately, and oddly clean Robert E. Lee.  

In silent films, music is the only audible cue available to the audience. In *The Birth of a Nation*, D.W. Griffith takes conspicuous advantage of this. Throughout the film, a series of classical and contemporary music cues serve to highlight or enhance the mood of any given scene. The sacking and burning of Atlanta, for example, is set to Edvard Grieg’s energetic “In the Hall of the Mountain King.” Grieg’s piece evinces a seemingly demonic glee as it grows in pace and intensity which is most suitable to the scene. Interestingly, however, Griffith uses “Dixie” only sparingly. Its first use, the aforementioned scene of Confederate soldiers marching to a crowd of cheering slaves, comes almost thirty minutes into the film.  

It plays again during the battle sequence between the elder Stoneman and Cameron brothers, cueing as Cameron spikes the Union cannon with a Confederate battle flag. The third and final time the audience hears “Dixie” comes near the very end of the film. After a series of calamities, deaths, and injustices, a regiment of “heroic” Ku Klux Klansman rides out to defeat a group of hostile

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48 Nolan, 15-18.  
49 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
50 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
51 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915.  
52 *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915. Interestingly, the only presentation of “Taps” plays not two minutes later as the camera lingers on the destruction and carnage of the battlefield. This particular piece, originally known as “Butterfield’s Lullaby,” dates to the Civil War itself.
mostly African-American Union soldiers besieging the Camerons and the eldest Stoneman in a small cabin. “Dixie” plays as the KKK triumphs.53

In many respects, The Birth of a Nation is an atypical example of the Myth of the Lost Cause. It avoids several of the principles of the Lost Cause mythology, notably the deification of Southern leadership. The famous Confederate generals, for example, are, excepting Lee, conspicuously absent. Additionally, The Birth of a Nation minimizes the cultural basis for the war as well. The film touches on other Lost Cause elements only tangentially. However, as a whole, The Birth of a Nation presents a profound summary of the Lost Cause argument. It set the stage for much of what would follow, including the biggest, and to this day still most successful American film of all time, Gone with the Wind.

Margaret Mitchell published her Civil War opus Gone with the Wind in 1936. Not three years later, Selznick International Pictures released Gone with the Wind as a major motion picture. The novel and the film quickly became two of the most popular works of fiction in America. The novel has earned accolades as one of the top ten most romantic works of fiction by an American author on more than one occasion.54 The film has enjoyed at least eight “world premier” class releases to theater audiences since its original release in 1939 in the United States alone, including a theatrical release in 1989 celebrating its 50th anniversary.55 Adjusted for inflation, it remains atop the heap as the number-one domestic grossing film in American history by more than one-hundred

53 The Birth of a Nation, 1915.
55 Gone with the Wind, DVD, Directed by Victor Fleming (1939; Burbank, California: Warner Home Video, 2004), Special Features.
million dollars.\textsuperscript{56} It is difficult to overstate the significance \textit{Gone with the Wind} on literature and film. This alone would be enough to cement its place in history. However, \textit{Gone with the Wind} also goes down as one of the most significant Lost Cause treatises in American fiction. It hits upon most of the key elements of Lost Cause mythology—the Happy Darky myth, the idealization of Southern lifestyle, the idealization of Southern soldiers and its corresponding demonizing of Union troops, as well as the legitimacy of secession. Additionally, \textit{Gone with the Wind} includes numerous statements as to the denigration the South suffered during reconstruction. It also includes a new feature, the portrayal of the Civil War itself as a character and an influence. In \textit{Gone with the Wind}, the Civil War is no longer a mere story element, a scenic construction in which the story plays out—no, the Civil War is a character, altering and affecting the story directly and, often, maliciously.

As with \textit{The Birth of a Nation} some two decades earlier, \textit{Gone with the Wind} takes a strong stance on race. While Margaret Mitchell’s novel begins, logically, with an introduction of the heroine, Scarlett O’Hara, David Selznick’s film version begins instead with a series of scenes of the idealized, bucolic Southern lifestyle—specifically, with slaves.\textsuperscript{57} The very first people shown in the film are a band of field hands working cropland. They wear no chains. There are no overseers in sight. They are, seemingly, happy in their work.\textsuperscript{58} Indeed, slaves, this time cotton workers, make up the second batch of people shown in the film as well. So are the third group—a mix of boatmen and a

\textsuperscript{56} Box Office Mojo. The theatrical re-release of 2008’s \textit{The Dark Knight} in January of 2009 may put \textit{Gone with the Wind}’s supremacy in jeopardy. However, if one factors VHS and DVD sales into the mix, \textit{Gone with the Wind} would regain a nearly insurmountable lead. Additionally, \textit{Gone with the Wind}’s box office totals do not appear to include its seven additional theatrical releases.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 1939.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 1939.
single farmer leading a cow.\textsuperscript{59} Not for seven full minutes, after both the title sequence and the informative text crawl, does Selznick give the audience a white person. Naturally, that person is Scarlett O'Hara, played by Vivien Leigh.\textsuperscript{60}

Just minutes later, however, Selznick provides the audience with a further example of the Happy Darky myth so common to the Lost Cause mythology—Mammy, played admirably by Hattie McDaniel. Mammy is a house slave responsible for both the inner upkeep of the O'Hara plantation house, Tara, and, more importantly, the upkeep of the O'Hara daughters—specifically, the ever-troublesome Scarlett. Another loyal house slave is Pork, played by Oscar Polk. These two characters, though more so Mammy than Pork, consistently portray the Happy Darky stereotype throughout the film. They are concerned with their masters' well-being—Mammy with the O'Hara daughters, specifically Scarlett, and Pork with Mr. O'Hara and the house. Another O'Hara slave, Big Sam, becomes an important Happy Darky stereotype later in the film—first, when he volunteers to work for the Confederate army digging the ditches in which Confederate soldiers will fight to defend Atlanta, and later, when he rescues Scarlett from a group of miscreants as she travels from town to her sawmill after the war.\textsuperscript{61} It is perhaps Sam's willingness to work for the Confederate Army that most clearly represents the Happy Darky element of the Lost Cause mythology. He is willing to assist an army that is fighting for the right to keep him in bondage—and he does so both willingly and happily. Nor are the O'Hara servants the only Happy Darkies in the film. Scarlett's unrequited love interest, Ashley Wilkes and his family own numerous slaves—the Wilkes, like the O'Haras, own a substantial working plantation, though Mrs. Wilkes is more concerned

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 1939.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 1939.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 1939.
with horse rearing than cotton. The Wilkes' slaves happily greet Ashley upon his return from the war for a Christmas furlough. Indeed, Mammy once again shows both her loyalty and her sense of propriety in this scene by restraining Scarlett from rushing to greet Ashley—an act which would have well spoiled the reunion between Ashley and his wife, Melanie.

Like the movie, Mitchell’s book is replete with Happy Darky stereotypes and references. Notably, Mitchell uses affected broken English for her slave characters’ dialogue. For example, a newly acquired O’Hara slave, the dignified Dilcey, thanks Gerald O’Hara, Scarlett’s father and family patriarch, for her own purchase as well as that of her daughter. “Mist’ Gerald, I is sorry to ‘sturb you, but I wanted to come here and thank you agin fo’ buying me and my chile.” This broken English is, by the standards of the other slaves presented in Mitchell’s novel, actually well spoken and easily comprehensible. Indeed, only Mammy and Pork are so readily understandable to the modern reader. The fact that she is thanking someone for purchasing her as one would purchase a chair or horse, goes utterly unremarked in Mitchell’s novel. Her characters, in fact, take it as a matter of course and pay it no attention at all.

Mitchell’s white characters reciprocate this loyalty, however, only in backhanded form. During the end of the War, when Scarlett O’Hara is struggling to provide for her

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62 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
63 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
64 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
65 Margaret Mitchell, Gone with the Wind (New York: Scribner, 1936), 79. This also represents another of the Lost Cause elements regarding Southern treatment of slaves. In reality, Southern slaveholders rarely, if ever, acknowledged the marriages of their slaves. Slave families were broken up and sold at will, without the consideration for how such treatment affected the family members. Indeed, slave-owners often used this very threat to keep slave families in line. It is, however, a common tenet of Lost Cause mythology, specifically the idealization of Southern lifestyle, that “proper” plantation owners did consider the welfare of their slaves in matters such as marriage and family unity.
66 Mitchell, 79. In fact, Mitchell goes out of her way to state this, by explaining, “When she [Dilcey] spoke, her voice was not so slurred as most negroes’ and she chose her words more carefully.”
family, as well as the Wilkes and the O'Hara slaves, Scarlett must condone and even encourage theft to feed all her dependents. However, the necessity of this theft sits raw with her. "Negroes," she thinks "were provoking sometimes and stupid and lay, but there was loyalty in them that money couldn't buy, a feeling of oneness with their white folks which made them risk their lives to keep food on the table." This backhanded compliment is evidence of both the Happy Darky myth and the Idealization of Southerners that is common in Lost Cause mythology. Put simply, Lost Cause mythology claims slave loyalty was such that one could not buy it and, despite the fetters of chains, slave-owners and their slaves experienced a sense of inter-racial unity.

Later still in Mitchell's novel, after the war's end, Scarlett remarks that emancipation, far from freeing the slaves, has been a poison to them. "The more I see of emancipation," she states, "the more criminal I think it is. It's just ruined the darkies." In this statement, we find one of the fundamental contradictions inherent in Lost Cause mythology. Two key elements of the Lost Cause are that slavery—and, therefore, the slaves themselves—was not the cause of the war and that the South would have given up slavery on its own. However, another element, the idealization of the Southern lifestyle, demands a justification for the existence of slavery itself. Thus, the Lost Cause both justifies the existence of slavery as a civilizing and legitimate force in Southern life and yet insists that the Southern slave-holding aristocracy would have eventually abolished the practice of their own accord. This element of the Lost Cause mythology, in effect, exists not to explain the past, but to justify that past to those looking back on it.

"Southerners," Charles Reagan Wilson writes in his exploration of the Lost Cause,
Baptized in Blood, "realized that ultimately the Southern Way of Life could not survive if their children rejected the Confederacy." Therefore, they had to pretty up the Confederacy so that others would accept it—such is the purpose of the Lost Cause myth.

Indeed, the Happy Darky myth finds expression in more than mere literature, film, and historical mythology and revisionism. As Wilson explains in a section detailing the Southern passion for statues and monuments, "At the turn of the century the Confederate groups [Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy, amongst others] did debate the question of building a monument to the slave's loyalty in the war." Both Wilson and Tony Horwitz go to considerable length to document the degree to which the Southern mania for statues embodied Lost Cause mythology. "This [statue]," Horwitz writes, for example, "was a microcosm in marble of the Lost Cause romance that took hold in the South after Appomattox. The Civil War became an epic might-have-been."

Lost Cause mythology focuses on more than mere race, however. Perhaps the other key element so strongly represented in Mitchell's novel and Selznick's film of the same, is the idealization of Southern culture and lifestyle. As Wilson put it, "Intellectually, [the South] developed a new image of itself as a chivalric society, embodying many of the agrarian and spiritual values that seemed to be disappearing in the industrializing North." Selznick's film embodies this belief in two ways from the very first moment. The opening seven minutes of the film, as mentioned above, portray the South in a very agrarian, bucolic manner. The slaves are happy, the land is fertile, and the pace is slow.

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71 Wilson, 105.
72 Horwitz, 172. The statue in question, "Victory Defeated by Death and Night," can be found in Appendix 2, Figure 1.
73 Wilson, 3.
and stately. More than that, however, Selznick offers an explanatory text crawl that sets the mood for the entire movie:

There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton fields called the Old South ... Here in this pretty world, gallantry took its last bow ... Here was the last ever to be seen of knights and their Ladies Fair. Of Master and Slave. [Ellipses and capitalizations in original]

This crawl, while important in setting the mood for the film, was not in Mitchell’s novel—Mitchell’s novel begins with an elaborately crafted description of Scarlett O’Hara, focusing on the beauty of her appearance while leaving absent the shallowness of her personality, itself a commentary on the Old South if there ever was one. Indeed, this text crawl was a source of considerable disagreement between the various directors of the film, Selznick, and Mitchell herself. This statement and the very imagery that followed and preceded it, set what many consider the very archetype for the “moonlight and magnolias” representation of the old, idealized South. Even the film’s historical advisor acknowledged that the antebellum portrayal of Tara owed more to that mythology than it did to the reality of the antebellum South. Mitchell’s book is equally replete with bucolic imagery of the pre-war South. Her description of the Wilkes’ estate at the opening ball is a prime example.

The wide curving driveway was full of saddle horses and carriages and guests alighting and calling greetings to friends. Grinning negroes, excited as always at a party, were leading the animals to the barnyard to be unharnessed and

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74 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
75 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
76 Mitchell, 25.
77 Gone with the Wind, 1939, Alternate Commentary Track and Special Features. Gone with the Wind was a production plagued with problems and staffing issues. During its production, Selznick’s company ran through no less than seven directors. Additionally, some modest changes to the story, necessary to fit a thousand-page novel with a great deal of internal dialogue into a film of any length (and three-hours plus is still considered a monster even today) did not sit well with Mitchell. This opening, explanatory crawl was, perhaps, the most contentious of them, however.
78 Gone with the Wind, 1939, Alternate Commentary Track.
unsaddled for the day. Swarms of children, black and white, ran yelling about
the newly green lawn ...

This scene conveys two qualities of the Idealized South. First, that it was populous and
wealthy, by agrarian standards. The Wilkes' estate is large enough, and well enough off,
to possess an established driveway sufficient to service numerous horses and carriages
alike—indeed the manor house is large enough to entertain what is clearly a tremendous
number of guests. The size of the crowd outside the Wilkes plantation manor, as
portrayed in the Selznick film, makes one wonder if anyone remained in town. Equally,
this scene also conveys the racial harmony of the Idealized South and Happy Darky
elements of the Lost Cause mythology. Selznick's film does an admirable job visually
portraying this agrarian, stately opulence as well—though it does tend to omit the happy,
mixed-race throngs of children.

The final element of the Lost Cause mythology celebrated by Gone with the Wind,
both film and novel, is the legitimacy of secession. However, unlike the aforementioned
The Birth of a Nation, Gone with the Wind does provide an admirable counterpoint to the
pro-secession argument—Rhett Butler and his incessant skepticism. Also, unlike The
Birth of a Nation, which briefly considers the pre-war period and the causes that lead to
it, the coming of the Civil War is a given in Gone with the Wind. In part, this is a literary
or film convention—a World War II film does not have to moralize on or explain the
coming of the war, indeed few World War II films not otherwise occupied telling the
story of the war's beginning ever mention it at all. The war simply is; no explanation is
necessary. So too it is with Gone with the Wind, especially the film. Indeed, there are

79 Mitchell, 108. Note, Mitchell does not capitalize the word "negroes" here, or anywhere in the original text.
Changes in accepted standards of typeface, pagination, and grammar like this are common when researching or
reviewing older works of literature.
80 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
only two real references to the beginning of the war in the film. The first takes place at
the introduction of Scarlett herself, where she laments that discussion of the war will
simply ruin the upcoming Wilkes’ party. The second comes only a bit later, at that same
party, where the discussion between various men folk turns to the start of the war, the
bombardment of Fort Sumter, and, of course, Rhett’s ominous warnings about the
disparity between Northern and Southern industrial capacities. 81

Mitchell’s novel, as books are wont to do, goes into more detail on the run-up to the
war and the characters’ own beliefs as to its cause. At a dinner before the Wilkes’ party,
for example, Gerald O’Hara rants about “the thievishness of Yankees who wanted to free
darkies and yet offered no penny to pay for their freedom.” 82 In Gerald O’Hara, Mitchell
uses an interesting literary trick. O’Hara, an Irish immigrant, becomes more Southern
than most Southerners, and hence offers the reader both an outsider’s view of Southern
culture and a heart-felt adoption of it. Additionally, where the movie offers the audience
only one example of warnings against the perils of war, Mitchell’s novel offers two. The
first is an off-hand statement by Scarlett. “But, Yankees must get married,” she argues,
“they don’t just grow. They must get married and have children. There’s too many of
them.” 83 Here, in the naïve Scarlett, Mitchell presents a cogent warning against the
disparities in capabilities and resources between North and South—notably, manpower.
The later speech by Rhett at the Wilkes’ party, which also appears in the film, is even
more impassioned and clear:

Has any one of you gentlemen ever thought that there’s not a cannon factory
south of the Mason-Dixon line? Or how few iron foundries there are in the
South? Or woolen mills or cotton factories or tanneries? Have you thought

81 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
82 Mitchell, 84.
83 Mitchell, 95.
that we would not have a single warship and that the Yankee fleet could bottle up our harbors in a week? ... Why, all we have is cotton and slaves and arrogance. They’d lick us in a month.  

While these two examples seem to argue for the “The South Couldn’t Defeat the North” theory of the Civil War, in fact nothing could be further from the truth. These two characters imply that argument, true. Rhett even believes it, though Scarlett does not. However, no one listens to their arguments. One of the key elements to the legitimacy of secession and the Lost Cause mythology as a whole is that the North did not defeat the South; rather the South wore itself out trying to beat the North. Gaines Foster, in his Ghosts of the Confederacy, provides just such an example in a poem written by a Tennessee Veteran of the Confederate Army. This poem ends with the stanza:

The Yankees did not whip us, boys,
No never let it be said,
We wore ourselves out by whipping them,
And stopped for want of bread.

Later still in the novel, Rhett and Scarlett have a conversation that laments the coming of the war and asks the question why. “Oh Rhett,” Scarlett laments, “why do there have to be wars? It would have been so much better for the Yankees to pay for the darkies—or even for us to give them the darkies free of charge than to have this happen.” Rhett’s reply is blunt. “It isn’t the darkies, Scarlett,” he states, “They’re just the excuse. There’ll always be wars because men love wars.”

Perhaps the biggest change in the portrayal of the Civil War itself between The Birth of a Nation and Gone with the Wind is the character of the war. Specifically, The Birth of a Nation treats the war as an event, a backdrop against which to tell the story of two

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84 Mitchell, 122-123.
85 Gaines Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 86 Mitchell, 256.
families in crisis and to preach against racial equality and miscegenation. Mitchell’s 
_Gone with the Wind_, and Selznick’s film version of it, treats the war differently, however. 
In _Gone with the Wind_, the American Civil War is a character unto itself, an influencing 
agent driving the story as much as providing the scenery against which the story plays. 
In the film, the war is an absent but looming presence, intruding into the events of the 
film to do mischief and harm before retreating once again. For example, the first act of 
the film pivots around the key event of Gettysburg. The turning point of the war 
becomes a turning point in the story, detailing the waning fortunes of the O’Haras and the 
Wilkes as the South’s plight grows ever darker. Selznick’s touching use of “Dixie” 
during the distribution of the casualty lists in Atlanta makes this evidently clear—the 
tears of the young boy in the band playing “Dixie” drive the point home even deeper. 
Indeed, just as Griffith uses “Dixie” to great effect in _The Birth of a Nation_, so Selznick 
uses it in _Gone with the Wind_. Its most effective and haunting use is during the epic 
casualty scene in Atlanta, where the camera pans back past a wavering St. Andrew’s 
Cross flag to show a rail-yard literally covered in Confederate wounded, dead, and dying. 
Here, “Dixie” is not a triumphal piece, urging the Confederates on to victory and glory. 
No, here “Dixie” is a dirge, slowed down in pace and dropped in tone to represent the

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87 _Gone with the Wind_, 1939. 
88 _Gone with the Wind_, 1939. Here, the Selznick film takes a considerable liberty—the casualty lists 
themselves. While lists of this sort were published throughout the North and South alike after major battles, it 
is hard to believe that the titanic losses incurred by the Southern forces could be squeezed onto such small 
pieces of paper as presented in the movie. Certainly, one can make the argument that only those names of units 
based in Atlanta were on the lists (as would most likely be the case in reality), but the fact that the list is still 
that short is hard to believe. Not to mention the idea that a cash- and resources-strapped Confederate 
government could, and would, mass-produce what can only be hundreds, if not thousands, of flyers for 
distribution is unlikely. It may well have happened. Regardless, however, it strains audience credibility.
failure of the nation-building experiment, indicating the eventual doom of the
Confederacy so jubilantly defiant not months previous.89

Selznick’s film also uses the war as a character to dramatic effect in portraying
Sherman’s march across Georgia and the bombardment of Atlanta itself. Here, this new
element is wedded to the older, Lost Cause element of the demonizing of the Union
soldier. Sherman’s troops are shadowy, distorted figures, anonymous and uncountable in
their numbers. They are a looming menace, marching across a backdrop of darkness and
flame, soulless in the destruction that both precedes them and which they leave in their
wake.90 Later, of course, there is the pivotal scene of the Yankee soldier who comes to
Tara itself. This Yankee comes not as a soldier, not as a scout or emissary of an army,
but as a thief and potential rapist. He is, in fact, the only Northerner seen to that point.91

The war itself is a character in Mitchell’s novel as well, and even more so than
in the film. She uses evocative language to promote Southern enthusiasm for the
war and its reflexive effects upon the South. Early in the book, as the war is
beginning, “The South was intoxicated with enthusiasm and excitement.
Everyone knew that one battle would end the war and every young man hastened
to enlist before the war should end.”92 Later, as the South came to grips with the
necessity of fighting an industrialized war:

Atlanta [hummed] like a beehive, proudly conscious of its importance to the
Confederacy ... before the war there had been few cotton factories, woolen
mills, arsenals and machine shops South of Maryland ... The South produced
statesmen and soldiers, planters and doctors, lawyers and poets, but certainly
not engineers or mechanics. Let the Yankees adopt such low callings. But

89 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
90 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
91 Gone with the Wind, 1939.
92 Mitchell, 139.
now the Confederate ports were stoppered with Yankee gunboats ... and the South was desperately trying to manufacture her own war materials.\textsuperscript{93}

Later still, one of the secondary characters laments that she is unable to wear a white satin wedding dress because “the white satin wedding dresses of years past had all gone into the making of [Confederate] battle flags.”\textsuperscript{94} The war imposes itself upon all the characters, even spurring the cynical Rhett to recant and join the Confederate army even as the war itself seems lost—he has, he claims, “a weakness for lost causes once they’re really lost.”\textsuperscript{95}

This presence of the war itself as a character is not the only new feature to the Civil War’s presence in media and popular culture, however. While \textit{The Birth of a Nation} and the more than 450 Civil War films that preceded \textit{Gone with the Wind} focused on telling the story of the Civil War as it was, they did not ask the question what might have been. This question, “if only” is a major, unspoken element to the Lost Cause mythology.

“What if,” “what might have been,” and “if only” are all elements of the Lost Cause argument that, indeed, the South could have won—and, if a second Civil War were fought today things might turn out very differently. Indeed, the “when” of the today in question is quite irrelevant—it is a common Lost Cause sentiment regardless of decade. For example, “Up North,” one Southerner argues, “the War’s over. Not like here.”\textsuperscript{96} Others express their statements in simpler, more emphatic terms. Tony Horwitz, in his travels throughout the South, found numerous emblems making this statement. Among them were bumper stickers that read “If at First You Don’t Secede, Try Try Again,” and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{93} Mitchell, 153.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Mitchell, 225.
\item \textsuperscript{95} \textit{Gone with the Wind}, 1939.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Anonymous female employee at the United Daughters of the Confederacy Museum in Virginia, quoted in Horwitz, 245.
\end{itemize}
another sticker affixed to a briefcase stating, “I Have a Dream Too,” beneath a picture of the U.S. Capitol with a rebel flag flying from the dome.\textsuperscript{97} Perhaps Margaret Mitchell, however, sums it up best:

If England had recognized us— If Jeff Davis had commandeered all the cotton and gotten it to England before the blockade tightened— If Longstreet had obeyed orders at Gettysburg— ... If! If! The soft drawling voices quickened with an old excitement as they talked in the quiet darkness—infantryman, cavalryman, cannoneer, evoking memories of the days when life was ever at high tide ... [dashes in original]\textsuperscript{98}

Such speculation was common amongst Lost Cause adherents, yet absent in most Civil War films and books during the first decades of the Twentieth Century. It would not remain so, however. With the 1960s, this sentiment would gain in prominence, as would the trend of using the Civil War as a secondary feature in storytelling. In the decades following the Second World War, the Civil War ceased to be a star itself, reversing \textit{Gone with the Wind}'s emphasis, and instead relegating it back to the scenic backdrop against which stories are told. However, these stories, with a few exceptions, were less and less about the war itself.

\textsuperscript{97} Horwitz, 51 and 79. The latter image is found in Appendix 2, figure 2.  
\textsuperscript{98} Mitchell, 690.
Three – The Shifting Role of the Civil War in Popular Culture, 1940–1974

With the coming of America’s participation in the Second World War, production of movies in general, excepting propaganda films, and Civil War epics specifically, dropped substantially. In the preceding decade, filmmakers produced twenty-seven films involving the Civil War; during the 1940s, there were only ten.\(^9\) Both were far short of the nearly 360 produced between 1910 and 1919. This trend would reverse only somewhat after the end of the war. Only thirty-two Civil War related films reached theaters during the 1950s, roughly equal to those produced in the 1920s.\(^1\) Data from the early 1960s shows little change to the production levels.

However, this reduction in film production conceals certain new trends in the relationship between the American Civil War and popular culture. First, with the rise of the new television media format, many Civil War stories shifted from the big screen to the small screen. Second, as the decades progressed, the presence of the Civil War in the media became less of a setting for a story and more of a story-telling device. Third, writers and producers began to use the Civil War in new and unusual ways, most notably MacKinlay Kantor’s 1960 novella *If the South Had Won the Civil War* introduced audiences to the concept of speculative or alternative history, the “what if” history so prevalent in Lost Cause mythology. It also set the Civil War against contemporary Cold War and racial tension themes, further relegating the war itself to a story-telling trope rather than a historical event.

\(^9\) Kuiper, Table I, 82.
\(^1\) Kuiper, Table I, 82.
A side effect of this new, story-telling methodology was a reduction in, or a concealment of, the presence of the Lost Cause mythology in Civil War stories. Unavoidable elements of Lost Cause mythology continued to creep into 1950s and 1960s Civil War films, television shows, and novels. However, these were far fewer than those present in earlier works. They exhibited none of the over-arching presence, for example, that one finds in the *Gone with the Wind* or *The Birth of a Nation*.

One of the early examples of the Civil War penetrating into the new media of television is the Looney Tunes cartoon, “Southern Fried Rabbit.” *Warner Brothers* released this cartoon as a short film in 1953. Today, the very few stations nation-wide that show Looney Tunes cartoons in syndication relegate “Southern Fried Rabbit” to a stable of Bugs Bunny and other *Warner Brothers* shorts that they no longer show—either by choice or by FCC mandate. In “Southern Fried Rabbit,” this is due, in part, to blatant racial stereotyping.

As is normal for a Bugs Bunny cartoon, the work begins with Bugs in need of carrots; since there are none worth mentioning in his unspecified, Northern location, he is tempted South by a newspaper article telling of a record carrot crop in Alabama.\(^{101}\) Of course, the fact that the South is so far south nearly exhausts him before he reaches his destination.\(^{102}\) In this trek, however, one finds the first of many elements of Lost Cause mythology—specifically the Idealization of the Old South, in this case, the very environment itself. The North is dry, rocky and barren—a sort of Arizona desert meets Wyoming Badlands, only without the cacti; the only signs of civilization are the dirt road

\(^{101}\) *Looney Tunes*, "Southern Fried Rabbit," Directed by Friz Freieng (Hollywood, California: Warner Bros., 1953), available uncensored at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9NU5x6odR4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z9NU5x6odR4)

\(^{102}\) “Southern Fried Rabbit,” 1953.
Bugs treks down, and semi-felled telephone poles in the far background.\textsuperscript{103} In contrast, the audience’s first view of the South is one of a vibrant, lush green land with stylized magnolia trees and an elegant manor house on the horizon; an old, two-stacker paddle-wheel riverboat sits docked along a river bank at the bottom of a hill.\textsuperscript{104} Even the northern sky is gray in comparison to the vibrant blue of the South.\textsuperscript{105}

Naturally, Yosemite Sam, here playing the part of a Confederate officer defending the South against Northern incursion, vigorously and violently protests Bugs’ entry into the South. Flying over Sam’s earthwork fort is the St. Andrew’s Cross battle flag that, in less than a decade, would become the universal symbol for all things Dixie.\textsuperscript{106} Here, under orders from General Lee despite the war having ended nearly 90 years before, Sam defends the “Masie-Dixie line” against any Yankee encroachment.\textsuperscript{107}

Consistent with \textit{Warner Brothers} cartoons, Bugs attempts a series of madcap hijinks while trying to befuddle, confuse, or otherwise get past Sam and his seeming endless supply of pistol bullets and cannon shells. In this, “Southern Fried Rabbit” departs from the traditional Civil War storytelling in two ways. First, “Southern Fried Rabbit” sets itself apart from other Civil War stories by clearly stating that the Civil War ended nearly a century before. The cartoon takes place neither before nor during the War, nor does it take place in its immediate aftermath. No, “Southern Fried Rabbit” is contemporary. This makes Yosemite Sam’s obstinate determination to defend the South until ordered otherwise a mockery of Southerners who refuse to consider the issue of the Civil War

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{103} “Southern Fried Rabbit,” 1953.
\item \textsuperscript{104} “Southern Fried Rabbit,” 1953.
\item \textsuperscript{105} “Southern Fried Rabbit,” 1953. Pause the film at the 1:27 mark to see the marked distinctions between the North and South. Not only have the artists clearly demarcated Northern from Southern ground, but the sky itself is literally divided between the sullen, drab grey of the North and the rich, almost purple blue of the South. This comparison between North and South remains a visual cue for the entire piece.
\item \textsuperscript{106} “Southern Fried Rabbit,” 1953.
\item \textsuperscript{107} “Southern Fried Rabbit,” 1953.
\end{footnotes}
over. Indeed, it is a subtle mockery of Southerners in general. In this manner, it both runs counter to the majority of Civil War film and literature before it. Previously, even films or novels featuring the Northern perspective do not mock Southerners and their determination to forge a new nation. However, “Southern Fried Rabbit” departs from traditional Civil War stories in another, more significant manner—it is funny. Few authors look back upon the Civil War as a story-telling environment suitable for humor, slapstick or otherwise. “Southern Fried Rabbit” refutes that belief, treating the whole issue of continuing regional tensions, racial inequalities and stereotypes, and all other manner of Civil War mythology in a humorous light.

Certain of those elements, however, are hardly funny by today’s standards. For example, Bugs’ first attempt to confuse Yosemite Sam involves his dressing as a slave, even down to wearing blackface. Sam even calls him “one of our boys,” which seems to imply a Confederate soldier until Bugs strolls on-screen in ratty clothes and colored face, stroking a banjo to the tune of “Old Kentucky Home.” Later, this same phrase, uttered by Bugs Bunny in drag, will apply to a Confederate soldier. After mistakenly playing “Yankee Doodle” in response to Sam’s request for something “peppy on that there skin box,” Bugs crawls about on his knees, frantically begging forgiveness. “Don’t beat me, Massa,” he says in an approximation of a slave’s accent and semi-broken English, “please don’t beat this tired old body, no!” Naturally, Bugs flees off-screen only to return as a tall, erect Abe Lincoln demanding, “What’s this I hear about you

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whippin' slaves?" This ploy, including a demand that Sam look him up at his Gettysburg address almost works until, as is usual for a Warner Brothers cartoon, the sight of Bugs' cotton-tail poking out of his costume gives up the deception.

This particular sequence is clearly one that censors cite when banning the cartoon from modern television. Similar to The Birth of a Nation or certain scenes in Gone with the Wind—the Rhett Butler implied marital rape scene, for example—this is a scene that clearly could not be written today without evoking a firestorm of controversy. It is, however, oddly in line with certain racial elements of the Lost Cause mythology. Sam, brought to task for potentially whipping slaves, protests vehemently, though in a sputtering and incoherent fashion. The Idealized South present in Lost Cause mythology, among other things, implies that Southern slaveholders were concerned for their slaves. It overlooks the issues of discipline, rape, capital punishment, and even the slaves' very bondage as a whole. While not actively Negrophobic, Lost Cause mythology seeks to rewrite and re-envision history regarding the centrality of slavery to the conflict. This scene also ties into the Happy Darky myth, with slave-Bugs willingly submitting to Sam's authority over him however briefly and only as part of the deception. However, the implication is there—Sam expects slave-Bugs to obey even without shackles or an overseer.

"Southern Fried Rabbit" also manages to both portray and take swipes at several other elements of the Lost Cause mythology. By impersonating an officer, General "Brickwall" Jackson, the cartoon calls into question the deification of Southern leaders, especially as part of the ruse results in Sam following orders that plunge him into a deep

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113 "Southern Fried Rabbit," 1953. This is a common element in Bugs Bunny cartoons.
114 Gallagher, Causes, 19.
well. Freleng also takes shots at the Idealized South concept by, in another Bugs Bunny staple, dressing Bugs in drag and having him impersonate a gentile Southern Belle Sam calls “Scarlett.” Of course, the visual portrayal of the South as vibrant, green, and lush is also a direct representation of the “moonlight and magnolias” element of the myth.

Ultimately, as a representation of Civil War history, one cannot take “Southern Fried Rabbit” too seriously. The story is played for laughs, intentionally so. However, as an examination of how the Civil War appears in popular culture, “Southern Fried Rabbit” has many merits. It reveals many elements of the Civil War mythology, Lost Cause or otherwise, and how, by the early 1950s, they had become so ingrained into popular culture that their use in a cartoon was both readily understandable and acceptable to audiences. Of course, some of those elements are no longer acceptable. They do remain, however, understandable and recognizable.

This trend of using the Civil War as a motif for telling a different sort of story continues some ten years later in the Twilight Zone episode, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.” This piece, written by Ambrose Bierce and produced in France, tells what amounts to a Civil War ghost story, telling the story of an execution of a Confederate sympathizer from two perspectives—what he dreams happens and what actually does. Even the supernatural elements of this story, however, do not detract from certain Lost Cause elements within the story itself. Indeed, the entire tale works as

117 The Twilight Zone, 1964. Interestingly, this French fascination with the American Civil War dates back to the post-Second World War release of Gone with the Wind in Europe. The French took to the story of the devastated but defiant South, looking at it as an example of another land destroyed by war but still able to rebuild and maintain its dignity. Considering the condition of post-war France, it is not surprising that these themes resonated with the French populace. (Gone with the Wind, 1939, Alternate Commentary Track and Special Features.)
a spooky reinterpretation of the Lost Cause itself—a valiant, but ultimately doomed attempt to escape from the clutches and intentions of a more powerful foe.

Perhaps the most obvious Lost Cause element—beyond the very nature of the story itself, of course—is the idealized imagery of the South, the “moonlight and magnolias” representation of the Condemned’s home and wife. Just before his first execution, he has a vision of his home. This home seems ripped directly from *Gone with the Wind*. It is a stately home with verandah and elegant columns, set in a lush lawn replete with meticulous landscaping. His wife appears to wear the narrow-waisted hoop-skirt style of ball-gown for every day occasions, as this is the only view of her the audience sees. In and of itself, however, the mere presentation of the “moonlight and magnolias” imagery of the Idealized South does not necessarily indicate a Lost Cause influence. However, it does represent a more generalized, mythologized view of the antebellum South.

However, when tied to the seeming demonization of the Union soldiers, the Lost Cause influence becomes clearer. In “Occurrence,” Union soldiers, while meticulous in their appearance, act with a degree of arrogance and malice designed to make them appear the villains to the audience. Even their carriage evokes a sense of disapproval in the audience. The soldiers seem to take a positive glee in prolonging the delay before the hanging, slowly tying the knot around the Condemned’s neck as well as bonds for the his knees, and ankles. The commanding officer orders one of the soldiers to take the condemned’s pocket watch, an elegant golden thing which plays music when opened,

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118 *The Twilight Zone*, 1964.
119 *The Twilight Zone*, 1964. One Union soldier in particular, the sergeant-at-arms for the rifle squad overseeing the execution, is particularly obnoxious in his dress and manner. Despite being far from the superior officer on scene, he stands apart with a cocked hat and an upturned nose with an air of profound arrogance and dismissal.
120 *The Twilight Zone*, 1964.
thereby reinforcing the view that these soldiers have little honor or decency, very much an element of the Idealized Southern Soldier element of the Lost Cause myth.\textsuperscript{121}

During the first execution the rope breaks, plunging the condemned to the bottom of a surprisingly deep stream.\textsuperscript{122} When he surfaces, he is briefly overcome with the joy of being alive. At this point, Enrico adds music to the soundscape—in this case, a minstrel tune celebrating life plays in the background. Whether or not the character can hear the music is uncertain, but his expression seems to indicate that, rather than an article of the film, the music is playing in the Condemned’s own head. Director Enrico chooses this moment to filter the commander’s voice, slowing and distorting it so that it sounds more than just angry; rather, the voice—and those of other Union troops—is brutal and menacing, almost demonic with hate.\textsuperscript{123} This further reinforces the demonizing of Union troops that comprises one element of the Idealized Confederate Soldier myth to the Lost Cause.

Of course, this is a \textit{Twilight Zone} episode. While not originally written for The \textit{Twilight Zone}, host and series creator Rod Serling acknowledges author Bierce as a “past master of the incredible,” and, as an example of such, “Occurrence” fits right in with the common \textit{Twilight Zone} milieu.\textsuperscript{124} Therefore, what the audience sees is not, nor can it be, the whole story. Today, film critics and historians would call the end of this episode a twist or a surprise. For \textit{Twilight Zone} fans, however, past or present, the climax, while shocking, is not entirely unexpected. Indeed, the sudden juxtaposition of teary reunion

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{The Twilight Zone}, 1964. The fact that the watch is gold is implied by the metallic sheen, the way it shines in the sunlight, and the degree to which the Union officer covets it. It is, of course, difficult to impossible to tell the actual color or metal of an object in a black-and-white film.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{The Twilight Zone}, 1964.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{The Twilight Zone}, 1964.

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{The Twilight Zone}, 1964.
and brutal hanging serves not just as a profound ending for “Occurrence,” but also mirrors the course of the Lost Cause concept of the Civil War itself—just as things might have turned out for the best, the worst happened, and not through any fault on the part of the condemned.

Notably, one element common to many Civil War stories is missing from “Occurrence”—race. While the condemned appears foreign in some indefinable manner, there are no minorities in “Occurrence.”\textsuperscript{125} All the characters are Caucasian with the possible exception of the condemned himself—Enrico leaves the precise setting for “Occurrence” to the audience’s imagination.\textsuperscript{126} All the audience knows is that Owl Creek is somewhere in the South itself, as the character easily imagines himself able to run to his home. If nothing else, the condemned is in civilian garb, not military, and, unless a spy, must be relatively close to home. This lack of a racial element sets “Occurrence” apart in many ways. Just as “Southern Fried Rabbit” contained a racial element to it, so too does \textit{The Undefeated}—though to far less of an extent.

\textit{The Undefeated} is one of many John Wayne war movies released during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. While many of these other films focused on World War II or, later, Vietnam, \textit{The Undefeated} is an unabashed Civil War picture, one that takes place after the end of the war itself, however. Unlike many previous Civil War films, however, \textit{The Undefeated}, while containing many Lost Cause elements, is really a Reunion picture rather than a Lost Cause one. What makes it significant to this research is how its director, John Ford, uses the Lost Cause mythology to tell a story of reconciliation—an

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{The Twilight Zone}, 1964. The condemned appears to be a mixture of Caucasian and Spanish.

\textsuperscript{126} If Owl Creek were in Texas, for example, the vaguely Hispanic look to the Condemned would be understandable. Since Enrico leaves it to the audience’s imagination, we must ignore the racial issue entirely as a mere artifact of the film’s French production and casting.
act Lost Cause adherents would find counter to their beliefs. Indeed, this juxtaposition reveals the gradual shift away from overt Lost Cause elements in film and television, to a more generalized Civil War presence.

*The Undefeated* opens with a close-up shot of the iconic St. Andrew’s Cross Confederate battle flag. This symbol, adopted by the States Rights Democratic Party (Dixiecrats) in 1948, quickly became the emblem for all things Dixie. By the centennial of the war, the battle flag was well established as the defining symbol and emblem for the Confederacy, States Rights, and the South as a distinct region within America. It is, in effect, the logo for the South, as much a symbol for the region as Kodak’s yellow box or Disney’s Mickey Mouse ears. In many respects, *The Undefeated* treats the battle flag in the same manner. Rather than the symbol for Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia, the only unit in the Confederacy to fly the St. Andrew’s Cross standard consistently, instead, it serves in *The Undefeated* as a marker for a weary and beaten force of Confederate holdouts.

After a brief battle that sees many a heroic Confederate soldier fall defending the flag, John Wayne’s cavalry defeats the Confederate troops. Wayne, playing the part of John Henry Thomas, cuts his usual heroic figure in Union uniform astride a dashing horse. This heroic image continues with him throughout the film, though without the uniform, and it contrasts with the equally heroic portrayal of Colonel Langdon, played ably by

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129 Coski, 119.

Rock Hudson. After the battle, however, Wayne's Thomas is saddened to learn that the Confederacy had surrendered three days previous at Appomattox. He also learns that the Confederates knew the day before he did, but fought anyway. When asked why, a bedraggled Confederate soldier responds, "'Cause this is our land, and you're on it." After a mutual expression of sadness that the war was fought between Americans, Wayne and his cavalry ride off and the opening credits begin to roll.

The entire opening sequence serves as more than just a prologue. It sets the stage for both the elements of the Lost Cause mythology director McLaglen weaves into the story as well as the eventual reunion message that follows. For the first half, McLaglen splits the film between two stories. In the first, Wayne's Thomas leads his old cavalry unit, now decommissioned, on what amounts to a cattle drive herding horses rather than cows. While Thomas originally intends to sell the horses to the U.S. Cavalry, which, following the war, has a rather desperate need for horses, he is angered by their willingness to renege on the previously agreed to price per head. Instead, Thomas accepts the offer made by representatives from the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico. This story line follows Thomas and his band in flight across the Rio Grande, escaping from pursuing U.S. Cavalry soldiers intent on appropriating the herd, and into Mexico itself where Thomas predicts trouble. "We're Americans in Mexico," Wayne's Thomas says with his usual drawl, "taking a cavy of horses to a very unpopular government." The second story line follows Rock Hudson's Colonel Langdon and his efforts to lead a convoy of expatriates from his plantation into Mexico where they expect Emperor Maximilian's

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131 The Undefeated, 1969.
132 The Undefeated, 1969.
133 The Undefeated, 1969.
134 The Undefeated, 1969.
government to welcome them. Before leaving, Langdon burns his plantation and all its outlying buildings rather than let it fall into Yankee hands.\(^{135}\) Langdon clearly adheres to the element of Lost Cause mythology that proclaims the war to be anything but over. Indeed, William Faulkner, in his "Intruder in the Dust," summed up this sentiment nicely:

> For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it’s still not yet two o’clock on that July afternoon in 1863 ... and it’s all in the balance, it hasn’t happened yet ... \(^{136}\)

Hudson’s Colonel Langdon and party, including the survivors of his own Confederate unit and their dependents also manage to cross the Rio Grande just ahead of a band of pursuing U.S. Cavalry.\(^ {137}\) They do so, however, crying rebel yells and flying the St. Andrew’s Cross battle flag before them.\(^ {138}\) Once in Mexico, the men ditch their homespun clothes for Confederate grays, while the women change from plain, worn-looking clothing to brighter colors.\(^ {139}\)

Naturally, these two convoys meet up with one another in Mexico while crossing bandit country. Wayne’s group, while scouting ahead of the herd, stumbles across Colonel Langdon’s party encamped with military precision, flying the Confederate battle flag. Wayne’s Thomas decides to warn the Confederates of the risk of bandits ahead and, while at dinner, bonds with Hudson’s Langdon during a whiskey-fuelled argument.

"Why," Thomas asks, "did you come clear out here to continue a war that ended months

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\(^{135}\) The Undefeated, 1969.


\(^{137}\) While no slaves or servants accompany Langdon’s party into Mexico, there is a touching scene between Langdon and an elderly servant before the caravan sets out. This scene, while brief, serves as another example of the Happy Darky element of Lost Cause Mythology. The Undefeated, 1969.

\(^{138}\) The Undefeated, 1969.

\(^{139}\) The Undefeated, 1969. Here, as in so many Civil War movies, the Confederate grey uniforms are a symbol of affiliation more than they are a historical representation. The Confederacy, frequently strapped for resources, was unable to provide uniforms for its entire army—many soldiers fought in homespun clothes or so-called butternut uniforms. Indeed, most grey Confederate uniforms seen in films are dress uniforms unsuited to the battlefield. Later movies such as Glory and Gettysburg, however, adhere to greater authenticity in both Confederate and Union uniforms and equipment.
ago in Virginia?" "Because I'm a stubborn man!" Langdon replies. After much bandying about, the two agree, cordially, to disagree. This argument, as much as Thomas' unwillingness to accept any of Langdon's rationales, epitomizes the ongoing tension inherent in Lost Cause mythology. Some thirty years later, a neo-Confederate named Walt, interviewed by Tony Horwitz for his book *Confederates in the Attic*, repeats this sentiment, stating "I'm not an American, I'm a citizen of the Confederate States of America, which has been under military occupation for the past hundred thirty years."141

This continuing tension plays itself out, albeit in a humorous manner, when the two groups meet for a Fourth of July celebration hosted by Langdon's group. A friendly wrestling match turns into a blue-on-gray free-for-all, with many punches thrown and the ubiquitous destruction of food-covered tables common to movie fight sequences.142 Ultimately, Langdon's sister-in-law, widowed by Thomas' cavalry unit's activities at the Battle of Shiloh, stops the fight by firing a musket into the air. Both groups reassemble, good-naturedly poking fun at one another. "You've been a perfect host," Thomas says, "I've always heard of Southern hospitality. Now, my men understand what it means." "Well," Langdon replies, "I thought my men'd do better, Colonel, seein' as how this is the first time in years we had you Yankees outnumbered."143 After mutual laughter, Langdon bids them farewell with that quintessential Southernism, "Y'all come back, hear?"144

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140 *The Undefeated*, 1969.
141 Horwitz, 81. Additionally, unlike Rock Hudson's Colonel Langdon in *The Undefeated*, Walt is not a fictional character—he also holds onto his militant beliefs where Langdon is willing to concede in the end.
142 *The Undefeated*, 1969.
143 *The Undefeated*, 1969.
144 *The Undefeated*, 1969.
McLaglen uses this friendly rivalry as a counterpoint to the potential bitterness elements of the story might otherwise have engendered. With Thomas’ cavalry having opposed Langdon’s forces at the battle of Shiloh where both Langdon’s son and brother died, the potential for significant enmity is clear. McLaglen defuses this rivalry with two different devices. First, he relies on the Idealized South myth, specifically the requirement for Southerners to be genteel and polite even to their enemies, to partially defuse the tension. The bonding scenes between Wayne’s John Henry Thomas and Hudson’s Colonel Langdon are both poignant in their regrets as well as significant for the friendship that seems to blossom between them despite those regrets.\(^{145}\)

The second device, a common staple in films of this sort, is the concept of shared peril. After separating, Langdon’s party reaches their destination, only to be tricked and ultimately captured by Juaristas, a group militantly opposing the Maximilian regime.\(^{146}\) The Juaristas know of the herd of horses destined for Maximilian’s armies, and demand the herd as payment for releasing the Confederates—indeed, as payment to stay their execution.\(^{147}\) While initially unwilling to ask for Yankee help, Juarista threats against Langdon’s family, specifically those against his wife and daughter, compel him to seek out Thomas’ group and ask for assistance. After the two forces defeat a band of French troops supporting Maximilian, who, one assumes, were there to prevent the Juaristas from obtaining the herd instead, Thomas and party lead the herd to the Juarista camp, turning it over to no monetary gain but, instead, securing Langdon’s party’s freedom.

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\(^{145}\) The Undefeated, 1969. Another sub-plot that develops, but is never fully explored, is a slowly blooming romance between Wayne’s John Henry Thomas and Colonel Langdon’s widowed sister-in-law. This romantic interest for Wayne’s character, however, is more implied than openly declared. The blossoming romance between Thomas’ adopted Native American son and Langdon’s daughter, however, is anything but implied.\(^{146}\) The Undefeated, 1969.

\(^{147}\) The Undefeated, 1969.
This is a significant departure from Lost Cause mythology. The presence of an external threat, and its potential to harm both sides of a conflict, is a common trope in films. It is not, however, a common theme in historical mythology like the Lost Cause. Of course, it has many examples in history itself—France and Spain as reluctant allies against England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the Triple Entente opposing the central European powers of Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, prior to World War I. These are but a few of the many historical examples of two rival nations uniting against a common threat. Adherents to the Lost Cause myth, however, would be hard pressed to find a similar loophole in their mythological structure. To Lost Cause adherents, the division between North and South, mostly of Northern creation, was too significant to be overcome without secession and eventual bloodshed.

Notably, as in "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," there is little racial element in _The Undefeated_. The Mexicans are enemies not because of their race, but because of their politics. Langdon’s party counts no slaves, emancipated or otherwise, amongst their number. Neither are there any freedmen in Thomas’ herders. Indeed, the only racial element to the film strikes, instead, at that trope common to Westerns—the adopted Native American son. In this case, John Henry Thomas’ adopted Native American son, about whom he could not be more proud, becomes romantically linked with Colonel Langdon’s daughter, much to the dismay of her long time suitor, played by a very young Jan-Michael Vincent. 148 _The Undefeated_ concludes this sub-plot in the Western tradition as well—with both Langdon and Thomas accepting the romance, albeit ruefully on Langdon’s part. Even Vincent’s character seems resigned to the fact by the film’s end.

The concept of a mixed-race pairing finding acceptance or tacit blending in a Lost Cause

148 _The Undefeated_, 1969.
Civil War story is far less likely, witness the avowed racism inherent in *The Birth of a Nation*, for example, or the expressed racism of the Happy Darky myth overall.

Ultimately, *The Undefeated* ends with the two groups heading back towards the United States together, united in friendship. Indeed, one of the members of Langdon’s group serenades the two parties on his harmonica, shifting between tunes until finally settling on the mutually acceptable “Yankee Doodle.” The Lost Cause has vanished, subsumed in a theme of redemption and reunification.

This theme of reunion and reconciliation continues in MacKinlay Kantor’s *If the South Had Won the Civil War*. Kantor’s novella represents an early example of speculative history—fiction written with a specific historical basis where the author chooses to alter one or more events, thereby changing the historical outcome to something new. Kantor, famous for his book, *Andersonville*, published the *If the South Had Won* in 1960, just prior to the centennial celebration of the start of the Civil War. Kantor claims he was inspired to write the book by a casual lunch question offered by a long-time friend. “What would it have been like,” his friend asked, “if the South had won the Civil War?” After a bit of soul-searching, Kantor agreed to cease work on his then-current project, which was stalled anyway, and begin research for the new piece. Only a year later, Kantor published *If the South Had Won*.

The book ignited a firestorm of responses. Kantor mixes the fictional narrative with footnotes related to equally fictional source material. While published as fiction, this format confused many readers. The concept of speculative history was new in 1960,

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149 *The Undefeated*, 1969. This is an odd choice for a song that unifies both groups; indeed, the Southern response to the song in *The Undefeated* is very different from Yosemite Sam’s more militant response in “Southern Fried Rabbit.”


151 Kantor. 116-119.
Kantor's work representing one of the first examples of the genre devoted to the American Civil War. It easy to understand many readers' confusion. "Don't you know that Ulysses S. Grant survived the Civil War?" asked one irate, seventeen-year-old critic, "How dare you call yourself an *historian?* [italics in original]" Kantor, a student of the Civil War in general and of Gettysburg in particular, eventually had a pre-made response card ginned up to make responding to his critics' mail easier. He did find, however, that more of the fiery responses came not from pro-Confederate Southerners objecting to the story's moral that America is better as one nation, not two, but rather pro-Northerners who objected to his arbitrary, "expedient" method of tilting the scales in the South's favor.

For this is exactly what Kantor does. Posed with the question "what would happen if," Kantor sets about providing the reader with two events which, when taken together, result in a Confederate victory over the Union forces not in 1865, but in the summer of 1863. These two events result in an unavoidable Confederate victory, the occupation of Washington, D.C., and the protective incarceration of Abraham Lincoln. As diplomats hammer out a peace treaty, "the scissors of History and Fate slashed at the map of the United States." Ultimately, Maryland and Kentucky, which were both slave-holding

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152 Kantor, 120  
153 Kantor, 122.  
154 Kantor, 122. Indeed, *If the South Had Won* stops not at two American nations, but three—with Texas seceding from the Confederacy in a dispute over the resolution of questions regarding the disposition of the unincorporated Indian territories. Additionally, such literary "expediences" are hardly uncommon in speculative or alternative historical fiction. More often than not, the author glosses over the "reality-changing event" in the desire to explore the alternative outcome.  
155 Kantor, 48. The events in question are the accidental death of U.S. Grant prior to his victory at Vicksburg, and a Confederate victory at Gettysburg brought about by effective action by Jubal Early and the presence of Stuart's cavalry in the Union rear. Lincoln's incarceration is for his own good—he and his family flee Washington under Confederate escort just ahead of a mob angered by the seizure of Washington and the failure of the war. Once in Richmond, Lincoln willingly submits to incarceration as a method of spurring forward the peace-process.  
156 Kantor, 57.
states that sided, somewhat reluctantly, with the Union at the war's outset, join the Confederacy while Kansas and Missouri, the two territories who, one could argue, were largely the first battlegrounds for the dispute that ended in war, join the Union. Nine years later, in a dispute over the disposition of the Indian Territories, Texas secedes from the Confederacy, becoming a third, independent American nation.¹⁵⁷

From this series of events, Kantor postulates how the three American nations would deal with the crises in the following near-century. The Confederacy fights the Spanish-American War, with the loss of the CSS *Mississippi* replacing the sinking of the USS *Maine*, and neither Texas nor the United States object. Confederate and Union soldiers fight side-by-side in the trenches of World War I.¹⁵⁸ All three ally with one another to present a unified front against the Axis powers during World War II. Interestingly, however, Kantor neglects to mention how the development of three American nations affected the annexations of Hawaii or Alaska. In the post-war environment, all three nations recognize the threat posed by the Soviet Union and a growing "consolidationist" movement eventually results in proposals to re-unify the three American nations on April 12, 1961—one century, to the day, after the firing of Fort Sumter.¹⁵⁹

Kantor's book reveals a strong Cold War influence, one that subtly directs the book towards the reunited outcome. This is only logical. During the late 1950s when Kantor was writing the book, Cold War fears were strong. The Iron Curtain had arisen and fears of a bomber-, later missile-gap merged with a general nuclear phobia. McCarthy's witch-hunts were a mere five years past. However, this marks a notable departure from

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¹⁵⁷ Kantor, 87.
¹⁵⁸ Kantor, 106. The illustration here is evocative and subtle. Examine the shoulder-flashes of the soldiers at the forefront—one sports a Confederate flag, the other the Stars and Stripes of the United States. The officer leading them, oddly, appears somehow English.
¹⁵⁹ Kantor, 113.
previous Civil War works. *If the South Had Won* is more than an early example of speculative history—it is also an early example of an author using the Civil War itself as a device or trope to tell a different story. *If the South Had Won* is not a story about the Civil War. It is, rather, a novel preaching American unity and strength against a powerful, foreign foe. Just as the unnamed Confederate sergeant at the opening of *The Undefeated* laments that the saddest part of the Civil War was that it was fought between Americans, Kantor implies that the very nature of being an American, regardless of under what flag, makes the nation strong. With political and racial unrest threatening to tear the United States asunder even with the looming threat of the Soviet Union, this message is especially poignant. Unity of character, *If the South Had Won* argues, is more important than the independence of flags.

There are few elements of Lost Cause mythology in *If the South Had Won*. Kantor’s book has a unification message, not one of the Lost Cause or neo-Confederacism. However, two Lost Cause elements do creep into the narrative. The first, that the South would eventually abandon slavery on its own, comes true in Kantor’s independent Confederacy in 1876 just after the Texas secession. Kantor puts the emphasis on a mixture of a nation bowing to international trends as well as international pressure—following the “free womb” policy of Brazil rather than the general emancipation policy that actually took place. By doing so, Kantor provides a logical reason for this otherwise doubtful element of the Lost Cause. Whether or not an independent Confederacy would really have freed the slaves, by choice or under external pressure, is a question no one can answer definitively—the South was never independent. Kantor, however, provides the reader with a recognizable, believable answer as to how this might happen. The

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\[\text{Kantor, 91.}\]
legitimacy of secession is the second Lost Cause element found in If the South Had Won. Indeed, this becomes a turning point in the story when, after a dispute with both the Confederacy and the United States over disposition of the Indian Territories, Texas elects to secede. With their own secession legitimized by victory, the Confederacy's leaders are forced to admit that, basically, what was good enough for them is good enough for anyone and they let Texas go without firing a shot. 161

Whether or not If the South Had Won is a Lost Cause or Reunion story is irrelevant to this research, however. It is, in fact, neither one nor the other, but both. By being so, Kantor's book is an example of a new direction in the use and influence of the Civil War in popular culture. If the South Had Won, in effect, makes the bold claim that Civil War stories—fictional or otherwise, in print, on film, or on television—can be about more than the Civil War itself. The Civil War need not be a setting or a background for a story. Instead, it can be a trope—a storytelling device that permits the author to tell an entirely new tale.

If the South Had Won provides an example for how authors can use the Civil War to tell an entirely new, contemporary story that has little to do with the Civil War itself. In the 1980s, a variety of television programs, films, and books would take this concept and run with it. Others would fall back on tried-and-true Civil War stories, telling them with a new attention to realism and detail lacking in previous productions. Yet, throughout this shifting paradigm, elements of Lost Cause mythology would continue to creep into many a Civil War tale—and the Civil War itself would gradually insinuate itself so seamlessly into American pop culture that it becomes ubiquitous.

161 Kantor, 87.
Four - The Penetration of the Civil War into Popular Culture as a Whole, 1974-2009

In 1974, Michael Shaara published one of the most acclaimed Civil War novels of all time, *The Killer Angels*. *The Killer Angels* tells the story of Gettysburg from a variety of points of view. Longstreet and Lee; Buford, Hancock, and the Chamberlains; Pickett, Stuart, and Armistead—the "holy" names of Gettysburg serve as the many focal points. Shaara weaves the Gettysburg tale from these men's perspectives—their hopes, dreams, impressions, and fears all show through Shaara's evocative prose. Steeped in historically accurate facts, dates, and times, Shaara's only "fiction" in the work, per se, is the conversations between the characters. Civil War soldiers, especially the officers, were largely literate and prone to writing down everything. Just as the American Civil War is one of the first wars documented on film, it also provides historians with an embarrassment of riches in journals, letters, diaries, manuscripts, and just plain jottings. Shaara uses this rich material, mining it for actual conversations as well as a general feel for the language of the day. *The Killer Angels* does more than tell the story of the Confederate high-water mark; it feels authentic.

In many respects, however, this work, presented largely from the Southern perspective, offers up one of the last gasps of Lost Cause mythology.162 Indeed, in a message to the reader, Shaara reveals a bias for, at the least, a Southern perspective to the conflict. "This is the story of the Battle of Gettysburg," Shaara writes, "told from the viewpoints of Robert E. Lee and James Longstreet and some of the other men who fought...

162 Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1974), ix. A quick perusal of the table of contents reveals that, independent of foreword, introductions, or afterword, seventeen of the twenty-three chapters have Confederate titles that reveal their perspective. Alternately, in two of those cases, the associated names are those of pro-Confederates like the spy, Harrison, or the English observer, Colonel Fremantle.
there." 163 Those merely "other" men include General John Buford, whose stubborn willingness to meet, and hold, the Confederate forces outside Gettysburg helped secure Union possession of the heights that would prove so decisive in the days following. It includes Colonel Joshua Chamberlain, whose heroic defense of Little Round Top would keep the Union flank secure and earn him the Medal of Honor. These men, along with Generals Meade, Hancock, and Reynolds also have stories to tell.

Shaara's introduction, beyond indicating a focus on Southern persona rather than an even mix between Confederate and Union leaders, reveals more than a mere Southern bias. "In [the Confederate] camp," he writes, "there is nothing more important than honor." 164 Here, Shaara expresses two elements of Lost Cause mythology—the idealization of the South and the deification of Southern leaders. The idealized image of the South common to Lost Cause mythology, as stated above, includes more than just the "moonlight and magnolias" imagery of plantation life. It includes the concept of the Southern obsession with honor and proper conduct, and obsession that, in part, led to secession though few Southerners would admit it. 165 Additionally, in the cast of characters in the foreword, Shaara presents the Southern leaders first, and in greater numbers and detail than their Union foes are given. This is not to say that his characterizations are inaccurate—far from it, in fact. Shaara does exaggerate them a bit, however. Shaara's description of Lee, for example, is a laundry list of virtues, a rapid-

163 Shaara, xiii.
164 Shaara, xviii.
165 Rock Hudson's Colonel Langdon in The Undefeated, however, would likely agree with this belief. It is his sense of propriety that encourages him to fire his plantation rather than permit it to fall into carpetbagger hands. It is his stubbornness that keeps him fighting "a war that ended months ago in Virginia" way out in the badlands of Mexico. (The Undefeated, 1969)
fire succession of positive qualities certain to endear him to the reader.\footnote{Shaara, xvi. This list includes, among many others, Lee's lack of vices, his piety, his ability to control his temper, and his opposition to slavery despite a belief that "the Negro, 'in the present stage of his development,' can be considered the equal of the white man." Martin Sheen's portrayal of Lee in the Turner film \textit{Gettysburg} is remarkably faithful to Shaara's image of Lee, except for a brief snap of anger during a scene where Lee disciplines a tardy General Stuart. \textit{Gettysburg}, DVD, directed by Ronald F. Maxwell (1993; Burbank, California: Turner Entertainment Col, 2000).} Throughout \textit{The Killer Angels}, the Confederate leaders are the stars. Notably, however, Shaara's portrayal of Longstreet during the conflict runs counters to the "Longstreet Lost it at Gettysburg" sub-element present in some, but not all, Lost Cause perspectives. Additionally, \textit{The Killer Angels} offers up evidence for the legitimacy of secession present in Lost Cause mythology. "The morale is simply amazing," Lewis Armistead says to Longstreet, "Never saw anything like it in the old army. They're off on a Holy War. The Crusades must have been a little like this."\footnote{Shaara, 62.} Later, one of George Pickett's brigade commanders, Jim Kemper, states, "We established this country in the first place with strong state governments for just that reason, to avoid a central tyranny."\footnote{Shaara, 65.} Statements like these abound in The Killer Angels. Whether or not they represent the characters' actual beliefs, or are simply serving as Shaara's mouthpieces, is of little importance, however. Indeed, there is no evidence that Shaara agreed with these statements. What they do represent, however, is the Southern belief in the righteousness of the Cause, of the legitimacy of secession. Only one Southern leader offers a differing perspective. "A Holy War," Longstreet replies after Armistead's statement, "He shook his head. He did not think much of the Cause. He was a professional: the Cause was Victory."\footnote{Shaara, 63.}
Gettysburg, released in 1993 and based on The Killer Angels, was one of a slew of Civil War films and television programs released in the 1980s and 1990s. The television mini-series Andersonville and The Blue and The Grey joined the Gettysburg, Glory, and a host of others. Of course, one cannot forget to add Ken Burns’ epic 1990 documentary The Civil War into the mix, either. In many respects, this decade long period represents the high-water mark of traditional Civil War stories in the media and pop culture. A second decade later, in 2003, Ronald Maxwell directed Gods and Generals, a pseudo-prequel to The Killer Angels written by Michael Shaara’s son, Jeff. Neither the book nor the film was as successful as The Killer Angels and Gettysburg had been, however.

As the 1990s progressed and the century turned, however, the presence of traditional, Blue vs. Grey Civil War stories faded from American pop culture. The Civil War did not vanish from popular culture, however. Far from it; instead, authors and screenwriters began to insinuate elements of, and references to, the American Civil War into otherwise seemingly unrelated material. Civil War references crept into cooking shows and slapstick comedies, from science fiction tent-pole shows like Star Trek: Voyager—which was the flagship program for the short-lived UPN television network—to Comedy Central’s social commentary and potty-humor powerhouse, South Park. Even crime dramas like CSI and Saving Grace wove Civil War themes into their stories.

As “Southern Fried Rabbit” had done fifty years earlier, many examples of the Civil War’s infiltration of Twenty-First Century pop culture involve humor. Unlike “Southern Fried Rabbit,” however, these humorous stories do not attempt to portray the Civil War

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170 The Blue and The Grey hit television screens in 1982. Between 1982 and Gettysburg’s 1993 release, dozens of movies, television mini-series, documentaries, and made-for-TV movies were released. Some, like the A&E production of Ironclads, which told the story of the battle at Hampton Roads between the CSS Virginia (a.k.a. Merrimac) and the USS Monitor, were shockingly bad.
itself. Instead, they use the Civil War as a device for telling their own entertaining stories.

The *Good Eats* episode, "Pickled Pink," is one example.\(^{171}\) *Good Eats*, a staple of the *Food Network* since the mid-1990s, is a cooking show hosted by the affable and entertaining Alton Brown. Brown, a chef with a penchant for scientific cooking methods, is also the program’s creator and one of its lead writers. *Good Eats* combines a mixture of Julia Child with *Mr. Wizard*, or, more accurately, *Bill Nye, the Science Guy*, to present audiences with new and interesting way of looking at food, preparing recipes, and cooking in general. The show uses a good deal of verbal, visual, and prop humor to make many of its points. This particular episode focuses on Brown’s lament at the quality of store bought corned beef and his attempt to make it himself.

In and of itself, this episode seems to have little or nothing to do with the Civil War. On the surface, that impression is correct. However, Brown takes advantage of the show’s Georgia filming location to interject a Civil War reference into what is otherwise an unrelated story. At the beginning of the episode, Brown is in New York City, travelling by cab to the airport. During his adventurous drive, itself a stereotype of the worst possible cab-drive imaginable, albeit with a friendly and affable driver, Brown gets into a discussion about luncheon meat with his thick-accented cabbie. Later in the episode, the same cabbie drives the same cab down to meet Brown at the Mason-Dixon Line to deliver some genuine kosher brisket, something Brown claims is difficult to obtain in the South.\(^{172}\) A "Mason-Dixon Line" signpost at the side of the road makes the


\(^{172}\) *Good Eats*, 2007.
location clear to the audience. After delivering the meat to Brown and accepting some homemade corned beef as payment, the cabbie drives off screen. Specifically, he heads south, across the Mason-Dixon line. After a brief warning by Brown, we hear the screeching of tires and the cab rockets past the camera headed northwards. Moments later, a band of men, all clad in Confederate gray uniforms, chases the cab across the Line. The men, shouting and hollering in an approximation of the famous rebel yell, show no indication that their pursuit of the encroaching Yankee will end any time soon.

Brief and unrelated to the episode’s story this scene may be. However, it represents an example of how Twenty-First Century pop culture writers utilize Civil War references for humor. It also represents, in a more general way, the extent to which the Civil War, and its imagery, has infiltrated popular culture as a whole. Brown’s shouted warning, “No! I wouldn’t go too far down that way, if I were you,” is the only explanation given. The audience needs none, however. The off-screen hollers of protest and the screeching of tires, along with the warning and the sign, provide the viewer with a quick series of mental breadcrumbs to follow. The pursing Confederates are merely the punch line, the payoff to the humor.

Cartoon Network’s Robot Chicken is another program that, again briefly, uses Civil War imagery in a humorous manner. Robot Chicken, created by Seth Green, uses stop-motion puppetry and claymation in a series of quick, visual “sound bites” to tell jokes and lampoon pop culture in what amounts to an animated variety show. The program uses

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175 Good Eats, 2007. Of course, the conspicuous “Mason-Dixon Line” sign is another clue to the cabbie’s peril.
176 Claymation is a form of stop-motion animation that, rather than using puppetry or dolls, instead uses clay and other moldable materials. The popular Wallace and Gromit series of short films, or the motion picture Chicken Run, by Ardman Studios in England are excellent examples of the capabilities of claymation.
the device of a chicken—resurrected by a Frankenstein-esque mad scientist and imbued with a number of robotic parts, hence the show’s name—strapped to a chair and forced to watch an endless series of unrelated scenes on a giant wall of televisions as an explanation to the audience for the seemingly random barrage of unrelated images. Often vulgar and frequently violent beyond excess, Robot Chicken follows the South Park tradition of accepting no sacred cows—Seth Green and his fellow writers mock everyone.

In the season three episode, “Bionic Cow,” one of these rapid-fire images mocks the Civil War. After the obligatory between scene static-wipe, the viewer sees Abraham Lincoln repeatedly kicking a captured General Robert E. Lee in the crotch. Lincoln chants, “eighteen, nineteen, twenty,” before ceasing the blows, each of which is forceful enough to lift Lee briefly into the air. Lee takes a few painful strides away from his Union-soldier captors before Lincoln indicates that that was but the first score out of “four score and seven.” Lee groans in resignation as the soldiers prop him back up and, just before the static wipe, Lincoln cocks his leg back and says, “Still three more and seven to go. One ...”

Just as with Good Eats, this Civil War reference is not related to the rest of the narrative. Indeed, the very structure of Robot Chicken has no underlying narrative—the show’s premise is a series of unrelated, but humorous, images flashed in quick succession. This sequence is just one more in the barrage of pop culture references. It is

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177 Robot Chicken, “Bionic Cow: Lincoln Gets a Good Ass-Kicking In,” directed by Chris McKay (Cartoon Network, Adult Swim, Turner Home Network Television, 2008). Robot Chicken uses a quick flash of a static-filled television screen combined with a diagonal “screen-wipe” between scenes. This relates directly back to the “chicken forced to watch television” device used in the overall story-telling structure of the program. Essentially, each scene represents a brief stop on a random channel during a night of forced “channel surfing.” Each static-wipe indicates the quick changing of a channel.

178 Robot Chicken, 2008.

179 Robot Chicken, 2008.

180 Robot Chicken, 2008.
significant for this very reason. Like the *Good Eats* episode above, *Robot Chicken* provides no explanation to the scene's subtext. There is no text crawl explaining the significance of the Civil War. The characters wear no nametags. The audience must rely on its own ability to recognize historical caricatures in order to make sense of this fifteen-second scene.¹⁸¹

Neither of these two scenes exhibits more than a token obeisance to Lost Cause mythology, or any other Civil War theory or mythology for that matter. Of the two, only *Good Eats* even touches on popular Civil War mythology—specifically, the ongoing hostility between South and North.¹⁸² This lack of adherence to any established Civil War mythology, however, is exactly the point. In the many earlier examples, the Civil War existed in literature and film to tell a story—one with a point of view inspired by Lost Cause mythology or, occasionally, some other mythological structure. These two scenes follow a different pattern. They utilize the Civil War to tell their own story, however brief, or to provide a humorous moment in an otherwise unrelated story.

The *TNT* dramatic series *Saving Grace*, in its episode "A Little Hometown Love" also seems to use the Civil War in the same manner, as a drop-in fact that does not seem to relate to the overall plot.¹⁸³ This perception, however, is false. *Saving Grace* is a controversial and critically acclaimed crime drama of sorts, albeit one with both

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¹⁸¹ Fortunately, *Robot Chicken* producers and animators offer three classic, even iconic, images for the audience to decipher. Lincoln is dressed in his iconic long, dark coat and stovepipe hat, complete with enormous black beard (very similar to Bugs Bunny's masquerade in "Southern Fried Rabbit"). The Union soldiers wear dress uniforms, neat, clean, and festooned with gold braid and piping. Lee, of course, sports a tremendous white beard, prominent stars on his shoulder boards, and a pristine gray uniform. It takes the bare minimum of Civil War knowledge to recognize these images, which, of course, is exactly what the producers intended.

¹⁸² *Good Eats*, 2007. Apparently, this includes the belief that just across the Mason-Dixon Line lurk patrols of gray-clad neo-Confederates eager to defend against Yankee encroachment. An element that Tony Horwitz would not be so quick to deny.

supernatural elements and an underlying quest-for-redemption storyline involving angels.

In "A Little Hometown Love," the episode begins with the brutal murder of Ed Lagardi—an officer in the Oklahoma City police department—in the bathroom stall of a popular bar quite literally filled with cops.\footnote{\textit{Saving Grace}, 2008.} As is typical with shows of this sort, the episode adds with a series of sub-plots, many established over previous episodes, to further muddy the waters and distract the viewer from potential clues. In this case, producers expect the audience to seize on little details, small facts dropped into the scene or in a conversation as clues. For example, when Holly Hunter's character, Grace Hanadarko, the Grace of \textit{Saving Grace}, describes the late Lagardi to her friend and city medical examiner Rhetta Rodriguez—played by Laura San Giacomo—she uses less than complimentary language. "Got a hamster named Roland," she says, "Collects Civil War shit. He and Gretchen did re-enactments on the weekend. Everybody in his neighborhood hated him."\footnote{\textit{Saving Grace}, 2008.} The Civil War reference appears to be just one of those details writers give their characters to humanize them.

In this case, however, the Civil War reference is neither an inconsequential detail nor a red herring. In fact, it becomes a key element in the solving of Lagardi's murder.\footnote{\textit{Saving Grace}, 2008.} Further investigation uncovers a link between Lagardi's wife and the murder. In this case, the couple's "song" was playing on the jukebox during his murder—Grace discovers this after hearing Lagardi's wife, Gretchen (Amy Madigan), sing their song...
over his corpse as a sort of send-off. Ultimately, when asked why she wanted her husband dead, Madigan’s Gretchen replies, “Well, have you ever met Ed?”

At this point, the Civil War drop-in earlier ceases to be an unrelated reference. Amongst the all the Civil War memorabilia in the Lagardi apartment, the police discover a picture of a re-enactor brandishing a particular sort of knife, the same sort of knife which killed Lagardi. The picture, of course, has no face. Grace, who has the police crawling through the Lagardi apartment and family finances, points to the photo, and says, “We’ll find a hit man who likes to do Civil War re-enactments on the weekend. Maybe this guy?” The Civil War reference suddenly has significance. Rather than a mere detail of Lagardi’s life, his collection of Civil War memorabilia becomes the method Gretchen uses to pay for his murder.

Where Saving Grace uses the Civil War as a plot element that enables its characters to solve a murder, Star Trek: Voyager’s “The Q and the Grey” uses the Civil War as a story-telling motif, a perceptual lens through which characters and the audience are exposed to a conflict they would not otherwise understand. Star Trek: Voyager, the tent-pole series from the now-defunct UPN network, told the seven-season story of the crew of a small starship inadvertently flung halfway across the galaxy and their struggles to return home to Earth. Star Trek: Voyager shared characters back and forth with the other Star Trek series airing at the time. One of these shared characters, Q, played by John

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187 The song, “Venus” by Bananarama, is a sufficiently odd choice that it sticks with Grace, becoming one of the clues key to solving, if not prosecuting, his murder.
188 Saving Grace, 2008.
189 Saving Grace, 2008.
190 The other series, Star Trek: The Next Generation, and Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, aired on Fox. However, since all three shows were produced by Paramount (owner of the UPN network), the writers were free to borrow characters, story lines, and events from one another. Indeed, these three shows, along with the original 1960s Star Trek television show, the films of the 1970s and 1980s, and the later Star Trek: Enterprise, form a fictional
de Lancie, is a member of an omnipotent race that hail from the Q-Continuum, a sort of parallel dimension they created. These other members of his race, all also named Q, are both male and female, and are played by a variety of actors and actresses in a number of episodes in this and other Star Trek television shows.

As one part of a typically convoluted plot, in “The Q and the Grey,” the past actions of this particular Q result in a civil war fought between the various omnipotent members of the Q-Continuum. As stated earlier, while many stories featuring civil wars do not reference the American Civil War directly, this one does. Q, attempting to end the violence amongst his people, kidnaps the Voyager’s captain, Kathryn Janeway, played by Kate Mulgrew. Janeway, it seems, is one of the few diplomats who would be capable of both understanding the basic premise of the conflict as well as negotiating a peace between the rival factions. Q transports Janeway to the Q-Continuum, a place she has been before, to facilitate the negotiations.

In previous episodes, the Q-Continuum appeared as a desolate highway cutting through the badlands of the American Southwest, complete with run-down gas station and the obligatory old man in a rocking chair. In “The Q and the Grey,” however, the setting is very different. Janeway regains consciousness dressed in an elaborate ball gown very reminiscent of the Idealized South finery seen in Gone with the Wind and “An universe that attempts, often unsuccessfully, to remain internally consistent. The sharing of characters is just one element of this attempted consistency.


Star Trek: Voyager, 1996. More precisely, she is one of the few capable diplomats who would be willing to help this Q, or any Q for that matter. The Qs are pranksters, stirring up trouble between races across the galaxy out of a sense of whimsy and boredom. De Lancie’s Q, for example, is known for playing a series of tricks on the crew of the Enterprise in Star Trek: The Next Generation, which result in not a few deaths. Additionally, Q’s desire to add human DNA (specifically Janeway’s) to the Q species through inter-species breeding is one of the elements that sparked the Q Civil War in the first place.
Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” in an elegant plantation manor house. Q appears to her as a wounded Confederate soldier needing her aid. Janeway, familiar with the American Civil War, immediately asks Q why this particular representation. Q explains that it is merely the best way to represent the tumult and conflict that her primitive, human brain could not otherwise hope to perceive.

As the episode progresses, there are plenty of Civil War references, icons, and period equipment. The various Q shoot at one another with muskets and cannon. They wear either Confederate or Union uniforms. The terrain is largely indicative of the Idealized South imagery so common to Lost Cause mythology. Most significantly, the Confederate Qs are the good guys, rebelling for the ability to exercise individual freedom of conscience.

This last element represents one of two Lost Cause mythological elements in the story, the other being the aforementioned Idealized South. Perhaps the one overriding element to Lost Cause mythology is that the South was right. The Confederacy was, in the simplest terms, “the good guys” resisting the tyranny of the growing power of the Northern states and a gradually centralizing government. Modern Lost Cause adherents, the neo-Confederates, continue to perceive the Lost Cause mythology in this manner. “If the government doesn’t stop telling people how to live,” a neo-Confederate named Rob states during a Tony Horwitz interview, “there just might be another Civil War.”

193 Star Trek: Voyager, 1996. It is a common device in all the Star Trek series that the captain of a ship knows anything and everything historical whenever necessary. This is especially true with knowledge of Earth history. While this circumstance is unlikely (would the average lawyer, for example, recognize 17th Century England by its furniture?), it is a simple enough conceit that enables the story to progress without introducing a know-it-all character.

194 More precisely, they are shooting at one another with energy beams and other weapons, but ones outside human comprehension. “If their weapons can make me bleed,” Q warns Janeway, “imagine what they’ll do to you. [emphasis in original dialogue]” Star Trek: Voyager, 1996.

195 Horwitz, 222.
than that, the South represents the "little guy," in the fight, the underdog. "Americans," Gary Gallagher writes, "normally root for the underdog."196

De Lancie’s Q and his Confederate-uniformed fellows represent the underdog in “The Q and the Grey” as well. They, like the original Confederacy, are both outnumbered and outgunned in a conflict largely of their own making. Additionally, like the Confederacy, they seek out external assistance to aid them in their plight. The rebel Q seek aid from the humans, a race they see as primitive yet possessing the unique ability to get along with many other races and societies with differing beliefs. De Lancie’s Q also sees the infusion of human DNA into the otherwise static Q-Continuum as essential to the future development and growth of his race.

_Star Trek: Voyager_, like all the various incarnations of _Star Trek_, is addicted to the one-episode, happy-ending round up of its plots. “The Q and the Grey” is no different. Despite obstacles, capture by hostile Union Q forces, and injury, Captain Janeway is able to secure a peace between the rival Q factions. In effect, the story ends with a Reunion theme—Janeway’s effort heals the breach between the two Q factions as they recognize a shared culture and heritage that takes precedence over any recent strife. However, as was the case with Kantor’s _If the South Had Won the Civil War_, this Reunion message is mixed up with Lost Cause elements. More importantly, this episode demonstrates the extent to which the American Civil War has penetrated pop culture. Science fiction is a genre market, popular with a large portion of the American, and, indeed, global, populace but not with everyone. _Star Trek_, in any form, is a subset of this genre. _Star Trek: Voyager_, despite having lasted for seven seasons, is neither critically acclaimed—excepting awards for its special effects—nor tremendously popular with a large segment

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196 Gallagher, _Causes_, 147.
of Star Trek fandom. Yet, even here, in a subset of a niche market, writers dip into the American Civil War well to tell a story that has little to do with the Civil War itself. The Civil War is merely a trope, a device to put the story into a context the characters, and, hence, the audience can understand.

The 2005 remake of The Dukes of Hazzard also takes popular Civil War themes and iconography and makes them its own. The film is a remake of the popular late-1970s, early-1980s television show of the same name and stars Sean William Scott and Jackass alum Johnny Knoxville as Bo and Luke Duke, two cousins perpetually getting into trouble with hare-brained schemes and a dose of high-octane car chases. The film also includes Jessica Simpson in her first film role, Willie Nelson as Duke clan patriarch Uncle Jesse, and Burt Reynolds as Boss Hogg, the corrupt town overlord. Primarily a comedy, The Dukes of Hazzard conceals a number of Civil War themes in between the car chases and naked co-eds.

Of course, the most well known Civil War element in The Dukes of Hazzard, television show and film both, is not a theme but, rather, a car. The film begins with the Duke Boys making their weekly delivery of illegal moonshine. After a confrontation with a local-boy-made good, their car is wrecked. They leave the vehicle in the tender care of their mechanic friend, Cooter. Later, an emergency need to drive to Atlanta, quick, compels them to retake possession of the car early. Where before the car had been a generic muscle car, it was now the famous General Lee.

197 The Dukes of Hazzard, DVD, directed by Jay Chandrasekhar (2005; Burbank, California: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2005). Reynolds’ Hogg is far different in appearance from Sorrell Booke’s portrayal in the television show. Burke was bald, rotund, and glutinous. Reynolds’ character, while just as manipulative and scheming as the original, shares only one visible similarity—a penchant for wearing all-white three-piece suits. Hogg’s full name is J.D. (Jefferson Davis) Hogg.

198 The Dukes of Hazzard, 2005. Like the name of a ship, I have chosen to indicate the General Lee’s name with italics. The car, like a ship, has a name.
The General Lee is a bright orange Dodge charger. Painted on its roof is a full-color, bold St. Andrew’s Cross battle flag with the name General Lee flanking it in blue letters above each door. First seen in the television show, the General Lee has become one of the iconic symbols of the South and the popular perception of the South in pop culture. There is, for example, a toy version of the General Lee on prominent display at the Strong Museum of Play, in Rochester, New York. In addition to its name, color, and St. Andrew’s Cross battle flag, the General Lee has one more clear Confederate reference to its credit—its horn, rather than beeping, attempts a credible rendition of the chorus from “Dixie.”

When the Dukes are caught in a traffic jam on the way to Atlanta, the responses from the other drivers to the General Lee are widely varied. “Southern by the grace of God!” one fellow driver shouts, following his bellow with a high-pitched “yee-haw!” Another sympathizes, exclaiming, “The South will rise again!” Naturally, not all the responses are appreciative. One woman asks if the Dukes are late for a Klan meeting, while the other suggests that they “Join us in the Twenty-First century.” Later, the Dukes are trapped in a predominantly African-American section of Atlanta—naturally, the local response to the General Lee is far from favorable.

199 The Strong Museum of Play is a museum devoted to collecting and displaying artifacts that chronicle the way people in general, and Americans specifically, spend their leisure time. Interestingly, with all the toys of pop culture iconic vehicles to choose from, the Strong Museum displays only four that are easily recognizable. These include the Barbie Convertible, Lightning McQueen from the Pixar film Cars, one rendition of the Batmobile, and the General Lee. An image of the General Lee on display is found in Appendix 3, Figure 1.

200 The Dukes of Hazzard, 2005.
201 The Dukes of Hazzard, 2005.
202 The Dukes of Hazzard, 2005.
203 The Dukes of Hazzard, 2005. The woman prefaxes her remarks with “Nice roof, rednecks.” After this scene, the two Dukes lean out of their windows to examine the flag on the roof. The flag is a new feature (it was not on the wrecked version of the car, nor was the original named), one which Cooter had not warned them about. “We’re gonna make some friends up here, huh,” Bo Duke says after discovering the emblem.
The General Lee is not the only Civil War theme or image in The Dukes of Hazzard, however. Of course, it is a very blatant reference—but it is not the only one. The Dukes, for example, represent the agrarian ideal present in the Idealized South element of Lost Cause mythology. They are independent farmers, supplementing their income with illegal moonshine sales since before there was a United States. The Dukes hold to their own code of honor and conduct and are both self-sufficient and capable of handling adversity. Finally, they resist the encroachment of industry and a “foreign” way of life into Hazzard County, the clan’s home for more than two centuries. The only missing element of the Idealized South myth is wealth. The Duke home is modest, so is their acreage. They epitomize the independent, small farming family that was the actual norm in the antebellum South.

In contrast, Hogg and his henchmen represent the encroachment of an alien and foreign way of life into the South. While Hogg is not a Northerner, he is attempting to import that most anti-Southern aspect of the Northern lifestyle—industry. In the film, Hogg embarks on an ambitious scheme to defraud a number of local farming families, the Dukes among them, of their property, confiscating it so that he might start a strip-mining consortium. To prevent public protest to his schemes, Hogg arranges for the public debate on the opening of the strip-mine to take place on the same day as the “Hazzard County Rally,” a road race sure to attract all the residents with its NASCAR-like thunder and spectacle. This scheme hearkens back to the many schemes presented in earlier Civil

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204 *The Dukes of Hazzard*, 2005. The back-story to the television show tells that the Jesse Duke voluntarily gives up making and distributing moonshine (or, at least publicly doing so, Jesse and the other Dukes continue on in the family business covertly) in a plea agreement to keep the Duke boys out of prison. This probationary agreement is the motivation for Hogg’s corrupt sheriff henchman, Roscoe P. Coltrane (and, he always includes the P. when he says his name) to “get those Duke boys.” This element is downplayed in the film.

War films and literature whereby carpetbaggers or Union sympathizers attempt to take possession of plantations or businesses through tax fraud or by substantially devaluing the property. Both Scarlett O’Hara’s plantation, Tara, in *Gone with the Wind* and Colonel Langdon’s nameless plantation in *The Undefeated* are threatened this way, for example.\(^{206}\)

Notably, this film departs from Lost Cause mythology in two ways. First, there is no racial element to the story whatsoever. Apart from the African-American judge, *The Dukes of Hazzard* touches on race only for comic effect.\(^{207}\) With so many other elements of Lost Cause mythology and Confederate iconography present, the lack of a racial dimension is compelling. However, in Twenty-First Century Hollywood films there is a tendency to avoid politically sensitive issues as much as possible, especially racial issues. A car-chase and naked co-ed comedy such as *The Dukes of Hazzard* is unsuited to any long-winded moralizing on the racial divide in the contemporary American South.

The second departure from Lost Cause mythology comes at the end of *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Put simply, this time the South, as embodied by the Dukes, wins. Through a series of car stunts and a well-timed appearance by Jessica Simpson’s Daisy Duke in a distracting outfit, the Dukes are able to foil Boss Hogg’s plan, forcing admittance to the public debate just before the time for objections to the plan expires.\(^{208}\) By the end, Boss Hogg’s plans are in ruins, the Dukes and the other families have their farms back, and the Duke boys are exonerated of all charges of wrongdoing. Like Kantor’s *If the South Had*

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\(^{206}\) The carpetbaggers do not use the obfuscatory device of a road race, however. *Gone with the Wind*, 1939. *The Undefeated*, 1969.

\(^{207}\) *The Dukes of Hazzard*, 2005. In this case, the aforementioned scene where the Duke boys drive the General Lee into a part of town unlikely to respond favorably to the flag on its roof.

\(^{208}\) *The Dukes of Hazzard*, 2005.
Win, *The Dukes of Hazzard* posits a happy ending to a clash between cultures in the South.

This departure from Lost Cause mythology is fairly common in this last period, however. Instead, *The Dukes of Hazzard* represents not a Lost Cause tale, but rather the infiltration of popular culture as a whole by Civil War and Confederate symbols and themes. This infiltration largely goes unrecognized.209

*The Dukes of Hazzard* is not the only work of fiction to re-fight the Civil War, however. A Second American Civil War has become a popular device in modern fiction, especially in science fiction. Popular authors Orson Scott Card and George R.R. Martin are but two of the many authors who have used this device to tell old stories anew. Others, like Harry Turtledove, chose not to write about a Second Civil War, but rather they choose to go the route pioneered by MacKinlay Kantor and fight the American Civil War again, but this time with an alternative or speculative twist. Turtledove has released more than thirty alternative-history novels, with many of them dealing at least in part with the American Civil War.

*The Guns of the South*, released by Turtledove in 1992, focuses, as so many speculative history stories of the Civil War, on a potential source for Southern victory. In this case, a group of time-travelling South Africans appears in Rivington, North Carolina and begins providing the Confederacy with weapons and technology from the early Twenty-First Century.210 Specifically, the Rivington men, as they are called in the novel, give the Confederate army AK-47 assault rifles and enough ammunition to use them.211

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209 Another example of this mixing of Civil War and Confederate iconography with other popular culture elements can be seen in Appendix 3, figure 2.
211 Turtledove, 11.
The difference in firepower between a single-shot, muzzle-loading musket and the automatic fire of a modern assault rifle quickly assures Southern victory.

*The Guns of the South*, despite re-fighting the American Civil War with a Confederate victory, does adhere to several Lost Cause themes, albeit subtly. First, there is the deification of the Southern leaders. Robert E. Lee and his son feature prominently in *The Guns of the South*. Lee, however, is suspicious of the Rivington Men and their “America Will Break” organization, using his son to probe into the source of the new weapons and other equipment, including modern, ready-to-eat food and instant coffee, the newcomers offer to the Confederacy. Additionally, the manner in which the Rivington men treat their slaves worries Lee. This worry, emblematic of the Happy Darky element of Lost Cause mythology, eventually becomes a sticking point between Lee’s Confederacy and the newcomers. Lee’s discovery of a modern history book that refutes the race war warnings given him by the Rivingtons further exacerbates this dispute—the Confederacy’s new allies, Apartheid era-South Africa, far from being champions of the white race, are pariahs in the international community. Lee’s proposal to begin gradually freeing the slaves ignites a firestorm of protest and almost loses him the Presidential election—ultimately, a close decision in Kentucky confirms Lee’s victory. After an attempted assassination attempt by Rivington commandos, Lee, in effect, declares war on the Rivingtons and drives them back through their time portal, destroying the device in the process.

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212 Lee is elected President after the end of Jefferson Davis’ Constitutionally mandated single six-year term. Lee faced Nathan Bedford Forrest in the election, with the South African Rivington Men supporting Forrest’s campaign with money and modern electioneering methods.

213 *The Guns of the South*, released in 1992, predates the 2000 election crisis in Florida by eight years. However, the presidential campaign between Lee and Forrest, especially with its close decision being decided by a single state, is eerily reminiscent of the events of 2000.
This final conflict between the Confederacy and their erstwhile saviors evokes Lost Cause themes—specifically, the aforementioned Happy Darky myth. Throughout the course of the book, Turtledove portrays most, if not all, Southerners as caring for their slaves and servants. A few mistreat or mistrust their slaves, but most are more solicitous. Portrayals of slaves and free blacks also show a profound bond between the races.214 In comparison, the Rivington men are harsh towards African Americans, free or slave. After learning of Lee’s decision to have captured Negro Union soldiers as prisoners of war, for example, the Rivington leader, Rhoodie, angrily confronts Lee. “You can rescind your general order for treating captured kaffirs—niggers—like white prisoners of war,” he demands, “Not only that, General Lee, you can do it immediately.”215

Robert Conroy’s 2006 novel 1862 also re-fights the American Civil War, this time with a British intervention. In Conroy’s novel, the Trent affair, rather than being resolved peacefully as happened in history, spirals out of control, resulting in the United States being on the wrong side of a three-cornered war. Great Britain does not go so far as to ally with the Confederacy, however. Rather, it chooses to chastise the United States for its heavy hand at sea. Conroy’s novel focuses on the potential outcome of one of many key events during the American Civil War. His book, like many other novels, short stories, anthologies, films, and television shows, asks and answers the “what if” question popularized in Gone with the Wind.216 Conroy’s novel works on the very popularity of desire, “The Civil War,” as Tony Horwitz put it, “[was] an epic might-have-been.”217

214 Turtledove, 316.
215 Turtledove, 149. The Guns of the South, combining both the Confederate South with recalcitrant modern South Africans, uses terms like kaffir and nigger repeatedly. However, Turtledove tends to place these words in the mouths of less-sympathetic characters—both bowing to popular perception (a “good guy” would never say nigger) as well as further emphasizing the Happy Darky element of Lost Cause mythology.
216 Mitchell, 690.
217 Horwitz, 172.
Interestingly, however, *1862* is not a Lost Cause novel in any meaning of the words. Rather than suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of the British and Confederacy, the entrance of Great Britain into the war is just the spark needed to unify the Union populace in support of the war.\(^\text{218}\) Indeed, the United States goes on to subjugate the Confederacy not in 1865, but in the summer of 1863. The United States also defeats the British navy through the profligate use of ironclads, defeats the British army in Canada ultimately annexing much of it, as well as aiding in the creation of an Irish Free State in previously British Canadian territory. *1862* uses a series of wildly unlikely circumstances and a significant telescoping of time that enables the United States to overwhelm both foes so easily. Ultimately, the book is popcorn fare—an unsophisticated literary thrill ride that is strictly low-calorie in themes and substance. *1862* is not utterly bereft of Civil War themes, however. *1862* is rabidly pro-Union, espousing both the Union and Reunification themes posed by Gallagher. Indeed, the only sop to Lost Cause mythology in the book is an early reference to the Civil War as Lincoln’s war. In a debate between the novel’s hero, Nathan Hunter and General Winfield Scott, Hunter asks Scott “And what about Mr. Lincoln and his war?” Scott replies,

> I consider his election a tragic mistake. I voted against him and I think he is the reason the South seceded. I doubt that he is competent to run this nation, and his election was to the South like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Had someone else become president, then perhaps the problems of slavery and states’ rights could have been deferred long enough for everyone to grow tired of them.\(^\text{219}\)

This single speech sums up one of the elements of Lost Cause mythology, specifically the pro-Secession argument. It is also the one case in all of *1862* where the dispute between

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\(^{219}\) Conroy, 22-23.
North and South gets any sort of hearing. Conroy is more interested in telling a rip-roaring military adventure than he is in exploring the complex social issues surrounding the American Civil War.

In contrast, the makers of *South Park* have no qualms about espousing social commentary on any subject that takes their fancy. *South Park* writers, for example, take advantage of a spectacularly quick production schedule to interject contemporary social commentary into their stories within weeks, if not days, of the actual events they lampoon. The episode "The Red Badge of Gayness" is an excellent example of this ability—it also provides another example of the influence of the American Civil War on popular culture.

In "The Red Badge of Gayness," *South Park*, Colorado plays host to a Civil War re-enactment, one that portrays a battle in which the South loses.\(^{220}\) This time, however, two new factors combine to unleash a very different result. First, this year's event is sponsored by Jagerminz S'mores flavored schnapps. This leads to predictable, drunken results. Second, the inevitable argument between the show's four stars, Cartman, Kenny, Stan, and Kyle—all seemingly perpetual third-graders—ends with Cartman assuming the role of General Robert E. Lee in an attempt to upset history and provide the Confederacy with the victory it deserves.\(^ {221}\) Cartman, while watching the re-enactment, bets the other boys that the South wins the Civil War—if he wins, the other three boys have to be his slaves for a month; if he loses the bet, he has to be theirs. Of course, once Cartman learns that, indeed, the South did lose the Civil War he urges the drunken Confederate re-

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enactors of South Park to begin the war anew, this time victoriously. In a rousing speech to the Confederate re-enactors who are, at this point, only slightly tipsy, Cartman says,

But, we don't have to lose. Gentlemen, we can win this battle. Sure, we could lose, and tonight we could go back to our families and say 'we did it; we lost like we were supposed to. Aren't we proud?' Or, we could take that hill. And, when we stand tall upon it, we hold our heads high and yell 'not this year! This year belongs to the Confederacy!'

After this rousing speech, the re-enactors win their battle, much to the surprise and consternation of their Union fellows. Cartman then convinces them to march on Topeka, Kansas, and on into Chattanooga, Tennessee. Later, after assaulting Fort Sumter and recruiting the entire state of South Carolina as reinforcements, Cartman leads his band of inebriated "soldiers" in a march on Washington, D.C. itself. There, his efforts fall prey to a simple premise—his renewed Civil War is merely a re-enactment. Two of the other boys use this to their advantage by dressing as Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, with Davis surrendering to Lincoln, thus ending the war. His defeat assured by history, Cartman takes advantage of the abolition of slavery and the Emancipation proclamation to renege on the original bet.

This episode, obviously, drips with Civil War iconography and themes. For example, excepting the current United States flag flying over the boys' elementary school, almost every flag shown in this episode is either the St. Andrew's Cross battle flag, the Stars and Bars Confederate national flag, or some other Confederate state or battle flag. It also

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222 South Park, "The Red Badge of Gayness," 1999. Cartman pronounces Confederacy with a profound accent. In his voice, the Confederacy becomes the "Confederasaah." This, however, is the only attempt to mimic or mock the Southern accent in the show.

223 South Park, "The Red Badge of Gayness," 1999. It is a South Park trope that, in every episode but one, the orange-sweater wearing Kenny dies, often in some horrible, accidental way. Of course, he re-appears with each following episode, his previous death unremarked upon. His manner of resurrection is, likewise, never explained or discussed (it is implied that his white-trash parents simply have son after son after son, each named Kenny). In "The Red Badge of Gayness," Kenny is shot by Tennessee National Guard troops during the re-enactors schnapps-fueled assault on Chattanooga.
draws on the “nested photo with voice-over” motif made popular in Ken Burns’ *The Civil War* documentary. Additionally, South Carolina’s almost instant participation in Cartman’s rebellion is a deliberate swipe at South Carolina’s history of having been the first state to secede. Their rabid enthusiasm mocks the contemporary concerns of the South being a hotbed of neo-Confederacism. \(^{224}\) “The Red Badge of Gayness” also mocks the American political system. “As Vice President,” Al Gore tells President Clinton after confronting the mass of re-enactors outside the White House, “I think we have to give them what they want. I mean, it’s just the Southern states. Who needs them?” \(^{225}\)

The previous examples do more than merely present Civil War themes, Lost Cause or otherwise, to an otherwise unsuspecting audience. Rather, they also indicate a simple fact—the American Civil War has become a trope, a common thematic element used by authors of a wide variety of works to tell a story. Unlike, for example, *Gone with the Wind*, however, the stories are no longer necessarily about the Civil War itself. Instead, the authors use the Civil War trope either to express a political message or, barring that, to offer up a light, rousing adventure or even comedy. Two final examples of this use of the Civil War trope to express political commentary can be found in Orson Scott Card’s novel *Empire* and the Marvel Comics multi-issue crossover story *Civil War*.

Both *Empire* and *Civil War* tell the tale of a second American Civil War, each using a different theme as the basis for the conflict. In *Empire*’s case, the conflict derives from the increasing militancy between red-state and blue-state political ideologies. Card expands upon this political simplification, however. “You might as well say rural versus

\(^{224}\) While trapped in Fort Sumter by elements of the US Army, Cartman responds to the usual “what do we do now?” question by suggesting they ask the state of South Carolina for recruits. Less than a minute later, a horde of men sweep over a hill to surround the besieging US Army. “Wow,” Cartman exclaims, “the entire state of South Carolina showed up!” *South Park*, “The Red Badge of Gayness,” 1999.

urban," Reuben Malich, *Empire*’s hero, says, challenging the simplification. “I do say that,” the Machiavellian Dr. Torrent, who will later become President, replies, “The geographical division is still clear. The Northeast and the West Coast against the South and the middle, with some states torn apart because they’re so evenly balanced.”

In Lost Cause mythology, slavery was not the root cause for the Civil War. Instead, abolitionist agitators fomented the crisis with their bellicose rhetoric. In *Empire*, those agitators exist in the role of billionaire Aldo Vera, a media mogul who funds a secret, high-tech army and commands them from hidden, underground bases. Vera’s excuse for escalating an ideological conflict to an armed one is the degrading civil liberties present in post-9/11 America. Ultimately, however, *Empire* is less about the political message than it is, like Conroy’s *1862*, a popcorn-fare adventure story with a few political and ideological overtones. Clearly influenced by action-adventure television series such as *24*, *Empire* is filled with gaping plot holes, unrealistic—but very cinematic—action sequences, and a high degree of simplistic moralizations.

Marvel Comics’ *Civil War*, on the other hand, is morally complex, dealing with a variety of contemporary issue through the Second Civil War trope. In this case, the accidental destruction of a mid-western town during a battle between teen-age superheroes and super-villains results in more than six-hundred deaths including more than sixty children. Marvel Comics, unlike its rival DC, is known for telling complex, moral stories. The popular *X-Men* franchise, for example, recasts American racial

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227 Nolan, 15.
228 Showing his cinematic influences, Card’s oddly named Aldo Vera is cast very much in the role of a James Bond villain. This is especially evident in his ability to fund and construct not just an army of high-tech battle-robots and missile-armed hovercraft but an enormous, underground base within and under a reservoir in the Rocky Mountains. How this base was constructed is, understandably, a detail Card chooses not to go into.
concerns using a human vs. mutant trope. In *Civil War*’s case, the question ceases to be human vs. mutant—a theme which expands from the X-Men books to the accumulated Marvel Universe as a whole—to human vs. post-human. In this case, post-human refers to costumed vigilante, with or without super-powers and without bias as to the origination of those super-powers.

*Civil War* relies heavily upon late-Bush Administration public fears over the gradual eroding of civil liberties in the quest for national security. Issues such as warrantless wire-tapping, “illegal combatants” detained at Guantanamo Bay, the increased intrusion of Federal scrutiny in inter-state travel such as the No-Fly list, and others all find expression in *Civil War*, albeit with super-heroes—Post-Humans as the series calls them—standing in for ordinary American citizens. Specifically, the public response to the Stamford Incident demands the institution of policies mandating superhero registration, voluntary or otherwise. This demand splits both the super-hero and super-villain communities in two. Some heroes argue that masked and costumed vigilantes are an established part of the American social framework and its historical past. Others see it otherwise—the police, for example, require licensing and training to do their jobs. Should not, these characters ask, the same rules apply to superheroes?

Ultimately, this yearlong event covering numerous intertwined stories spanning 106 different comic book issues in 21 different titles is too complex to analyze fully here. However, certain key *Civil War* themes are present throughout. First, the over-arching...

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230 The destructive event spawning the controversy takes place outside an elementary school in Stamford, Connecticut. Those who refuse to register with the authorities are hunted down and captured, or occasionally killed, by Federal “Cape Killer” units and imprisoned as Unregistered Combatants. Paul Jenkins, *Civil War: Frontline*, No. 2 (New York: Marvel Comics, 2007), 18.

231 Millar and McNiven, *Civil War*, No. 1, 24.

232 Millar and McNiven, *Civil War*, No. 1, 14.
story is, in itself, a Lost Cause argument. Specifically, the rebellious super-hero forces, led, interestingly, by Captain America, believe in the righteousness of their cause, thereby re-enacting the Legitimacy of Secession Lost Cause argument. Second, Captain America’s idealized view of America, one on which he is challenged at the story’s conclusion, is similar to the Idealized South element of Lost Cause mythology. “Let me ask you something, sir,” a reporter assigned to interview an incarcerated Captain America asks, “do you know what MySpace is?” When he responds by asking how the question is relevant, the reporter excoriates him on his lack of understanding of what America is. “You hold America up as some shining beacon of perfection,” she says, “but you know next to nothing about it.” In many respects, this argument mirrors objections to Lost Cause mythology. Those who object to Lost Cause mythology are quick to point out that, while slavery was indeed the lynchpin of the debate that spawned the war, what lay at the heart of that debate were cultural differences. America was changing from a rural society to an urban one, from an agrarian economy to an industrial one. Southerners, clinging to the older ways, objected to this national evolution. Neo-Confederates who espouse the Lost Cause mythology still do not recognize this social evolution, and it is this inability that keeps regional tensions high.

Third, Civil War plays on the contemporary fears of government intrusion into everyday American lives to express both the Nationalistic/Cultural Difference element of Lost Cause mythology and the Voluntary Abrogation of Slavery argument. Many

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234 Jenkins, Civil War: Frontline, No. 11, 14.
235 See Appendix 1, figure 4. Nineteen out of twenty-three respondents to my poll indicated that they believed there was still sectional tensions between North and South. Only three indicated that there was not. One chose not to answer the question. While some qualified their answers, others were most emphatic. “Spend time in the South,” one respondent who chose to remain anonymous wrote, “[and] you’ll see it. Even in the North it can be found.” Survey conducted by David Latella, 2008.
characters who support the registration laws insist that the measure will be temporary, that, once things settle down and people get used to heroes being heroes again, the legislation will quietly pass. Of course, the very division lines between the two camps, pro- and anti-registration, are the embodiment of the Cultural Difference argument. Some characters in both camps, particularly thoughtful or personally conflicted—Spider-Man, for example—switch sides during the conflict.

A fourth, and final, element of Lost Cause mythology lurking in Civil War, however, is the concept of the Idealized Confederate soldier. The anti-registration heroes, called rebels by the government, are led by Captain America, the super-hero symbol for, and embodiment, of all things American and moral. Where the government forces actively license and utilize super-villains in their efforts to apprehend the rebel heroes, Captain America’s rebel forces avoid villain assistance—even going so far as to forbid certain heroes like the overly-violent Punisher to join their cause. The rebel superheroes are fighting for a Cause. More than that, however, when Captain America realizes the Cause is lost, he takes the noble course of surrendering. By doing so, he protect the public at large from any further threat of spill-over violence from fights between the super-powered factions. This reflects Lost Cause Idealized Confederate soldier mythology—in Lost Cause portrayals of the Civil War, Union soldiers are always thugs, criminals seeking to plunder the South and murdering or endangering any who get in their way. Confederate soldiers, on the other hand, acquit themselves nobly, never menacing the populace on their, albeit few, forays into Union territory. The historical fact that Lee ordered his troops to pay for provender during their expedition into Pennsylvania lends a

236 Millar and McNiven, Civil War, No. 1, 23.
237 Mark Millar and Steve McNiven, Civil War: a Marvel Comics event, No. 7 (New York: Marvel Comics, 2007), 22.
degree of factual credence to this element of Lost Cause mythology. In Civil War, whichever innocent bystanders are threatened, injured, or killed, it is more often through action by a pro-legislation hero or in a defensive response to such actions.

These examples, while many, are but a few of the morass of popular entertainment containing Civil War elements, themes, or iconography. In novels and comic books, television shows and movies, computer games and board games, the presence of the Civil War is difficult to miss. It has infiltrated into every aspect of popular culture, often without any overt knowledge. Arguments over the existence of Confederate iconography in Southern state flags continue even today, as do fights over the display of the St. Andrew's Cross battle flag in public venues.238 As Randal Allred put it in his examination of the popularity of Civil War re-enactment, "One cannot begin to express adequately the impact of the American Civil War on our cultural consciousness."239

238 Tobin Beck, “Giant Confederate flag stirs discord,” America’s Civil War (September 2008), 16-17.
239 Allred, 1.
Five – Conclusion

It is, quite simply, difficult to over-estimate the influence the Civil War has had on American popular culture. Amongst all the literary, social, and historical influences, the Civil War stands above all others. Since the turn of the Twentieth Century, the Civil War has influenced films and literature alike with the power of its legends, the strength of its many heroic characters, and its sweeping landscape in which to tell a story. It is present in love stories and political treatises, in racial diatribes and social commentary. Its iconic symbols and actors continue to influence the national psyche today. It creeps into everyday life in pop culture icons, state flags, and at the head of football processions. The Civil War has become synonymous with any number of a host of ideological, racial, or cultural conflicts—conflicts real or imaginary.

This influence, however, has not remained static in nature. In the early part of the Twentieth Century, when the fledgling motion picture industry released hundreds of Civil War films, the Civil War existed in popular culture to tell its own story—the story of the events of the war itself—or by infusing its themes into a story set within the period. Margaret Mitchell’s epic love story, *Gone with the Wind*, for example, would be far less interesting and influential had she not set it against the backdrop of the Civil War. Moreover, only the tragic perspective of the Southern experience of the war could highlight the epic nature of the love story. *Gone with the Wind* relies heavily on Civil War mythology to enhance the story’s impact. Equally, the racial elements in *The Birth of a Nation* also rely heavily on Civil War mythology for their legitimacy. In both cases, the Civil War is not a mere story-telling trope or device but, rather, a setting and a character in and of itself. *Gone with the Wind* and *The Birth of a Nation* are more than
just set in the Civil War—at their cores, they are as much about the Civil War as they are about anything else.

More significant, however, is the nature of the Civil War mythology both rely upon to tell their stories. Both *Gone with the Wind* and *The Birth of a Nation* do not rely on the history of the Civil War to tell their stories—they rely on its mythology, specifically Lost Cause mythology. Both stories deliberately choose the Southern perspective for their narratives and their heroes. Even the Stonemans in *The Birth of a Nation* come to see the Southern philosophy on race, at least, as the correct one. The mere presence of the Civil War in either story would be less important to the story itself without the Lost Cause mythological elements both incorporate. Rhett Butler’s decision to join the Confederate Army at the last moment signals his acceptance of the legitimacy of secession, a key Lost Cause element. Both tales exhibit the Happy Darky myth, with loyal slaves who willingly remain with their masters after emancipation and who frown on the other emancipated slaves. Moreover, both stories overflow with Idealized South elements—the disparity in the portrayals of Confederate versus Union soldiers is but one example, the idyllic portrayals of Southern life, especially in the plantation epic *Gone with the Wind*, is another. Both stories rely heavily on the Civil War to increase the dramatic tension and poignancy of their tales. They also rely just as heavily on Lost Cause mythology to ramp up the Civil War’s relevance and influence on the tales themselves.

Beginning in the 1950s, however, the emphasis begins to shift away from blatant Lost Cause mythology. Gradually, Civil War stories cease telling the story of the war itself, instead using the Civil War as a trope through which to tell their own stories. Lost Cause mythology recedes, allowing the Civil War to become a mere setting, a landscape in
which to place a new message. MacKinlay Kantor’s *If the South had Won the Civil War*, for example, is not about the Civil War. It holds to few Lost Cause elements. Instead, it is a call for American unity in response to a looming threat. Kantor merely uses the Civil War as a device through which he expresses this new message. America, his novel claims, is stronger unified than divided—a message far different from that espoused in Lost Cause mythology. The war is a vehicle for preaching Kantor’s message, a device in which to put Kantor’s call for Americans to put down their internal differences and, instead, focus outwards into context. The Civil War, put simply, does not drive the narrative—the narrative drives the war. Such is the case in the other works examined from this period. The Civil War, while key to “Southern Fried Rabbit” and *The Undefeated* alike, does not drive the story—it merely provides a reference point. Moreover, Lost Cause mythology, though central to certain characters’ motivation, does not represent the central framework for the story—it is simply one more element used to tell the real story.

By the late Twentieth Century and through the turn of the Millennium, the Civil War had infiltrated its way into every aspect of the American cultural *zeitgeist*. It is its novels and in its humor. It lurks within the screens of both the television and the motion picture. In some cases, its presence is subtle, hiding almost unnoticed in the background. In others, it is blatantly overt. Confederate symbols have become cultural icons. Confederate defiance has become, to many, a regional battle cry. Most importantly, however, Civil War mythology has become integral to the pop culture stew. It is everywhere, unavoidable as much as it goes unnoticed.
What has changed, however, is the nature of that presence. Since the 1970s, Lost Cause mythology as a whole has waned while the presence of the Civil War in general has not. While some Lost Cause proponents have grown more strident, in general the Lost Cause mythology is fading from the American cultural media. More precisely, it is fading from the forefront of the cultural zeitgeist—it still lurks, in parts rather than as a whole, deeper down. While Lost Cause mythological elements have faded into the background or sunk deep into the unconscious cultural depths, however, the Civil War itself has become an unconscious, dominant presence. It has become ubiquitous, present in nearly all aspects of pop culture and the media, unrecognizable without conscious effort, yet a powerful influence all the same. The presence, for example, of Civil War themes and iconography in a cooking show begs a simple question—if it can exist here, where else can it exist? Indeed, it is more than a question of where can it exist—it is a question of where does it not exist?

Civil War themes, iconography, and its many mythological elements (Lost Cause or otherwise) are everywhere in contemporary America. It is no accident that the U.S. Navy, in a spirit of Civil War centennial sectional reconciliation, named one of its newest destroyers the USS Waddell, in honor of the captain of the CSS Shenandoah, the only Confederate ship to circumnavigate the globe. Themes of a Second Civil War abound in a post-9/11 America. Authors of Second Civil War stories have taken existing public sentiment and blended it with traditional Civil War mythology, tweaking it to provide a reasonable premise for a second, armed conflict on American soil fought between

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240 Tom Chaffin, *Sea of Gray* (New York: Hill and Wang, a Division of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 367. Waddell resigned a commission in the U.S. Navy to take command of the Confederate commerce raider CSS Shenandoah. After circumnavigating the globe, Waddell and the Shenandoah continued the fight for several months after Appomattox, attacking U.S. whaling fleets off the coast of Russia.
Americans themselves. The very fact that the 2000 and 2004 Presidential election maps, for example, so closely resemble the divided America of the Civil War has not gone unnoticed by historians, novelists, or screenwriters.

Ultimately, the American Civil War in general, and the Myth of the Lost Cause in particular, has been among the most influential forces driving the American zeitgeist for more than a century. It began as the elephant in the room—a story element so obvious that no one needed discuss it. The Civil War’s presence and influence merely was, recognized but unacknowledged. As the decades progressed, elements of Civil War mythology receded into the background, fading away in some cases, absorbed into unnoticed ubiquity in others. The power of the Lost Cause waned, but never faded completely—it merely changed tacks, growing covert where overt had failed. The elephant expanded, growing more influential even while it became steadily more invisible. By the early Twenty-first Century, the Civil War is everywhere, invisible at times and blatantly obvious in others. The elephant is no longer in the room—it has become the room. Elements of Civil War mythology and iconography extend their influence throughout the American cultural zeitgeist. America, obsessed with its Civil War more than any other fleeting passion, now lives within the elephant.
Shown here are the Confederate Battle Flag (on the left), specifically the battle flag for General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia, and the first of several national flags for the Confederate States of America (right). While the Confederate Battle Flag has grown to prominence as the symbol for all things Dixie, it was not, nor has it ever been, a national flag. It is also commonly called the Stars And Bars, a term that hearkens back to the Stars and Stripes of the United States. This, however, is in error. The CSA National Flag was called the Stars and Bars, not the Battle Flag. The formal term for the Battle Flag is the St. Andrew’s Cross flag.

Image from [http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/Confederate_Flag.htm](http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/Confederate_Flag.htm)
Clearly, the similarities between the St. Andrew's Cross battle flag and the state flags of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi are obvious. Indeed, the Georgia and Mississippi flags are close enough to the emblem of Dixie to cause considerable controversy. The *South Park* episode "Chef Goes Nanners" both an excellent, satirical example of this controversy as well as an example of how far into popular culture the American Civil War has infiltrated.\textsuperscript{241} Two of these flags were

\textsuperscript{241} Trey Parker, *South Park*, "Chef Goes Nanners," directed by Eric Stough (2000; Hollywood, California: Paramount Home Video, 2004). In this episode, the debate is over the South Park, Colorado town flag, a flag that depicts four white people, represented by stick figures, hanging a black person. Chef, voiced by Isaac
adopted in the late 19th century: Alabama and Mississippi, in 1895 and 1894 respectively. The others were adopted in the Twentieth century, in 1912 for Arkansas, 1956 for Georgia, and 1900 for the basic design for Florida, though the current version of the Florida State flag dates to 1985. The Georgia flag was again changed in 2003 to one much less controversial. For a time, highlighting this controversy, the New York legislature refused to display the Georgia state flag in the Albany capitol building—naturally, Georgia reciprocated.242 This new flag, however, shows considerable similarity to the CSA national flag.

Image from http://home.att.net/~USAFlags/FlagCatPage13.jpg

Hayes, as the major African-American character in the series (the young African-American boy, unambiguously named “Token” appears in a later episode) naturally objects to the flag’s racist representation. Others object to his objection, claiming the flag is historical, not racist. Others still, notably the boys around which all South Park stories center, do not see what the big deal is—they have been raised not to see race as an issue and, hence do not see four whites lynching a black, but rather they see four people hanging a fifth. It is this recognition that they do not even recognize race that causes Chef to recant his objection to the flag as a whole, instead settling on a compromised version of the flag which is racially neutral if no less violent in its depiction.

While more subtle, the Tennessee flag also shows elements of the Confederate Battle Flag. Surprisingly, neither the North Carolina nor the South Carolina state flags show any indication of their previous Confederate past.

Image from http://home.att.net/~USAFlags/FlagCatPage14.jpg
Figure 4

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<th>D: Self-Determination</th>
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Legend:

Home State: N = Northern S = Southern (specifically, one of the Confederate states)
Unit: N = Northern, S = Southern, N/S = participates in both.
Blue Collar / White Collar: B = Blue, W = White, O = Other.
This statue depicts the lament for the death of General Johnston and the resulting Confederate losses that followed. The statue was commissioned in 1917 by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and stands in the Shiloh National Military Park at Pittsburg Landing.

Figure 2

I HAVE A

DREAM

Image found at http://www.kissmyrebelass.com/designs/confederate/thumbnails/tnR1054.jpg
The Dukes of Hazard, a popular television show in the early 1980s, cast a 1969 Dodge Charger nicknamed "The General Lee" in a leading role. Marketed under the slogan "Catch Dodge fever!" this classic muscle car cost enthusiasts nearly $4,000 new. Designed in pre-gas-crisis Detroit, muscle cars made no apologies for their fuel gulping V-8 engines.

Photograph taken by Eric Wheeler, November 2008. Used with permission.
This image plays on several pop culture and political themes. Most obviously, The Dukes of Hazzard’s iconic General Lee car is depicted here as a gun-toting robot. This is no generic robot, however. Rather, it is a stylized version of Megatron, the evil leader of the Decepticons, a race of predatory alien robots from the popular cartoon franchise Transformers. In this political cartoon, Megatron-Lee is clearly in league with John McCain, implying a negative impression of McCain to American voters. By using the

The 2008 Michael Bay movie, Transformers, based on the cartoon franchise uses a far different, and much less easily recognizable, design for Megatron.
General Lee as the basis for the Transformer, however, the picture’s author is implying more than just “McCain is bad.” Previous images linking McCain with Darth Vader, for example, expressed that sentiment. Instead, he is expressing a political fear of the resurgent South, implying that the Conservative wing of the Republican party—McCain’s primary support base in his failed 2008 Presidential election bid—is dominated by neo-Confederates.

Image found on the Fark.com, a website devoted to political and news humor.

http://forums.fark.com/cgi/fark/comments.pl?IDLink=3953426
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**Film Sources**


Television Sources


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