
English Summaries

Heikki Länsisalo

The Racist Ideologies of Director D.W. Griffith and Writer Thomas Dixon: *The Birth of a Nation* in Comparison with the Novels *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman*

The article discusses the racist ideologies expressed in D.W. Griffith's classic silent film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). The film, which was based on reverend Thomas Dixon Jr's bestselling novels *The Leopard's Spots* (1902) and *The Clansman* (1906), depicted the American Civil War and the racial reforms of the Reconstruction period after the war from the Southerners' point of view. The first part of the movie presents the war as a heroic rebellion against the oppressive Northern central government. The second part portrays the Ku Klux Klan as a chivalrous organization that saves the South from Northern tyranny and the barbaric violence of the freed slaves.

The Birth of a Nation

described blacks in an ambivalent way. On one hand, it relied on the old stereotypes of simple-minded but faithful slaves. On the other hand, it was the first film that portrayed blacks as dangerous, sexually lustful beasts. The film is influenced by two different racist ideologies: Dixon's biological racism and Griffith's paternalistic social conservatism. For Dixon, the black race was a crucial threat to white civilization. According to him, the horrors of the Reconstruction years were due to the biological characteristics of the blacks. For Griffith, the greatest villains were the Northern politicians who destroyed the harmonic Southern society and aroused the blacks against their masters.

The film's depiction of black characters is mostly based on Dixon's modern, social darwinist racism. However, the film repeats Griffith's conservative view of American history: it does not present the anarchy of the Reconstruction years as an outcome of the blacks'

animal nature but as a symptom of failed, utopistic political reforms.

Eero J. Hirvenoja

***February Manifesto* - Epic Historical Films and Political Struggle**

February Manifesto (Finland 1939), directed by T. J. Särkkä and Yrjö Norta, was one of the most successful Finnish films in the 1930's. It was clearly a product of its own era, and the film illustrates the nationalist cinema of the late 30's and early 40's. The two characteristic features in Finnish historical cinema at that time were anti-Russian (or, more likely anti-communist) tendencies and ideals of national unification. Both are essential themes in *February Manifesto*.

After World War II, the film was banned in Finland along with many other nationalist films for political reasons. Especially its anti-Russian tendency was too delicate a matter in the new political situation. After the war T. J. Särkkä, the head-manager of the film company Suomen

Filmeollisuus (SF), practised self-censorship when he voluntarily banned two of his own films and also heavily edited *February Manifesto*. Because of these actions, fewer political sanctions were imposed against SF than its main competitor, Suomi-Filmi, after the war. The film, however, could not be shown publicly (with one exception) until 40 years later in the late 80's when the Soviet Union relaxed its politics under Gorbachev's reign.

For decades the original and longer version of *February Manifesto* was believed to be lost. A few years ago a copy close to the original one was found, which has enabled researchers to verify that, indeed, all the anti-Russian parts of the film were censored after World War II.

Mari Maasilta

**Against or for
censorship?
Discussion about
Karmen on two
Senegalese Internet
forums**

The Senegalese film *Karmen* (France/Canada/Senegal 2001) was censored in Senegal in September 2001 because the film was considered a blasphemy by a group of Muslims. The event raised a vivid debate in the Senegalese media and among Senegalese audiences about the state of national cinema and censorship. In this article Mari Maasilta analyses the debate on two Internet forums.

In Senegalese publicity audiences have had few possibilities to express their opinion and to participate in public debates on cultural issues. A national daily *Le Soleil* offered an opportunity for this in its online discussion forum opened in March 2001 and immediately got an enthusiastic reception. The film was eagerly discussed during several months even

though the participants of the debate did not have a chance to see the film.

Senegalese cinema needs international finance and distribution in order to survive. Every film made for transnational distribution has to balance between two qualities: *cultural specificity* and *universality*. If the film is "too culture specific" or "too local" it might have difficulties to attract foreign audiences but if it does not respect certain cultural norms local audiences might reject it.

Maasilta represents four different ways to frame the discussion about national cinema on Senegalese forums. The two most common frames are the *religious* and *nationalist* frame, which see cinema as a tool in the service of God or in nation-building. In the third, *reality* frame, the core principle is that cinema has to reflect reality and raise awareness and discussion about social problems. In the fourth, *art* frame, cinema is seen first of all as art, and as such free from all kinds of restrictions. The art frame also

accentuates the issues of human rights and freedom of expression. The two first frames do not exclude each others since religion and nationality seem to be intertwined in the idea of Senegaleseness. They also accept censorship if the goal is to protect religious moral or "national pride". In these frames the idea of "art for art's sake" and unlimited freedom of expression are not imaginable.

Johanna Pakkanen

**"Day by day by day" –
Twinning, Heterosexual
Melancholy and Stored
Sorrow in *Single White
Female***

The mainstream thriller *Single White Female* (US 1992) is based on a crime novel *SWF Seeks Same* (1990) by John Lutz. Besides the basic storyline there are several differences in the narratives of the film and the novel. One of the most intriguing differences is the main motive of the murderous main character Hedra. In the film she suffers from a trauma caused by the

loss of her twin sister at an early age. In the movie the twin sister theme is emphasized with numerous mirror images of the emotionally unstable Hedra and her landlady Allie. The grief theme is interestingly reversed at the end of the movie: Hedra murders Allie's fiancé, and Allie grieves him. Nevertheless, she also suffers from bad conscience after killing Hedra and mourns her loss.

The theme of a lost twin sister widens metonymically to depict the complicated relationship and identification of the main characters. This shift is analyzed within the framework of queer theory, by using the concepts of twinning and heterosexual melancholy. By applying a reparatory reading position the grief expressed in the ending is read as a mark of the high price to be paid for hegemonic heterosexuality getting increasing representations in the era of crises and rupture of the heterosexual family institution.

Lähikuvan tulevat teemat ja deadlinet

2/2005

Mainonta

3/2005

Kuva, tapahtuma, liike (deadline 31.5.)

4/2005

Viihde ja tähdet (deadline 30.9.)

1/2006

Gootit (deadline 30.11.)

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