

The Wind Goes On: *Gone with the Wind* and the Imagined Geographies of the American South

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ABSTRACT

Published in 1936, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* achieved massive literary success before being adapted into a motion picture of the same name in 1939. The novel and film have amassed numerous accolades, inspired frequent reissues, and sustained mass popularity. This dissertation analyzes evidence of audience reception in order to assess the effects of *Gone with the Wind*'s version of Lost Cause collective memory on the construction of the Old South, Civil War, and Lost Cause in the American imagination from 1936 to 2016. By utilizing the concept of prosthetic memory in conjunction with older, still-existing forms of collective cultural memory, *Gone with the Wind* is framed as a newly theorized mass cultural phenomenon that perpetuates Lost Cause historical narratives by reaching those who not only identify closely with it, but also by informing what nonidentifying consumers seeking historical authenticity think about the Old South and Civil War. In so doing, this dissertation argues that *Gone with the Wind* is both an artifact of the Lost Cause collective memory that it, more than anything else, legitimized in the twentieth century and a multi-faceted site where memory of the South and Civil War is still created.

My research is grounded in the field of memory studies, in particular the work of Pierre Nora, Eric Hobsbawm, Andreas Huyssen, Michael Kammen, and Alison Landsberg. In chapter one, I track the reception of *Gone with the Wind* among white American audiences and define the phenomenon as rooted in Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation. I further argue that *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism provided white national subjects with a collective memory of slavery and the Civil War that made sense of continuing racial tensions during Jim Crow and justified white resistance to African American equality. *Gone with the Wind*, in other words, reconciled the lingering ideological divisions between white northerners and southerners who then were more concerned with protecting white supremacy.

In chapter two and three, I analyze *Gone with the Wind*'s continuing popularity throughout the twentieth century and its significant influence on other sites of national memory. Chapter four uses contemporary user reviews of *Gone with the Wind* DVD and Blu-ray collector's editions to reveal that the phenomenon remains popular.

Throughout this study I analyze the history of black resistance to the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon. For African Americans, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism has always been understood as justification for racism, imbuing the white national conscious with a mythological history of slavery and black inferiority. As I argue, black protestors to *Gone with the Wind* were correct, as the phenomenon has always resonated most during moments of increased racial tension such as during the civil rights era and following the Charleston Church Massacre in 2015.

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the continuing popularity of the popular culture phenomenon *Gone with the Wind*, from its initial publication as a novel in 1936 to 2016. I first argue that *Gone with the Wind* is an artifact of the Lost Cause, which is defined as an amalgamation of myths about southern history that relies on negative racial stereotypes, the veneration of the Confederacy, and the position that slavery was unimportant to the causes of the American Civil War. The Lost Cause, as scholars have argued, has always been an ideological justification for anti-black racism, particularly Jim Crow apartheid. As a product of this white supremacist mythology, I further argue that *Gone with the Wind* is not merely an artifact of the Lost Cause, but its most powerful statement that defined what twentieth-century white Americans believed about southern history. As I reveal, *Gone with the Wind* resonated most among white audiences during periods of heightened racial tensions, in particular during various points in the civil rights era and following the 2015 Charleston Church Massacre. The Lost Cause remains a potent ideological force that underpins American white supremacy.

In chapters one and two, I analyze *Gone with the Wind*'s popularity in the twentieth century using reviews by readers and viewers. I reveal that *Gone with the Wind*'s popularity was more due to its Lost Cause mythology rather than its narrative plot, and was widely popular among white audiences across the North and the South. In chapter two, I also look at *Gone with the Wind*'s influence on later novels and films about the South before, in chapter three, highlighting how *Gone with the Wind*'s version of the Lost Cause became the primary historical narrative at sites of southern heritage tourism, in particular plantation museums and Georgia's Civil War sites. In chapter four, I highlight contemporary user reviews of *Gone with the Wind*'s DVD and Blu-ray collector's editions to reveal that its version of the Lost Cause remains a potent ideological influence among its fans.

Throughout the chapter I also analyze the history of black resistance to the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon, including organized pickets during its original theatrical release and the arson of a *Gone with the Wind* museum. For African Americans, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism has always been understood as justification for racism, imbuing the white national conscious with a mythological history of slavery and anti-black stereotypes.

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Introduction

In one of *Gone with the Wind*'s (1939) most spectacular cinematic sequences, the camera follows Scarlett O'Hara as she makes her way through the crowded and decimated Atlanta streets following General Sherman's attack on the city. Once the obviously distressed Scarlett reaches her destination, the camera slowly ascends to reveal the Atlanta rail yard littered with the dead and wounded bodies of Confederate soldiers. As the camera continues to pan, the immense size and scope of the rail yard is revealed to the viewer as Scarlett becomes indistinguishable from the scores of soldiers and medics below. For the audience viewing this lengthy sequence, Scarlett's character is lost amid the horrifying outcome of the battle; she and the fallen soldiers are revealed to be at the whim of forces and historical events greater than themselves. The camera pans to a tattered Confederate flag flying high above the city.¹

This sequence is an example of what film historian Tom Brown calls a "spectacular vista," a cinematic technique that is excessive in scale and in action (for example, a battle scene shot from a point of view high in the air). The spectacular vista, Brown contends, is the type of cinematic spectacle most associated with the narrative histories and stunning visuals that are important to epic films and the fantasy worlds they depict. In *Gone with the Wind*, it is the reveal of the Confederate flag that most resonates white viewers who most sympathize with the romanticism of the antebellum South, its history, and the losses incurred by white southerners during the Civil War.² For white viewers who see the Confederate flag as a symbol of their ancestors, *Gone with the Wind*

¹ Tom Brown, "Spectacle / Gender / History: The Case of *Gone with the Wind*. *Screen* 49 (2008): 172.

² Ibid.

revisits grand historical events that they did not experience and therefore could not possibly remember. Viewers use the visual production of those historical experiences as memories that inform their national identity in the present and their relationship with the past, giving them a sense of belonging and purpose.

The emotional responses of numerous white American viewers to *Gone with the Wind*'s epic version of American history raise questions about collective memory of the American South in the age of mass culture, especially since *Gone with the Wind* is a statement of an older collective memory, the mythology of the Lost Cause. How has the Lost Cause, through *Gone with the Wind*, shaped the identity of white Americans and their memory of the South from 1936 through the twentieth century? How have products of mass culture associated with *Gone with the Wind* functioned as mediators of memory and history, constructing knowledge about the South that shapes twenty-first century white southern identity?

Few scholars have attempted an analysis of the latter question while many others have instead relied on assumptions about *Gone with the Wind*'s enduring popularity to posit broadly that it perpetuated historical myths about the Civil War and Old South in the popular American consciousness, sometimes calling for other scholars to take up the task of verification.

Literature Review: The Lost Cause and *Gone with the Wind*

Informing *Gone with the Wind*'s epic tale of hardship during the Civil War is the longstanding mythic interpretation of history that dates to the moment that General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox courthouse in 1865 and

that is rooted in the Confederacy's humiliation, damaged self-image, and loss of honor suffered in defeat.³ As W.J. Cash writes in his highly influential *The Mind of the South*, "it was the conflict with the Yankee which really created the concept of the South as something more than a matter of geography, as an object of patriotism, in the minds of Southerners."⁴ This anguish then coupled with the psychological effects of a devastated post-war economy to create a "rising loyalty to the new-conceived and greater entity" of the South through the Lost Cause: a social movement that defined the South following the war.⁵

"The 'cause,'" writes Eric Bain-Selbo, "was the defense of the Confederacy."⁶ It was the romantic interpretation of the Old South as a geographically and culturally superior region that was once populated by chivalrous cavaliers and "happy darkies." This region, the Lost Cause claims, was ultimately destroyed in the "War of Northern Aggression" that was prompted by a Constitutional debate over state's rights and the undermining of the Southern state's sovereignty by the Federal government. Additionally, with the state's rights interpretation of the historical roots of the Civil War in place, the severity of institutional slavery in the South was sanitized and downplayed. Slavery, to post-bellum Southerners, was not considered central to the Civil War and was

³ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, Knopf, 1991), 115; Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941; New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 65.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 66. In the years immediately following the conclusion of the war, the Lost Cause was most prevalent among the Virginia elite because they were most able to maintain their social status. Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 35.

⁶ Eric Bain-Selbo, "From the Lost Cause to Third and Long," in *Game Day and God: Football, Faith, and Politics in the American South* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 86.

omitted from their historical accounts about the war itself, despite the widely held antebellum belief that white supremacy was the “cornerstone” of Southern society.⁷ This interpretation of history then resulted in the pride, racism, and paternalism that has depicted slaves as ignorant and faithful servants to a benign institution and benevolent masters and has created the “unshakable conviction that there is something grander about the South and being a southerner.”⁸

The architects of the Lost Cause were not monolithic. The movement actually began with a period of memorialization—spearheaded by Southern women—that at first consisted of simple decorations and monuments on the graves of fallen confederates in local cemeteries.⁹ Alongside Southern women’s eventual success at creating multiple ladies’ memorial associations throughout the South, their efforts coincided with the writing of prominent Southern white men who were authoring the first histories of the Civil War from the Southern perspective. These histories textually defined the Lost Cause, and thus the South, and served as a clarion call that united white Southerners and emergent historical and memorial associations under a renewed struggle against the

⁷ Kenneth Stampp, ed., *The Causes of the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 153.

⁸ Bain-Selbo, “From the Lost Cause to Third and Long,” 86.

⁹ Catherine W. Bishir, “‘A Strong Force of Ladies’: Women, Politics, and Confederate Memorial Associations in Nineteenth-Century Raleigh,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 77 (2000): 456; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “‘Woman’s Hands and Heart and Deathless Love’: White Women and the Commemorative Impulse in the New South,” in *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, by Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson, eds. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003), 64-78; Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies’ Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 39-40; Lloyd A. Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy: Another Look at the Lost Cause Religion,” in Gallagher and Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, 190. It has been argued that the memorialization movement began in northern Virginia, however, Hunter illuminates that the women of Columbus, Georgia, began to care for the graves of soldiers following the battle that resulted in a Confederate surrender to General William T. Sherman on April 26, 1865. These women, who compared themselves to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary following the crucifixion, recommended that an annual observance be established for decoration of the fallen soldier’s graves.

North.¹⁰ As historian Gary Gallagher asserts, “[Southerners] collectively sought to justify their own actions and allowed themselves and other former Confederates to find something positive in all-encompassing failure. They also [provided] future generations of white Southerners with a ‘correct’ narrative of the war.”¹¹

But despite the role of women in founding and perpetuating the confederate memorial movement, the Lost Cause social movement at large was a paternal creation at a time when Southern masculinity had been damaged in defeat. In other words, the Lost Cause appealed to a society that was searching for a way to recreate the masculinity of warfare and that was already “defensive about [its] public image and more than a little anxious for reassurance.”¹² Thus, Southern whites turned to the memorialization of “heroic soldiers, martyrs, and battlefield glories” to fill the void.¹³ The grand exploits of the Confederacy’s manly heroes became a coping mechanism to assuage the psychological burden of humiliation in defeat and ushered in the most notable era in American history for erecting monuments and collective memory.¹⁴ Additionally, Southern whites fostered a desire to return to the paternalistic and racial social hierarchies

¹⁰ Alan T. Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth,” in Gallagher and Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, 13; The most notable example of male authors of the Southern perspective was Edward A. Pollard, the editor of the *Richmond Examiner*. His book, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E.B. Treat & Co., 1866), marks the first official usage of the term “Lost Cause” in relation to the Confederacy after the Civil War.

¹¹ Gary Gallagher, “Introduction,” in Gallagher and Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, 1.

¹² Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 115.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, 35. John J. Winberry argues that most Confederate monuments were erected between 1889 and 1920. Until 1889 most monuments were constructed in cemeteries; however, after 1890, monument construction primarily took place in Southern town centers. By 1900, the courthouse square was the most popular public space for monument construction while, in 1910, the most Southern monuments were erected in a single year. John J. Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget’: The Confederate Monument and the Southern Townscape,” *Southeastern Geographer* 23 (1983): 111.

of the antebellum era—especially as the Populist and labor movements of the late twentieth century promoted increased solidarity among white and black laborers—and sought to solidify white identity. Furthermore, Cash and subsequent historians have claimed that this was more than a sense of racist nostalgia. Instead, they called it the “Savage Ideal”: “an assortment of half-digested truths” that, during Reconstruction, saturated Southern memory with notions of intense individualism, puritanism, and romanticism and were centered on the firm belief in antebellum hierarchical values of the “Southern Way of Life.”¹⁵ So deeply ingrained were these beliefs, Cash argued, that “dissent and variety [were] completely suppressed, and [white Southern] men became, in all their attitudes, professions and actions, virtual replicas of one another.”¹⁶ The Southerner was thus an identity that was long affected by the legacy of the Civil War and that was seeking and upholding masculine, white power. This, as historian Jackson Lears has argued, was a national identity of “rebirth.”¹⁷

Southern rebirth also took place in the political and cultural realms during Reconstruction. In the political realm, Redeemer Democrats actively sought to oust the Republican coalition that was attempting to grant political and civil rights to African Americans. But, as historian James Cobb argues, the perceived Confederate destiny to “rise again” then combined with the “mystique of prideful ‘difference’ and

¹⁵ Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 327; Quote from Bruce Clayton, *The Savage Ideal: Intolerance and Intellectual Leadership in the South, 1890-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 2.

¹⁶ Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*, 90.

¹⁷ TJ Jackson Lears, “The Long Shadow of Appomattox,” *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 12-50.

defensiveness” that had become integral to white Southern identity.¹⁸ However, by the end of Reconstruction, “[t]he cultural dream had replaced the political dream,” and the cultural Lost Cause had become a civil religion throughout the South.¹⁹ This was not a distinct form of Southern Protestantism, argues historian Charles Reagan Wilson, who was building on sociologist Robert Bellah’s popular connotation of the term “civil religion.”²⁰ Instead, the Lost Cause transformed into a belief system that centered on “the religious implications of a nation” and that justified the South’s loss in the Civil War as a “redemption from past sins, an atonement, and a sanctification for the future.”²¹ As Cobb argues, the Southern cause that “survived” defeat was perceived to be sanctified in the bloodbath of war and Southern whites believed that “the war had actually played out as God had planned all along.”²² Thus, the cultural Lost Cause was not merely backward looking, or nostalgic, it was a “transcendental value,” a reality; it was the justification for the future of the South to proceed in the image of the old, perceptually real, “Southern Way of Life.”²³

¹⁸ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64.

¹⁹ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, 1.

²⁰ Sociologist Robert Bellah popularized the term “civil religion” in his groundbreaking essay “Civil Religion in America.” Bellah argues that “the civil religion at its best is a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experience of the American people.” The civil religion, for Bellah was thus the combination of the civil with the sacred (e.g. the American Flag). Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” in *American Civil Religion*, by Russell E. Richey and Donald D. Jones, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 33.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 13, 5.

²² Cobb, *Away Down South*, 63.

²³ Lloyd A. Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy: Another Look at the Lost Cause Religion.” In *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, Gary Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds., 186.

In order to understand the civil religion of the Lost Cause, one only needs to look to the Civil War itself. During the war, Southerners began viewing the war as a “holy war” that demanded sacrifices, the ultimate sacrifice being the life of one of the countless common soldiers who laid it down selflessly, and blamelessly, for the homeland.²⁴ And, according to Historian Kurt Berends, those sacrifices were laid down by patriots fighting for the noble cause of self-rule and liberty for the Protestant Confederate nation. Thus, “southern identity, with its emphasis on honor, became fused with Christian identity, and, for many southerners, saving the Confederacy became tantamount to saving Christianity.”²⁵ But for Berend and Wilson, this merging of the nation and the religious was necessary for the establishment of a civil religion. In other words, the Lost Cause fused the social and political ambitions of the Redeemer Democrats with the sacred ideas of the Southern nation. It is no accident that simple prayers at Confederate graves turned into eulogies, or that figures such as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis were afforded Christ-like personalities.²⁶ According to Lloyd A. Hunter, sacralization, an existential process, was the means Southerners used to “make sense out of meaningless

²⁴ Kurt Berends, “Confederate Sacrifice and the ‘Redemption’ of the South,” in *Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture*, Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 106.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁶ Upon his death, Robert E. Lee became the model of masculinity and morality for white men of the South. Conversely, Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederate States of America, was not deified upon his death, like Lee. Instead, Davis was first blamed the defeat of the Confederacy but received sympathy from Southerners during his lengthy imprisonment after the war at Fort Monroe. After the rise of the New South, Jefferson became a political ideal, a dutiful politician, and champion of the Lot Cause’s states’ rights before the war. He became the embodiment of the political history of the South and suffered the consequences after being victimized by the North and Lincoln that overthrew the Constitution. This “was Davis the Christ figure.” Interestingly, Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was likened to Moses. He didn’t live to see his anointed people’s enter the promise land for which they were destined. Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy,” 197-199.

suffering...in both its societal and individual forms.”²⁷ The deaths of a number of Southerners who “sacrificed” their lives during the war (notably Sam Davis, executed by Union soldiers) were likened to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and slavery was taught as if it were divinely sanctioned by God and the Bible in order to civilize the inferior, non-Christian peoples of the world.²⁸ Slavery, in other words, was white Southerner’s religious duty, and to accuse them of going to war to maintain or extend a malevolent institution was sacrilege. The Confederacy, they maintained, had the constitutional right to secede and best exhibited the principles of American liberty before the war. The South, to these Southerners, was not seen as rebellious and the idea of the Civil War and slavery became irreconcilable, allowing the Lost Cause to be likened to not only the unfinished cause of Jesus Christ but also one that sought to uphold the racial hierarchies of the Old South. But this was not “the Christian concept of sanctification—to make holy, to impart sacredness, to set apart as consecrated”—as Hunter, Will Herberg and Samuel S. Hill argue.²⁹ Under the civil religion’s sacralization, the South, its culture, and religion were not interdependent; they reinforced one another, and were the same, and the words of the Lost Cause were transferred to the symbols of the nation and the rituals that took place around them (for instance, the Confederate Battle Flag, Confederate monuments, Dixie, and the old grey uniforms that were proudly utilized at Memorial Day celebrations). The

²⁷ Ibid., 187.

²⁸ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 137-138, 53, 102. Sam Davis, often referred to as the Boy Hero of the Confederacy, was hanged by Union Forces for suspected espionage. He was hanged in Pulaski, Tennessee on November 27, 1863. His childhood home is now a tourist destination and a statue of Davis stands in Nashville.

²⁹ Quote from Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy,” 188; Will Herberg, “America’s Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes,” in *American Civil Religion*, edited by Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 77; Samuel S. Hill, *Religion and the Solid South* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1972), 46.

Southern nation, Hill writes, was “the ultimate social good news...society [was] God,” and Southerners were born again in the image of the Lost Cause believing that God had carved out a society in which to implement humanity’s millennial destiny in the South.³⁰

After the Redeemers successfully overthrew Reconstruction, the Lost Cause transformed into myth and survived in cultural symbols and ceremonies that achieved sacrilization: Southern churches, child socialization and public education, historical societies, the historiographical tradition of the Dunning School, and New South universities such as Washington and Lee and Sewanee that staffed their history, law, and journalism departments with former Confederates.³¹ According to Paul Gaston, after Reconstruction the Lost Cause melded with the emergent New South Creed: a dualistic image of the South that incorporated “the romantic pictures of the Old South and the cult of the Lost Cause” with a new lexicon “that bespoke harmonious reconciliation, [segregated] racial peace, and a new economic and social order based on industry and scientific, diversified agriculture.”³² The New South appealed to Southerners, being championed by writers such as Henry Woodfin Grady and Thomas Nelson Page, due to the lingering destitution and poverty incurred by the war and the humiliation suffered during Reconstruction. However, champions of the New South often invoked the mythic,

³⁰ Quote from Hill, *Religion and the Solid South*, 46; Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy,” 188.

³¹ Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy,” 188-189; Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 151-157; Kristina DuRocher, *Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2011). The Dunning School is named for William Archibald Dunning of Columbia University. The historiographical tradition was influential in depictions of Reconstruction and slavery from the turn of the twentieth century until about 1950. The Dunning School viewed black suffrage and Radical Reconstruction as political blunders. It also maintained that slavery was a beneficial institution for the uncivilized and that granting African Americans their freedom allowed their natural ignorance, corruption, and violent behavior caused Reconstruction to fail.

³² Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (Montgomery, AL: New South Books, 2002), 28.

shared past of the aristocratic South and the battlefield glories of the war through Lost Cause rituals that still regularly dramatized the myth around monumental sites. And these myths were “not polite euphemisms for falsehoods,” writes Gaston, but “combinations of images and symbols that reflect [the white Southerner’s] way of perceiving truth.”³³ In this case, the truth Southerners perceived was their collective, historical identities that were bound “together through the ceremonial restatement of their [Lost Cause] heritage...interpreted in the light of transcendence.”³⁴ And these myths, and Southerners’ “objects of devotion,” would continue into the twentieth century as “representations of the homeland” and belief in the South’s eventual resurrection atop American society.³⁵ Racially, proponents of the New South openly sought to maintain white supremacy through segregation so that the white South could once again come to dominate a united nation.³⁶ In the early twentieth century, the now monument-littered Southern landscape itself, argues geographer John J. Winberry, was meant to drive a wedge between white Southerners and African Americans with concrete manifestations of Jim Crow and Southern folklore.³⁷ Thus, in the words of Page himself, the New South “was simply the Old South with its energies directed into new lines” and those Lost Cause-inspired

³³ Ibid., 9.

³⁴ Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy,” 189, 193.

³⁵ Ibid., 193,194.

³⁶ Gaston, *The New South Creed*, 28.

³⁷ Winberry, “‘Lest We Forget’,”117; John J. Winberry, “Symbols in the Landscape: The Confederate Memorial,” *Pioneer America Society Transactions: P.A.S.T.* 5 (1982): 11, 13.

themes would dominate Southern political, social, and cultural opinion well into the 1930s, the decade of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*.³⁸

This is not to say that counter-narratives did not exist; quite the contrary. As C. Vann Woodward wrote, "The Mind of the South has never been so closed that it has not contained its antithesis."³⁹ However, the mind of the white South maintained hegemony over counter-narratives, such as the highly influential, black intellectual W.E.B. Dubois' *Black Reconstruction* (1935), due to the widespread acceptance of white supremacy throughout the United States and the institutional segregation of society in the South.⁴⁰ In popular culture, a significant alternative to *Gone with the Wind*'s interpretation of the Old South and slavery was not widely acclaimed until 1976 with Alex Haley's publication of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* and the subsequent T.V. miniseries of the same name. *Gone with the Wind*'s interpretation of the Civil War was not challenged until the release of the Civil War epic *Glory* in 1989.⁴¹

³⁸ Thomas Nelson Page, *The Old South: Essays Social and Political* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1892), 6. Speaking on white supremacy in the New South, Henry W. Grady wrote that systems of slavery and plantation agriculture must be abandoned, but white supremacy "must be maintained forever, and the domination of the negro race resisted at all points and at all hazards." "The New South" delivered to the New England Club of New York on December 22, 1886, in Joel Chandler Harris, ed., *The Life of Henry Grady, Including his Writing and Speeches* (New York: 1890.) 91, 83.

³⁹ Quote cited in Clayton, *The Savage Ideal*, 3.

⁴⁰ Clayton writes, white Southerners, as well as "the South's white intellectuals held racist assumptions...not because they were Southern but because they were American." *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹ Alex Haley and James Lee, *Roots*, 30th Anniversary Edition DVD (Burbank, Warner Home Video, 2007) [orig. rel. 1977]; Kevin Jarre and Edward Zwick, *Glory*, Special Edition DVD (Culver City: TriStar Home Video, 2000) [orig. rel. 1989]; Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 78-79; John Gray, *Blacks in Film and Television, a Pan-African Bibliography of Films, Filmmakers, and Performers* (New York: Greenwood, 1990). *Roots*—a multi-generational T.V. miniseries about the horrors faced by African and African American slaves in the South—and *Glory*—an epic about the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the first all-African American regiment—provide the most notable popular culture derisions of the romantic standard set by *Gone with the Wind*. Neither piece portrays the Old South or the institutional slavery as positive, and instead represents the most pervasive attempts to provide a Northern or African American perspective in modern years. The impact of these movies becomes especially clear when considering the amount of acclaim they received:

Since the release of *Glory*, there has been a concerted effort to produce alternatives to the Lost Cause vision of the South. Yet the South is largely regarded in the minds of Americans as a monolithic, distinct region. As Tara McPherson contends, the legacy of *Gone with the Wind* is that it naturalized a type of “lenticular logic” that whitewashes the “power-crossed triangulation of race, gender, and place that structured both the antebellum and postbellum South.”⁴² In other words, this lenticular is still present today and only allows one version of the historical South to be viewed at a time, despite the fact that each can be acknowledged, albeit separately, by those identifying the region: a white South best exemplified by the southern belle and her pristine plantation home, the stereotypical black South of the offensive mammy figure, and a more critical South that acknowledges the horrors and legacies of slavery. However, because it has been nearly impossible for popular interpretations of the South to escape the first two logics, or to recognize their dependence upon the third, the interconnections of race, gender, and their class connotations are effectively hidden behind a singular interpretation of southern history and identity. This, then, creates a contemporary problem, especially since the South that is presented is often strictly a “historical” interpretation, or a heritage: the past is partitioned from the present, race becomes a binary of blackness and whiteness, and old racism is distinguished from the racism of the

Roots alone boasted around 140 million viewers, nine Emmy Awards, and one Golden Globe, and still ranks in the 100 most watched television shows of all-time. *Glory* racked up twelve awards (three of which were Oscars).

⁴² Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 57.

present, thus making it much more difficult for the nation to come to terms with its lingering racial and gendered legacies.⁴³

For McPherson, *Gone with the Wind* was the benchmark for the popular lenticular of southern femininity, and other scholars have argued for its continued importance. Similar cinematic lenticulars remained in films throughout the twentieth century, however, and can still be seen in the present despite the increased production of films that actively deride and subvert Lost Cause racial and historical myths. For instance, in *Gone with the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema* by Brian Steel Wills, the author becomes bogged down in tediously reading myriad Civil War film narratives for historical accuracy but nevertheless uncovers the influence that *Gone with the Wind*'s success and themes had on subsequent films that tried to recreate the "sweep and popular appeal" of Selznick's story in their own.⁴⁴ One notable example discussed at length by Wills is *Raintree County* (1957) and he contends that much time passed "before Hollywood would try to break the mold of the 'plantation myth.'"⁴⁵

In a similar analysis, Gary Gallagher's *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (2008) argues that four distinct representations of the Civil War are present in the film culture of the two decades preceding its publication. For Gallagher, The Lost Cause tradition waned in Hollywood as the reconciliationist tradition (which overlaps with the Lost Cause in its downplaying of slavery and sympathy toward the Confederacy), and more recently the

⁴³ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁴ Brian Steel Wills, *Gone with the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema* (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 35.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 37, 140.

slave emancipation tradition, became more popular following the release of *Glory*.⁴⁶ This slightly echoes historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage's argument in a 2014 lecture at Virginia Tech that the Civil War, and by extension the Lost Cause, has become less and less culturally important to Americans.⁴⁷ However, Gallagher presents a major challenge to Brundage in his rightful acknowledgement that that the cultural popularity of the Civil War, and especially the Confederacy, has been resurgent in recent decades due to the always-growing distance from the Vietnam War, increased political support for a strong U.S. military among politicians and the public, recent antagonism toward "big government," and the widespread interest in Civil War sesquicentennial celebrations (of which the popularity of the 75th anniversary of *Gone with the Wind* in 2014 coincided and is also testament).⁴⁸ And similarly, although unstated, Gallagher demonstrates in his cultural analysis of popular Hollywood films how they served McPherson's Lost Cause lenticulars. For instance, *Gettysburg* (1993)—one of the most popular Civil War epics in recent memory—continued reconciliationist sentiments of sympathy toward to the South, displayed Confederate battlefield glories and bravery, and maintained that the Civil War was fought by and for great white men, brother against brother. These logics distort the reality of interconnected and multifaceted southern identities that are not adequately represented by popular versions of southern history and heritage. a Hollywood cultural representation of the Civil War that "touches almost every Lost Cause base" was released

⁴⁶ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 2.

⁴⁷ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "The Civil War is Over" (Keynote, 17th Annual Brian Bertoti Innovative Perspectives in History Graduate Conference, Virginia Tech, March 22, 2014).

⁴⁸ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 4-5, 11-12.

as recently as 2003 as Gallagher shows in his discussion of the film *Gods and Generals*,⁴⁹

Gallagher uses *Gods and Generals* to demonstrate the resiliency of the Lost Cause in American popular culture while drawing parallels between the film's depiction of African Americans, slavery, and racism with the depictions set into popular memory by *Gone with the Wind*.⁵⁰ But while Gallagher's argument centers on film as a powerful tool that teaches modern viewers about history, he also delves into other cultural media that have recently emerged to forcefully portray Lost Cause mythology. For Gallagher, this is most seen in popular art that depicts great Confederate leaders and whitewashes the centrality of slavery and race to the war. In some notable cases he highlights paintings that depict free black Confederate soldiers dutifully fighting in battle alongside their white brethren—an image that undoubtedly further distorts the history of race and the Civil War.⁵¹ However, Gallagher is not the only scholar to notice that the Lost Cause has emerged in other cultural outlets since it has become less popular in Hollywood. Charles Wilson and Eric Bain-Selbo have recently argued that the Southern civil religion has “been diffused through southern culture, appearing at such rituals as football games, beauty pageants, and rock and country music concerts.”⁵² Gallagher also briefly discusses recent contestations over the presence of the St. Andrews flag and Confederate memorials as sites where Lost Cause detractors and supporters engage one another, but

⁴⁹ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 73.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 74-80.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 154-184.

⁵² Quote from Charles Reagan Wilson, *Judgment and Grace in Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), xvii; Bain-Selbo, *Game Day and God*.

he ultimately argues that such public displays of Lost Cause history are becoming less popular. With regard to *Gone with the Wind*, both Gallagher and Wills acknowledge that it has continued vitality, like Lost Cause-inspired art. Gallagher posits that its “[r]esidual influence...will rest with television”—a contention that this study will further and challenge by exploring the continued popularity of *Gone with the Wind* in tourism, rereleases (theatrical and home media), museums, and as America’s favorite movie at large.⁵³

Aside from the scholarly works already mentioned, the scholarly literature on *Gone with the Wind* as cultural and memory processes is quite thin.⁵⁴ This dissertation connects a powerful historical film, *Gone with the Wind*, to the work in modern memory studies that views memory as a tool of nation building. Scholars such as Michael Kammen, Benedict Anderson, Pierre Nora, Andreas Huyssen, and Maurice Halbwachs collectively have argued that technological advances and historical shifts in the modes of production have created a modern collective historical memory that seeks to infuse shared values and common beliefs into people’s imagined communities that are centered on common identities and nationalisms connected to physical locations (or artificial

⁵³ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 10, 89; Wills, *Gone with the Glory*, 37. Wills writes, “Consistently rated as one of the best films ever made, *Gone with the Wind* will doubtless continue to influence audiences for generations to come. It will also surely serve as the inspiration for other films that try to recapture its glory and stature. But the producers of those future efforts will certainly come to understand that the mighty wind that blew into movie theaters in 1939 can never return in the same way again.” In other words, *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause myths will remain relevant in the continued popularity of the phenomenon as well as the lenticular logics about the South that it has helped engrain in popular memory.

⁵⁴ One additional significant contribution is Helen Taylor’s *Scarlett’s Women: Gone with the Wind and Its Female Fans*, which examines how British women relate to Mitchell’s novel in their personal and daily lives—represented best by the naming of children and pets with *Gone-with-the-Wind*-derived names and the women’s intimate relationship to Scarlett as a resilient, strong lady in her relationships and losses. Helen Taylor, *Scarlett’s Women: Gone with the Wind and Its Female Fans* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

landscapes, as Nora calls them).⁵⁵ As Nora and Huyssen contend in their notable works *Les Lieux de Mémoire* and “Monumental Seduction” respectfully, the connection of shared historical memories to physical locations serves the political needs of those imagined communities and provides a sense of historical “origin and stability as well as depth of time and of space” to a location whose historical events were never experienced by the citizens of the national community, citizens who will likely never meet.⁵⁶ Thus, as Charles Reagan Wilson alludes in *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause*, memory sites, images, and rituals of the southern community following the destruction and humiliation of the Civil War—such as Lost Cause monuments, popular literature, museums, celebrations, and later film—are inherently linked to southern nationalism by providing a recognizable, static, and shared recent past to the inhabitants of its imagined community while often evading critical examination from within.⁵⁷ Wilson argues that this continued well into the twentieth century.

The Lost Cause tradition that produced *Gone with the Wind* in the 1930s served these nation-building purposes for prideful southerners, despite, as some scholars have argued, instances in which *Gone with the Wind* subverted old Lost Cause doctrines. For instance, in some of the film’s more memorable scenes, Scarlett abuses the slave Prissy verbally and physically, threatening to “whip [her] hide off,” to sell her “South,” and

⁵⁵ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 33, 12; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 23; Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 182.

⁵⁶ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory (Les Lieux de mémoire)*, vol. 1, ed. Pierre Nora and trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xv, 12; Andreas Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathon Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), 199, quote from 200.

⁵⁷ Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*.

slapping her in the face. This at least somewhat nods at a realization that slavery was not always benign. In other scenes Scarlett and Rhett express disillusionment with the Confederacy and are critical of the Old South planter class.⁵⁸ These instances, however, were less subversions, but reflections of, and updates to, the version of the Lost Cause that white southerners accepted in light of the New South economy. Slavery may have been represented as a vestige of the past, but the core message of the Lost Cause remained firmly in tact in *Gone with the Wind*: white victimization and black inferiority that, when freed, produced societal chaos and violence. The message for Jim Crow America, in other words, was that white supremacist institutions such as slavery ameliorate society's woes.

Accepted as it was, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism became rooted as an important part of the larger American historical and memory tradition, as Gallagher alludes in the introduction to *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*.⁵⁹ Existing literature on *Gone with the Wind* as an important Lost Cause artifact does not account for the deep resonance of *Gone with the Wind* in relation to white American identity, however. I theorize that *Gone with the Wind*, itself, developed into a distinct national memory phenomenon. I further argue that *Gone with the Wind*, more than any

⁵⁸ During the Twelve Oaks barbeque, Gerald O'Hara makes two statements passively acknowledging the centrality of slavery to igniting the Civil War. This is a notable subversion of the Lost Cause in *Gone with the Wind* that readers and viewers largely ignored. It could also be argued that Gerald's acknowledgement was understood by 1930s and 1940s Americans in light of the aggressive position of the North that Mitchell and Selznick also depict. In other words, white Americans saw Gerald's comments as reflecting the idea that it was the Union who waged the war over slavery, ending the institution, freeing the slaves, and therefore causing the supposed chaos of Reconstruction. The central message of the Lost Cause would have then remained in tact. David O. Selznick, dir., *Gone with the Wind, seventieth anniversary edition* (Burbank, C.A.: Warner Bros, 2009) [orig. rel. 1939], DVD; Melvyn Stokes, *American History through Hollywood Film: From the Revolution to the 1960s* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 117-120.

⁵⁹ Gallagher, "Introduction," 4.

other cultural product, embedded its version of the Lost Cause into the white national memory during the twentieth century and became a fixture—whether celebrated directly or as the guiding lenticular—at America’s Civil War memory sites.

Gone with the Wind: A Memory Phenomenon

The history on which Mitchell based *Gone with the Wind* was highly contested for decades before the publication of her novel or the release of the film version. Scholars have shown that the Lost Cause social movement actively established mythic historical and cultural memories in the minds of white southerners, but that Unionist and Emancipationist memories of the war were also equally prevalent throughout the late-nineteenth century. As reconciliation was pursued on southern terms during the period of early twentieth-century Jim Crow, African American narratives of the war and emancipation were silenced and many of the Lost Cause’s assumptions about the Confederacy and the Civil War were increasingly accepted as the dominant memory of the Civil War era in white America.⁶⁰ As historians Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan argue, the Lost Cause was a collection of historical “truths” that white southerners readily accepted in the post-bellum era to reconcile the white traditionalist society of the Old South with their defeat in the Civil War. These truths appeared in emergent literary and historical traditions as well as memorialization campaigns and bereavement ceremonies, and, as Gallagher and Nolan contend, undoubtedly affected the ways in which southern and American audiences received *Gone with the Wind* since the

⁶⁰ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 2-3; Gallagher, “Introduction,” 2-3; David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 258.

narrative's popularity continued to perpetuate Lost Cause ideals and the prideful exceptionalism that white southerners reveled in.⁶¹

In the early-twentieth century, Lost Cause memory was a collective memory, as formulated by Maurice Halbwachs, that depended entirely on the social milieu and frameworks of the South and that captured a perceived collective past based on “the predominant thoughts of the society.”⁶² Collective memory during the modern era was often focused on nationalism, nation building, and connecting both to physical locations via “figures of memory,” or monuments, literature, architecture, and anthems that reference seemingly “pure,” incorruptible moments of the past cordoned off from the present.⁶³ Confederate monuments, veterans' reunions, and novels such as Thomas Dixon's pro-Ku Klux Klan series—which, to a large degree, influenced Mitchell's writing—are emblematic. Relying on close readings of the narratives of the film and novel while making assumptions about their continued popularity among the national public, film scholar Melvyn Stokes claims that *Gone with the Wind* implanted Lost Cause ideals into collective American consciousness, alluding to it as a figure of national memory.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Gallagher, “Introduction,” 2-3; Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth,” 11-30.

⁶² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

⁶³ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006); Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991); Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory (Les Lieux de mémoire)*, vol. 1, ed. Pierre Nora and trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Andreas Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, eds. Mieke Bal, Jonathon Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999); Jan Assman, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-133.

⁶⁴ Stokes, *American History through Hollywood Film*, 117.

Analysis of *Gone with the Wind* by Stokes, Gallagher and Nolan is valuable. I build on their insights by utilizing the scholarship of memory theorists and centering my analysis on the distinctive role mass cultural technologies served in twentieth century memory formation. That is, *Gone with the Wind* appeared on the heels of three important historical developments that memory scholars recognize as having recalibrated the phenomenon of memory: the emergence of technologies of mass culture such as cinema and the mass movement of people brought about by modernity and industrialization (new immigration from southern and eastern Europe to the United States and the migration of African Americans and upland whites to northern industrial centers). According to cultural historian Alison Landsberg, the rise of cinema and the mass movement of people in the twentieth century ruptured generational and community ties, rendering traditional, communicative modes of transmitting memory increasingly inadequate.⁶⁵ As central to my analysis of *Gone with the Wind* and the imposition of its Lost Causism on white America, I also take seriously the twentieth century's white supremacist retrenchment that was motivated by whites fearful response to the increasingly assertive African American struggle for equality.

New mass production technologies, argues Landsberg, disseminated images and historical narratives to large audiences at an unprecedented pace, which created the circumstances for the emergence of "prosthetic memory," a new form of public cultural memory. Like other forms of public and cultural collective memory, prosthetic memory comes not from a person's direct, lived experience, but instead from what they experience personally through a mass cultural technology as a reflection of an idea or

⁶⁵ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 1-2, 20.

event, especially if it pertains to the past. Landsberg, who talks primarily about film in this regard, grounds her theory in the psychoanalytical theories of Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Vivian Sobchack, Linda Williams, and Steven Shaviro who all view cinema as a mode of experiential collective reception that simultaneously maintains a sensuous, emotional, bodily component for each individual and their memories.⁶⁶ As Landsberg, quoting Shaviro, writes:

“the portability of cinematic images—the way people are invited to wear them prosthetically, to experience them in a bodily fashion—is both the threat and the allure of film. To emphasize this experiential, bodily aspect of spectatorship, Shaviro sets forth as his guiding principle that “cinematic images are not representations, but events.” This new form of experience...is crucial to the acquisition of prosthetic memories.”⁶⁷

According to Landsberg, prosthetic memory visually and experientially dramatizes a historical event that one did not live through in such a way that it can challenge the “essentialist logic of many group identities” by making the memories available to wider populations, and altering their behaviors and the way that they envision themselves in relation to those memories. Prosthetic memories are experienced by individuals within the public sphere via mass cultural media and, by extension of their somatic and emotional impact, can have a collective impact those that experience them. In this way, prosthetic memories are similar to the mediation of collective memory through what

⁶⁶ Ibid, 31-32; Miriam Hansen, “With Skin and hair’: Kracauer’s Theory of Film, Marseilles 1940,” *Critical Inquiry* 19 (1993): 458; Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3; Linda Williams, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess,” *Film Quarterly* 44 (1991): 3-13; Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 24.

⁶⁷ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 31-32; Landsberg quotes Shaviro from page 24 of *The Cinematic Body*.

Halbwachs calls “collective frameworks” (or “topographies”) that create “public spheres of memory” within social networks. However, modern public spheres of memory centered on mass media technologies such as cinema are not constrained by similar geographical, social, cultural, or political values, which was true for white America’s acceptance of *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause.⁶⁸ Citing film scholar Robert Burgoyne, Landsberg further believes that cinema might have become the preeminent shaper of the “collective imaginary in relation to history, and to nation.”⁶⁹

Landsberg builds on Burgoyne and Shaviro and argues that prosthetic memories are “actually worn on the body; these are sensuous memories produced by an *experience* of mass-mediated representations.”⁷⁰ In other words, Landsberg says that with the adoption of a prosthetic memory, older (possibly more authentic) memories are altered or replaced and the identity of the person holding those memories in the present is changed. And since memory makes up the identity of a person, the old identity and memory of that person can no longer be claimed by that person’s body in the present—since memories are, in fact, “domains of the present”—and only the new identity and memory of the person can be worn in a manner that affects their lives and the current reality around them.⁷¹ Furthermore, the primary distinction between prosthetic memory and other forms of memory is their commodification into experiential products of material and visual culture such as film. This transition makes it possible for people of various geographical,

⁶⁸ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 122; also see Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

⁶⁹ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 29; Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.

⁷⁰ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 20.

⁷¹ Alison Landsberg, “Prosthetic Memory: Total Recall and Blade Runner,” *Body and Society* 1 (1995): 191.

race, gender, and class backgrounds to adopt a relationship with a collective or cultural past experienced on screen as memory into their present knowledge bank.

Gone with the Wind contains two components of the prosthetic memory model. First, it has the ability to transport viewers into a time, place, and collective, cultural memory that they never experienced while, second, its commodification offers viewers the opportunity to interpret the narrative's meaning for themselves, often leading to varied opinions about the protagonists. However, since Lost Cause collective memory—itsself already embedded in the national consciousness at the time of the film's release—is inherent to *Gone with the Wind*, the southern history that it depicts was experienced collectively by twentieth-century white audiences as an authentic national memory, reaffirming Lost Causist beliefs about and lenticulars of the Old South and Civil War. In this way, those white audiences sutured themselves to the historical narrative of *Gone with the Wind* as a prosthetic that provided Lost Cause history and imagery to a collective memory that had already been accepted into the popular American understanding of the Civil War and Old South as a national memory. Only with *Gone with the Wind*'s mass mediation of the Lost Cause's Old South, the mythology was visualized and experienced on an emotional, somatic level, or, as Friedrich Nietzsche said, “burned in.”⁷² The collective experiential nature of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Cause turned cinemas and museums that borrowed its lenticulars into sites of national memory creation themselves, and America's Civil War past was imagined by the white nation in light of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Cause.

⁷² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969), 61. Nietzsche writes, “[i]f something is to stay in memory, it must be burned in.”

Landsberg argues that prosthetic memories are not necessarily accepted wholesale and therefore allow for the construction and contestation of social meaning based on the backgrounds and experiences of individuals. Landsberg's notion of prosthetic memory is valuable in its ability to allow for individual variation in a way that notions of collective memory and official national memory do not. Furthermore, her definition of prosthetic memory is valuable in its ability to account for a public memory that can serve counter-hegemonic ends whereas previous theories of memory tended to emphasize memory's role in reinforcing hegemonic views of the world. As such, prosthetic memory is a useful tool for analyzing not only *Gone with the Wind* but also rebukes to the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon, as in protest letters sent to director David Selznick by African American and Jewish American correspondents.

Landsberg does not dwell on the use of prosthetic memory for hegemonic purposes. Nor does she account for a cultural product as potently connected to earlier forms of collective memory and nationalism as *Gone with the Wind*, focusing instead on significant but less pervasive examples such as John Singleton's 1997 film *Rosewood* and Detroit's Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. While I find prosthetic memory a welcome tool for excavating counter-hegemonic interpretations that are then made available to consumers of varied backgrounds, as both *Rosewood* and Detroit's Museum do with regard to African American oppression, I believe that the counter-hegemonic possibilities of prosthetic memory were largely foreclosed for white audiences of *Gone with the Wind*, especially in the South. This dissertation illuminates the ways in which Landsberg's theory of prosthetic memory proves valuable even in cases when the scholarly goal does not lie in explanations for the propagation of counter-

hegemonic public memory and creates new knowledge about how a cultural artifact linked inherently to collective identity can function as both a product of mass culture and as a cultural memory site that creates, reinforces, and perpetuates national memory, history, and identity. Landsberg, like earlier cultural collective memory theorists, fails to account for a traditional memory site that creates community and regional identity while also functioning as a product of mass culture.

I further argue that it was precisely *Gone with the Wind*'s emergence at a moment when mass culture technologies began to transform collective memory into prosthetic memory that enabled the Lost Cause myth to enter the national memory beyond the South. Gallagher and Nolan briefly speculate as to the significance of *Gone with the Wind* for affirming a Lost Cause version of the South's history in the minds of white individuals with little, if any connection, to the region.⁷³ This dissertation seeks to document the transmission of Lost Cause ideology to white Americans beyond the South while also documenting counter-hegemonic protests and challenges to *Gone with the Wind* that highlight its role in black oppression. In this way, prosthetic memory allows my study to account for the mass dissemination of Lost Cause collective memory beyond the regional and national boundaries that usually define collective cultural memory. Additionally, the lens of prosthetic memory allows this study to value how the *Gone with the Wind* narrative is received by consumers and thus applied to those consumers' present memories and understanding of southern history. The reception of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Cause narrative can then be compared to the black counter-hegemonic narratives that continue to oppose it.

⁷³ Gallagher and Nolan, *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, 14.

Methodological Note on Reception Analysis

This dissertation tracks the reception of the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon at various historical moments from its inception to its contemporary position in the memory landscape. For the earliest decades of the phenomenon's popularity, I rely upon primary source evidence—most importantly reader and viewer reviews and audience testimony—to demonstrate the film's and novel's cultural resonance throughout the United States. I also examine protest letters to Selznick to show how African Americans, Jewish Americans, and civil rights groups related to the mythic histories of *Gone with the Wind*.

I detail the *Gone with the Wind* tourist industry beginning with the first accounts of tourists' traveling to Georgia in search of Tara. Tourist sites, including numerous plantations, museums, and exhibitions that celebrate *Gone with the Wind*, are used to highlight *Gone with the Wind* as a phenomenon much larger than a successful novel and film. The message of these sites is overwhelmingly positive with regards to *Gone with the Wind* narrative. I highlight in particular the histories of the most popular museums (Atlanta's Margaret Mitchell House and Museum, the Atlanta History Center, and the Clayton County *Gone with the Wind* Historic District), using original interviews conducted with the curators to document their success and popularity. I contrast the *Gone with the Wind* museums listed above with my observations at "The Making of *Gone with the Wind*" exhibition in Austin, Texas, (dates?) which did not celebrate the phenomenon and provided significant coverage to *Gone with the Wind* protests and its racial legacy. In order to highlight the national scope of *Gone with the Wind* celebration, I briefly address the Clark Gabel Museum in Ohio, particularly its Rhett Butler exhibit, as

well as other exhibitions and displays that regularly travel the country during important anniversaries.

This dissertation documents *Gone with the Wind* anniversary celebrations over the course of the twentieth century—which first appeared following the film’s initial release in 1941—to highlight the magnitude of the *GWTW* phenomenon, the frequency of the celebrations, and ways they have changed over time. In order to discern the contemporary importance and uses of *Gone with the Wind*, this project utilizes reception geography methodologies similar to those used by Janice Radway and Emily Satterwhite, examining user reviews from online markets of the anniversary edition rereleases of the novel (2011) and DVD, and Blu-ray (2009, 2014). Geographical differences are accounted for if the online marketplace displays the responder’s state or country or if a geographical or cultural identifier is provided in the text. I attempt to determine the reasons Americans purchase recent manifestations of *Gone with the Wind* and what has changed and stayed the same about its consumption throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. By doing so, this study, like Satterwhite’s, moves beyond early reception theory that focused on “hypothetical” or “ideal” readers of a cultural product. The chronologic, geographic, and social positions of contemporary and past consumers of *Gone with the Wind* will be taken seriously so as to better understand how *Gone with the Wind* resonates with those people based on their historically particular circumstances and moments.

The potentially democratizing structures of the internet allows lay readers to offer in-depth reviews, personal responses, and criticisms to cultural products. Online user reviews provide responses from consumers of various contemporary backgrounds who do

not merely seek to express admiration or disapproval toward the creator or product.⁷⁴ This type of forum for review, Satterwhite writes, attracts commentators who seek “to establish a public reputation for one’s self as a knowledgeable reader, or [have] a desire to affect the purchases, reading selections, and opinions of other readers,” making it an invaluable resource for a study that seeks to measure the contemporary relevance of Lost Cause-derived myths regarding slavery and the Civil War that continue to affect the memory logics that perpetuate harmful stereotypes about black slavery.⁷⁵ Reviews are not representative of all views, fans, and readers, but, in this case, the reviews do provide rationale and praise that may help explain the overwhelmingly approbation for *Gone with the Wind*. The preponderance among reviewers of enthusiasts, who may underrepresent negative or lukewarm perspectives, is not a limitation for this study, as enthusiasts are the primary subject of this dissertation.

By measuring *Gone with the Wind*’s reception and continued popularity via viewer reports, this study does not limit itself to examining the cultural products’ intended reading or the words of “trained” readers and viewers often viewed as universal figures.⁷⁶ Instead, it measures lay and trained readers alike within a historical lens that details the historical consequences of the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon and those affected by it, both positively and negatively. Additionally, as John Tulloch argues, researchers are able to obtain rich evidence from people and groups who may not be considered academic experts or professional critics whose responses are, to some degree,

⁷⁴ Emily Satterwhite, *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction since 1878* (Lexington, K.Y.: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 238.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 229-230; Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

informed by personal profit and marketing paradigms.⁷⁷ The reception of lay-readers thus affords researchers the ability to glimpse the political particularities and historical consciousness of the fan group through their interpretations of the text's or film's meaning.⁷⁸ This, in turn, reveals the cultural contexts in which the fans operate and, because such information is written inadvertently by both positive and negative reviewers, selection bias is less prevalent than with fan mail. Furthermore, as Barbara Ryan and Charles Johanningsmeier note, "e-fan writing can dramatically alter the relationship between fans and their objects of adulation by allowing fans to be acknowledged as producers rather than mere passive recipients of cultural messages" about the past.⁷⁹

Through tracking the reception geographies of *Gone with the Wind* over time, this methodology tracks the resonance of the Lost Cause mythology and how it has been experienced throughout the twentieth century, creating a better understanding of how the mythology—a founding mythology of white supremacy—has been perpetuated. In so doing, it is clear that the perpetuation of the Lost Cause has been as much an ideological phenomenon as a physical one, upheld by conservative beliefs about the South—and by extension America—that distort the history of black enslavement and the United States central historical moment. Through analyzing the historical trajectory of Lost Causism, it is clear that white nationalism, through its persistence in American founding ideologies,

⁷⁷ John Tulloch, *Watching Television Audiences: Cultural Theories and Methods* (London: Arnold, 2000), 202.

⁷⁸ Janice Radway, "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading," *Daedalus* 113 (1984): 51, 53, as quoted and cited in Satterwhite, *Dear Appalachia*, 11.

⁷⁹ Barbara Ryan and Charles Johanningsmeier, "Guest Editors' Introduction," *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 5 (2013): 5, quote on 4.

is a feature of the white American identity that is as much about continuity over time, as it is change.

While the media of novel and film are different, the various *Gone with the Wind* experiences contribute to the same prosthetic memory. That is, references to *Gone with the Wind* are usually in reference to a set of ideas, settings, characters, and a moment of history that are collectively agreed upon by fans and casual observers alike. The different mediums thus do not always need to be discussed as separate experiences since the prosthetic memory that they instill now references an entire experiential phenomenon that can be experienced by persons both inside and outside of the South. There are several notable plot differences between the novel and film versions. I attend to those differences if reviewers reference either the novel or film in particular. For instance, in the novel Scarlett conceives more children than in the film version, which had fewer supporting characters on the whole. Perhaps more important, David Selznick intentionally sanitized some of the more racist and sexist representations in the film so as to avoid controversy. This does not mean that the film is devoid of problematic racial myths and stereotypes, but the film does not contain reference to two rape scenes that involve Scarlett, one of which played into the offensive stereotype of the black beast rapist, or to the Ku Klux Klan scenes in the novel.

One methodological limitation is the fact that online reviews can change over time. As Barbara Ryan and Charles Johanningsmeier posit, reviewers can employ “second-thoughts-are-best deletions” and dates of the reviews can change due to

technical problems.⁸⁰ Screenshots of the reviews are used to protect against revisions and date discrepancies.

The *Gone with the Wind* Phenomenon, 1936-2016

Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* is the most complete version of the Lost Cause mythology ever assembled. The novel begins in the same Old South that writers of southern local color fiction and plantation literature had long romanticized and that white southerners came to believe once actually existed. Mitchell's Old South was complete with the idyll plantation, Tara, southern belles, dashing soon-to-be Confederates, and numerous loyal slaves, most notably the O'Hara's house slave, Mammy. As the plot turns to what is supposed to be a romance, the war comes and the entire southern society is embroiled in the tragedy. Confederate soldiers are rendered ragged, the field slaves were emancipated, Atlanta burns along with the O'Hara's cotton fields, and all innocence in the Old South is lost; the old civilization gone with the wind.

In the second half of Mitchell's novel, influenced heavily by the work of Thomas Dixon, the Civil War is over and Scarlett endures the "dark days" of Reconstruction: the Yankees have imposed martial law on the state of Georgia and southern society is decaying due to black freedom and carpetbagger rule. Scarlett, who travels alone through this society to the mill, is nearly raped by a criminal black man, an event that causes the Ku Klux Klan raid on the Shantytown to heroically avenge the violation of Scarlett's white womanhood. Mitchell ends Scarlett's story as one of Lost Cause-esque resilience

⁸⁰ Barbara Ryan and Charles Johanningsmeier, "Guest Editors' Introduction: Fans and the Objects of Their Devotion," *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 5 (2013): 4.

and ultimate triumph over Reconstruction by returning her home to Tara, her family's plantation, to rebuild and take on the uncertain days to come.

White readers in the 1930s proved eager to consume Mitchell's version of the Lost Cause that chronicled the romance of the Old South, the tragedy of the Civil War, and the "dark days" of Reconstruction. Chapter one details the overwhelming positive reception of the novel that, unlike *The Birth of a Nation*, was enormously popular across the entire United States. One million copies of *Gone with the Wind* sold in just six months and reviewers primarily praised its Lost Cause history and true-to-life characters (mostly they praised the believability of Mitchell's "happy darky" slaves).⁸¹ Even white reviewers critical of the novel's love story between Rhett and Scarlett applauded the supposed accuracy that Mitchell was able to instill in the historical South. As one reviewer in the *New York Times* put it, "[t]here [was] certainly no Mason-Dixon boundary about the book."⁸²

Gone with the Wind proved so popular among white American readers that Selznick International Pictures purchased the novel's film rights in less than one month of its publication. Producer David O. Selznick stayed mostly true to Mitchell's source material, only muting some of the novel's most racially harsh aspects. The movie's premiere at Loew's Grand Theater in Atlanta on December 15, 1939, was a grand Lost Cause spectacle: following multiple days of celebration, the theater house was decorated with facades that made it look like Tara and welcomed thousands of white guests to take

⁸¹ "Reviewer Points Out Motive Behind 'Gone with the Wind': Sees Author in Subtle Attempt to Justify New Form of Slavery," *Chicago Defender*, March, 13, 1937, 19.

⁸² Edward Weeks, "What Makes a Book a Bestseller? The Phenomenal Success of 'Gone with the Wind' Prompts Some Reflections on Popular Novels of Yesterday and Today," *New York Times*, December 12, 1936, BR2.

in the experience. Notably, the *Gone with the Wind* premiere was segregated, allowing only white viewers into the theater unless they were African American servers or entertainers dressed in slave garb. The scholar Grace Elizabeth Hale calls the event the “pinnacle of race making” and the embodiment of “the contemporary universalization of southern segregation.”⁸³

Inside Loew’s cinema, the screening provided white American viewers an experience of a new mass cultural media technology that affected the impact and resonance of the film itself. The presence of *Gone with the Wind*’s mythology across the screen allowed white audiences already sympathetic to Lost Cause collective memory to experience virtually the romance of the Old South and the tragedy of the Civil War. The images and emotions felt during the experience seared Mitchell’s and Selznick’s Lost Cause into collective historical consciousness, creating a prosthetic collective memory that homogenized the complete Lost Cause narrative around *Gone with the Wind*. Millions watched *Gone with the Wind* across the country as the film proved more popular than the novel, which itself remained the most popular novel in the world. The overwhelming consensus in white America was that *Gone with the Wind* was the best movie ever made, but not for its narrative plot. *Gone with the Wind*, the reviewers and audiences were adamant, was a historical masterpiece that told the true story of the South. Viewers often reported that they were most moved by the appearance of the Confederate soldiers and the fall of Atlanta. In an era with few of the war generation living, *Gone with the Wind* fully reconciled the lingering ideological divisions between the North and South

⁸³ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998); Ivan Evans, *Cultures of Violence: Racial Violence and the Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 248.

concerning the Civil War. For new generations, the Lost Cause became not only about southern white victimization, and ultimate southern triumph over “dark days,” but also of reconciliation in the face of a new challenge to white supremacy in the form of a developing black civil rights movement. The *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon finally answered Jubal Early’s demand to control the national memory of the war with the southern perspective, and to preserve it for future generations.

Gone with the Wind’s popularity among white American audiences during the 1930s cannot be divorced from the resonance of its fantasy version of the Old South in which peaceful race relations were maintained by a benign institution of slavery. Outside of the theater and the confines of Mitchell’s pages, Jim Crow racial tensions remained and white Americans feared that the decade’s losses had damaged their standing within society. Those white Americans therefore turned to the Lost Cause to understand their collective past and their place within the nation. White Americans, no matter where they lived, internalized *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause to not only understand their own place within that history, but to also justify their resistance to any gains that African Americans might make toward racial equality during a moment of national economic distress. The Lost Cause, as it was homogenized by *Gone with the Wind*, reconciled national memory and national identity. Through *Gone with the Wind*, the Lost Cause became the white national memory of the Old South, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, homogenizing the memory in American consciousness via the cinematic experience of *Gone with the Wind*’s complete Lost Cause mythology. *Gone with the Wind*, in other words, became an American national origin mythology that made sense of one of

America's original sins, slavery, and the central, revolutionary event of American history that destroyed it, the Civil War.

Following *Gone with the Wind's* record-breaking performance at the 1940 Academy Awards, the film did not fade in the public imagination. In chapter two, I cover the long-term impact that both *Gone with the Wind* as novel and film had on subsequent writers of southern historical fiction and on Hollywood. In each case, writer and producer tried for decades to recreate the success of *Gone with the Wind*, with more than a few attempts that tried to reuse the same formula of *Gone with the Wind's* assumptions about southern history and culture but with different character names. Ultimately, none succeeded, but *Gone with the Wind's* Lost Causism became the historical narrative that any producer of southern culture followed and the Lost Cause remained a fixture of Hollywood for decades. Importantly, however, the reason that all novels and films that were created in *Gone with the Wind's* shadow failed to live up to its popularity was not due to any waning of Lost Cause sentiment or American interest in Civil War history from the southern perspective. They failed, quite simply, because *Gone with the Wind* never went away.

In movie houses across the country, *Gone with the Wind* has been screened with regularity from the 1941 to the present. The first major return of the film was in 1954 for its much-celebrated fifteenth anniversary, the same year that the Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. In other words, during the same year that the black civil rights movement forced the U.S. government to rule racial segregation unconstitutional, millions of Americans flocked to movie theaters to experience the racial tranquility of

Gone with the Wind's slavery and the destruction brought about by Emancipation. As a national founding mythology, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism only continued to reconfirm the white supremacist ideologies that underpinned white Americans' national identities and provided a safe place to convene with their national past.

As the civil rights movement grew stronger, *Gone with the Wind* returned again with a national release in 1961 during the nation's Civil War centennial celebrations. The centennial celebration was deeply troubled by an insistence on Civil War history that celebrated the Lost Cause during the civil rights movement. But there was no trouble for white Americans about *Gone with the Wind*, and the film's rerelease became the most successful feature of the entire celebration. More importantly, however, *Gone with the Wind* once again became the most popular and important movies in American culture following the urban rebellions of the late 1960s.

It is hard to fathom that MGM executives didn't know what they were doing when they rereleased *Gone with the Wind* to the Hollywood Roadshow circuit after the racial violence in the hundreds of American cities in 1967, most notably Detroit. But despite not having an outright admission from MGM, the company did profit mightily off of white audiences eager to convene with *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism during the violent years of the 1967-72 Roadshow. Millions of white Americans, mostly living in the suburbs after fleeing the cities and taking their resources with them, lined up to watch *Gone with the Wind* at special engagement screenings at elevated prices. According to Hollywood film historian Peter Krämer, *Gone with the Wind* was "in almost every conceivable way...the most outstanding film in American culture during the period of 1967-76," grossing millions in box office sales and rentals. Adjusted for inflation,

Krämer argues, *Gone with the Wind*'s rerelease might qualify as one of the top fourteen New Hollywood films.⁸⁴ Throughout the rereleases white reviewers, like the audiences, continued to overwhelmingly praise *Gone with the Wind* for its Lost Causism and as a means to experience the bygone days of the Old South.

Gone with the Wind's amazing run on the Hollywood Roadshow circuit was fueled almost entirely by suburban whites who fled American cities during the violent years of urban unrest during the civil rights movement. MGM, happy with their profits, used the same logic a decade later when they profited off of white grievance by selling the TV rights of *Gone with the Wind* to NBC, which in turn premiered the film on the small screen only months in advance of the January 1977 release of the *Roots* miniseries. *Gone with the Wind* premiered on television to astronomical ratings with more than 33 million American televisions tuned to NBC, which, at the time, was the most successful premiere for a film on television in TV history.

As important as its rereleases and influence on subsequent films have been, the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon does not merely consist of novels and film rolls. *Gone with the Wind* consumer products also became immensely popular immediately after the film premiered in 1939 and are still traded on contemporary collectible markets today. As I cover in chapter three, the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon also encompasses an entire *Gone with the Wind* tourism market that includes many of the South's most popular sites of plantation tourism.

Gone with the Wind tourism began in 1936 as a result of the popularity of Mitchell's novel. At first, white tourists from across the country flooded into Georgia in

⁸⁴ Peter Krämer, *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 46.

search of the fictional Tara and Twelve Oaks plantations. As a result of the influx of tourists, the city of Atlanta and its surrounding counties developed sites for Civil War tourism in the image of *Gone with the Wind*, going so far as to renovate and relocate old plantation homes to serve as approximations of Tara for tourists. Even sites of plantation tourism that predated the publication of Mitchell's novel—such as the Natchez, Mississippi, pilgrimage or the sites at the Stone Mountain Confederate monument—benefited from the national exposure that the novel and Selznick's film gave to the Lost Cause. As *Gone with the Wind* reconciled lingering white ideological divisions about the Civil War, and, in the process, homogenized the white collective memory as it reached millions of eager viewers in American theaters, white imaginings of the Old South became inseparable from *Gone with the Wind* representation. Due to *Gone with the Wind*'s immense popularity throughout the twentieth century—largely driven by white Americans' turning to the Lost Cause to explain their place within the nation during civil rights era—the southern plantation tourism industry boomed.

Sites of historical tourism have power. According to historical geographer Steven Hoelscher, quoting fellow historical geographer Karen E. Till, “[l]andscapes and material artifacts of place—monuments, memorials, and museums—anchor memory and make it ‘user-friendly,’” creating a “spatial context within which ‘stories and rituals of citizenship are performed, enacted, understood, and contested.’”⁸⁵ These “theaters of memory”—that often include costumed docents, historical reenactments, and ritualistic celebrations of the

⁸⁵ Steven Hoelscher, “Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93 (2003): 661; Karen E. Till, “reimagining National Identity: ‘Chapters of Life at the German Historical Museum in Berlin,’” in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*, eds. Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 273.

Old South—as Hoelscher argues, “are reflexive instruments of cultural expression and power in which a group creates its identity by telling a story about itself” and “serve as a chief way in which societies remember.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, memory scholars argue that Americans consider museums and historic sites to be “the most reliable sources of information about the past” and seem “to believe that they could have an authentic and undistorted experiences in places where history happened, especially if they were presented with authentic artifacts.”⁸⁷

In no place in the United States has the performance and (re)production of a distinct American white identity—of whiteness itself—been more pronounced than in the South.⁸⁸ And as the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon developed throughout the twentieth century—igniting plantation and Civil War tourism and incorporating them into its fold—the performance of collective white American memory that informs white identity itself became inextricably linked to *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism. The South, its place in American history, and its population to a large extent were imagined through the lens of *Gone with the Wind* as heritage. To put another way, *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causim became the *de facto* imagining of the South’s place in American history, and white Americans used its white nationalist mythology, its racial stereotypes, and its false assumptions about the past to make sense of, and to resist, the black fight for equality. Plantation tourism remains popular to this day, more often than not forwarding the

⁸⁶ Hoelscher, “Making Place, Making Race,” 661.

⁸⁷ Jennifer W. Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and the Politics of Memory* (Fayetteville, A.R.: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 16; Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 105-106.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 662.

romantic, homogenous Lost Cause experience of white wealth and white victimization during the Civil War that *Gone with the Wind* popularized across the country, while saying little about the reality of slavery.

As *Gone with the Wind*'s *de facto* imagining of the South's past was represented over Sothern heritage products throughout the twentieth century, *Gone with the Wind* itself remained ubiquitous, appearing in regular rereleases to theaters, reissues of the novel, in commercial consumer products, and in sites of southern heritage tourism. In the Atlanta area, the celebration of southern heritage manifested in regular and widely popular direct celebrations of *Gone with the Wind*, and of the so-called "elegance of the antebellum South," giving rise to what historian Jennifer W. Dickey calls the "marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* memory."⁸⁹ According to Dickey, Atlanta's marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* today is centered on the Margaret Mitchell House and Museum; Clayton County's *Gone with the Wind* historic district, which most notably includes the Road to Tara Museum; and Atlanta's numerous *Gone with the Wind*-themed businesses and buildings. Atlanta's market place for *Gone with the Wind* memory developed out of several attempts to capitalize on the phenomenon—some of them outrageous—and was to a large degree curated by an emergent cult of *Gone with the Wind* fans and collectors called the Windies. Windies today are the driving force behind *Gone with the Wind* museums and celebrations and have extended the marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* memory across the country to the private displays of *Gone with the Wind* artifacts and memorabilia that they own and operate.

Toward the twenty-first century, Americans came to understand, at least verbally, that certain aspects of the Lost Cause and its most powerful artifact, *Gone with the Wind*,

⁸⁹ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 98-100.

were problematic nostalgias that didn't accurately represent the historical Old South. Much of the credit for this is due to the popularity of the miniseries *Roots* (1977) and the Hollywood film *Glory* (1989) which exposed Americans to more accurate representations of slavery and stoked an interest in African American history and genealogy. But as discussed above, *Gone with the Wind* and the overly romantic heritage tourism that it more than anything else had developed remained popular despite acknowledgements of inaccuracy and even racism at those sites. *Gone with the Wind's* Lost Causism thus became not only a *de facto* imagining of a historical era, but also a *de facto* imagining of a national founding myth that many came to see as inaccurate, or overly simplified, while still feeling some close affinity to it. The Lost Cause, in other words, came to have more in common with national myths such as the Thanksgiving story—a gross distortion of the relationship between European colonists and Native Americans that is celebrated annually—that is woven into the fabric of white American national identity, despite many Americans' understanding that it is inaccurate. Those mythologies thus still resonate with the white Americans—through their artifacts, celebrations, and spatial performances—fulfilling white America's need for a sense of place and, as per the Lost Cause, a false sense of white victimization and superiority that has been continuously challenged by African Americans since the end of the Civil War. White Americans have continued to invoke the mythology of the Lost Cause consistently to undermine those efforts and the fight for black equality.

Like the Confederate battle flag, "Dixie," and Confederate soldier monuments, *Gone with the Wind* became an artifact of a national heritage, or the material components of the mythology that supports what political theorist Michael Billig calls a banal

nationalism. According to Billig, nationalism remains a foundational structure in the contemporary order of things, but no longer needs to be reinforced by regular celebrations, symbols, or national crises. Instead, nationalism has become a banal process of identity reinforcement, allowing modern subjects to internalize the ideologies of their nation without needing to be constantly reminded of their national place. The battle flag on Confederate monuments are the most notable examples of performed banal nationalism, as they have existed on the Southern landscape—and in some cases beyond—for decades without question, reinforcing a sense of place and identity without a need for ritual.⁹⁰ Unlike the battle flag and Confederate monuments, however, *Gone with the Wind* is not merely a much celebrated artifact, but the narrative that defined white southern, and American, Civil War memory. *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism thus defined the most important historical moment in the South's past, providing a homogenized white nationalist memory of the Old South, Civil War, and Reconstruction that was transferred to Lost Cause, nationalistic artifacts and rituals that continue to resonate in the white American consciousness, despite acknowledgement of inaccuracies in the mythology. *Gone with the Wind*, in other words, is the most important Lost Cause artifact of the twentieth century, perhaps ever, as the phenomenon defined the Lost Cause, homogenized its imagining, and imbued its ideology throughout white America as a function of identity that justifies and maintains a belief in white supremacy, and that offers regular communion and remains regularly celebrated. Even if *Gone with the Wind* were to be outlawed, all of its copies burned, its damaging effect—through the Lost Cause founding mythology that remains a part of white national identity and continue to

⁹⁰ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism (Theory, Culture, and Society)* (New York: Sage, 1995), 8, 37.

resonate—is already done. *Gone with the Wind* helped the Lost Cause exceed everything that Jubal Early knew possible.

Despite the banality of Lost Causist symbols that have for so long gone overlooked by white Americans, when the sanctity of those symbols is challenged, a nationalistic response is provoked. Most recently, the removal of Confederate soldier statues has led to campaigns to save them, sometimes resulting in demonstrations of violence, and to the erection of new monuments and battle flags on private property. In other words, just as white Americans in the 1960s and 1970s responded to challenges to white supremacy, and its foundational mythology, by turning to *Gone with the Wind*, many white Americans today still resist any efforts to delegitimize pro-Confederate symbols. Chapter four examines the place of *Gone with the Wind* within this twenty-first century moment when Black Live Matter and other civil rights groups have created a movement that challenges white supremacist symbols in public spaces.

In 2014, Selznick's film version of *Gone with the Wind* celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary. That the movie has achieved seventy-five years of relevancy is an amazing feat itself. The anniversary was celebrated like other recent anniversaries—with screenings, TV specials, and a special collector's edition rerelease on DVD and Blu-ray. The collector's edition medium, too, is important to understanding how contemporary consumers interpret *Gone with the Wind*, as it comes in velvet packaging and contains numerous features and video extras that scholars of paratexts argue influence how users understand the product.⁹¹ Most notably, the packaging itself demonstrates that the film is exceptional in some way, and supposedly contains something of value. However, the

⁹¹ Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris, 1975), 45; Gerard Genette and Marie Maclean, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 261-272.

video extras go many steps further and include a documentary about the Old South produced in the 1940s. The documentary follows a strict Lost Cause interpretation of southern history, including the idea that the slaves were content in their positions as field hands and house servants. The extras also mostly overlook the black actors of *Gone with the Wind*, one of whom—Hattie McDaniel—was the first African American actor to win an Academy Award. Celebratory footage of the film’s Jim Crow premiere at Loew’s Grand Theater is also included.

Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority of twenty-first century reviewers maintain that *Gone with the Wind* is a great film and novel, whether they are new fans or old. However, reviewers of the anniversary editions follow a trend similar to the proponents of the *Gone with the Wind* tourism industry and the Windies at large: that *Gone with the Wind* is problematic for its racism, but that its racism can be overlooked so that the phenomenon can still be celebrated. This sensibility was not only common among reviewers, but was also reinforced by a video extra titled “Old South, New South,” a documentary by Gary Leva that criticizes the racist elements of the Lost Cause mythology while simultaneously maintaining that there is something redeemable about white southern national identity, completely failing to understand that the identity itself was built upon black exclusion and a mythical southern lenticular of the romantic South. Apologetic reviews such as this one from 2016 were common: “Yes, the blacks are shown in a childish manner and are degraded, but we can’t discredit a book because of it or we lose sight of the history of our past.” The words of this reviewer, who also called it

“[o]ne of my favorites,” again demonstrate that one need not believe that *Gone with the Wind* accurately represents a real historical period for its imagery to still resonate.⁹²

Ardent Lost Causers are still a definite presence among fans of *Gone with the Wind*, though there are far fewer pointed Lost Cause reviews as there were in earlier decades. Many of the contemporary reviewers of *Gone with the Wind* are apologists for the phenomenon’s racism, even going so far as to call Mitchell’s slave caricature’s “tasteful” or a “necessary evil to tell a story about the Old South.”⁹³ One of the most disturbing trends among contemporary fans was an increase in *Gone with the Wind* purchases and reviews following the murder of nine African Americans by a white supremacist in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015. Defenders of *Gone with the Wind* in the wake of the white terrorist attack echo current defenders of Confederate soldier monuments, often citing the pitfalls of “political correctness,” a favorite contemporary white supremacist dog whistle, and claiming that they are the real victims of oppression. “I wanted to make sure I had a copy in case the hysterics tried to ban the rest of anything having to do with *our* Civil War history...GWTW is an all time favorite [emphasis mine],” wrote one reviewer less than two months after the attack.⁹⁴ Another Lost Cause defender called *Gone with the Wind* “Not politically correct by today’s standards, but accurate historically.”⁹⁵

⁹² Dorothy J. Green, “One of my favorites,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, February 19, 2016.

⁹³ K. McCain, “Superb and Sublime,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, Superb and Sublime, June 29, 2013.

⁹⁴ Texas librarian, “Long time favorite,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 5, 2015.

⁹⁵ David J. Cahill, “The Classic of classic movies,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, April 27, 2013.

As Confederate monuments come down, and as white supremacist symbols are increasingly challenged, many white Americans are feeling the challenge to their nationalism, to their white identity, and are responding with resistance and a renewed effort to control the legitimacy of their historical memory and to repel the perceived attacks on nation. However, most will not admit freely that their identities are built atop a vicious strain of white nationalism, and its most important founding mythologies, often framing themselves as the victims. For white supremacists following the election of the nation's first black president, and at a moment of heightened white fear and grievance about an increased browning of the American population, a belief in white victimization at the hands of black efforts to secure equality and safety is the Lost Cause's most resonate myth in the twenty-first century, just as it was in the 1930s when whites grappled with the poverty of the Great Depression and heightened racial tensions. And just like it was in the late-1960s as white Americans convened with *Gone with the Wind* as violence swept southern cities and they fled, with their wealth and resources, to the suburbs. Despite having their boots on the necks of minorities, and controlling most of the wealth in the nation, white victimization is a narrative that still resonates with whites fearful that American will no longer be a white supremacist nation.

African American Resistance to the *Gone with the Wind* Phenomenon

Scholars generally point to the NAACP protests of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915 as an example of black resistance to white supremacy in popular culture. However, little scholarly attention has been paid to black resistance to *Gone with the Wind*, the Lost Cause's most important and powerful artifact. Existing scholarship on black protest to

Gone with the Wind has mischaracterized it as insignificant. The reality, however, is that black resistance to *Gone with the Wind* was a major flashpoint and has been sustained, though the struggle against the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon has failed to put much of a dent in its influence.

Resistance to *Gone with the Wind*'s racism first manifested in the American Jewish community when actor Hyman Meyer wrote to Selznick International Studios calling *Gone with the Wind* a "Negro baiting film that will only encourage such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Legion to continue their terrorism and violations of civil rights." Meyer, writing a little more than one year after the German Nazi Party released the propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*, understood that racist imagery sanctioned violence against oppressed groups. He cautioned that *Gone with the Wind* would "be welcomed by the Fascists and Nazis of this country."⁹⁶ The Social Justice Commission of the Conference of American Rabbis voiced its concern shortly thereafter.

African American civil rights organizations also followed Meyer's lead, including the Negro Youth Congress and the NAACP, led by Walter White, who recommended that the production team take steps to avoid overly "confederatized" southern histories but failed to mobilize any significant protests to *Gone with the Wind*'s ultimate release.⁹⁷ The black press—led by the *Chicago Defender*, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, and Earl Morris of the *Pittsburgh Courier*—however, achieved real results in 1939 by pressuring Selznick with protest letters, editorials comparing the Selznick International to Hitler, and the

⁹⁶ Hyman Meyer to Selznick International Pictures, October 29, 1936, Selznick Collection.

⁹⁷ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Letter from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to David O. Selznick, June 28, 1938, W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

threat of boycotts. Selznick, not wanting to provoke anything like the NAACP's *Birth of a Nation* protests in 1915, invited Morris to his studios and muted the harshest racism from Mitchell's novel, including removal of the racial slur "Nigger" and all direct references to the KKK. Morris, seeing that his efforts helped achieve real change to the *Gone with the Wind* script, returned to Pittsburgh and declared that production of the film could continue with his blessing. Morris' resistance to *Gone with the Wind* never went far enough, and his insistence to tone down Mitchell's racism had an unforeseen consequence: his protests made Selznick's film more palatable to popular audiences, contributing to its power by making *Gone with the Wind*'s racism more acceptable to white viewers ever since. Perhaps if Selznick's film was as racist as Mitchell's source material, then *Gone with the Wind* would carry the same stench as *The Birth of a Nation* and contemporary viewers wouldn't be so readily apologetic about its anti-black stereotypes.

Unlike the mainstream press, which was extraordinarily high on Mitchell's and Selznick's work, black writers regularly published anti-*Gone with the Wind* editorials and negative reviews, often worrying, as the black historian Lawrence D. Reddick wrote, that *Gone with the Wind* could come to "represent the true account in fictionalized form of what actually happened [in the Civil War]." ⁹⁸ Black communist leader William L. Patterson, writing for the *Chicago Defender*, had his finger on the pulse of the developing *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon: "In glorifying the slavery of yesterday [*Gone with the Wind*] has deliberately thrown down the gage of battle to those who are seeking to advance democracy today." . Paterson similarly proclaimed that *Gone with the Wind* "lies

⁹⁸ Lawrence D. Reddick, "Review of Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South and *Gone with the Wind*," *Journal of Negro History* 22 (1937): 365-366.

about the Civil War” and “martyred the southern plantation owner.” Referencing the popularity of *Gone with the Wind* among whites outside of the Jim Crow South, Patterson complained that, “[i]n martyring this relic of barbarism ‘Gone with the Wind’ not only ‘morally justifies’ the slave breeding pen...it has scorned upon and desecrated the love that democratic white America has for freedom and truth.” Patterson further noticed that the release of such propaganda has always been intentional and that racial division has always upheld America’s white supremacist capitalist system, especially following the economic distress of the Great Depression. “The Klan is riding,” he wrote, “[c]an anyone doubt ? that its release was a conscious matter...aimed at the white sharecropper, the jobless white workers, the poverty stricken... ‘Gone with the Wind’ is aimed at American Democracy.” Patterson and the *Chicago Defender* called for protests: “‘Gone with the Wind’ is a warning that cannot go unheeded.”⁹⁹

When *Gone with the Wind* opened in Chicago on January 25, 1940, Patterson led protests at multiple theaters, which continued into February, and forced screenings of the film on the South Side to be cancelled. Picketers carried signs that read “Gone with the Wind Hangs the Free Negro” and “Negros Were Never Docile Slaves.” Similar anti-*Gone with the Wind* protests were organized in Washington D.C.; Canton, Ohio; and New York City where protestors disrupted white patrons eager to experience the Lost Cause of *Gone with the Wind*. Under the apartheid conditions of the Jim Crow South, significant southern protests to the film were not organized, but the protests continued in Los Angeles at the 1940 Academy Awards on February 29. African Americans protested *Gone with the Wind* as long as it was in theaters on its premiere run, and demanded that

⁹⁹ William L. Patterson, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Lies about the Civil War, It Glorifies Slavery, Sons of Rebels Cheer It, A Farce on Democracy,” *Chicago Defender*, January 6, 1940, 15.

Hattie McDaniel throw away her Academy Award for the derogatory stereotype Mammy, the only role for which Hollywood would honor an African American actor.

Patterson understood, almost a century ago, that *Gone with the Wind* was an extraordinary piece of white nationalist propaganda that sanctions racial suppression. He understood that resistance to it was vital. However, as the African American civil rights movement grew more robust throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, direct protests to rereleases of *Gone with the Wind* were virtually nonexistent as the movement targeted segregation, policing, and other discriminatory policies and social practices. Picketers outside of Baltimore's Hippodrome theater in the fall of 1967 was the only direct protest to the film during the civil rights era. Black academics and journalists, however, continued to challenge *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism in the press, calling on authors and filmmakers to pursue counter-narratives. In 1975, Antiguan-American writer Jamaica Kincaid directly challenged *Gone with the Wind* in an essay entitled "If Mammies Ruled the World," lambasting Mitchell's most iconic characters and inverting Lost Cause white nationalist mythology. "The Old South remains one of the most vivid examples of why white people in America won't be able to look themselves clearly in the eyes for a long time," she wrote. "White southerners have always appeared to me to be the savages of the North American continent...Scarlett and Rhett and Melanie and Ashley were not civilized people." Most punctually, Kincaid proclaimed, "my God, did the Old South ever need destroying."¹⁰⁰ Kincaid is right: no matter how sizable a tragedy

¹⁰⁰ Jamaica Kincaid, "If Mammies Ruled the World," in *The Village Voice Anthology (1956-1980): Twenty-five Years of Writing from The Village Voice*, ed. Geoffrey Stokes (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1982), 55.

the Civil War's slaughter became between 1861 and 1865, the destruction of the Old South was justice.

Kincaid's inversion of *Gone with the Wind* was a powerful rebuke to Lost Causism that influenced another African American author, Alice Randall, who published the novel *The Wind Done Gone* in 2001. Classified as a parody following a lengthy legal battle with the Margaret Mitchell Estate, Randall's novel tells a story set in the *Gone with the Wind* universe from the perspective of slaves, who instead of being passive and loyal hold all of the power and cunningly survive on the plantation under the noses of their white masters. Randall's novel—like the work of authors such as Kincaid, Toni Morrison, and Ida B. Wells before her—follows in the tradition of inverting popular narratives so as to create a counter-narrative that challenges the logics of the hegemon. Randall's novel did not go unnoticed—she was taken to court for damaging *Gone with the Wind*'s reputation—but inspired significant backlash from *Gone with the Wind* fans. At one speaking engagement at Atlanta's Margaret Mitchell House and Museum—itsself a venue that was burned down twice during its renovation, likely by the *Gone with the Wind* resistance—Randall's appearance was met with hundreds of protestors, some of whom donned Confederate uniforms and carried picket signs, one of which read “The Wind Will Always Blow in Atlanta.”¹⁰¹ As Randall learned first-hand, plenty of people still experienced any challenge to *Gone with the Wind* as a personal attack, especially when it happened on their sacred ground at the Margaret Mitchell House. The events surrounding Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* were furthermore a litmus test for the popularity and resonance of *Gone with the Wind* at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

¹⁰¹ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 162-163.

As the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon grew throughout the twentieth century, and as its popularity in white America remained steady even into the twenty-first century, African Americans resisted its narrative and consistently attempted to undermine its power. From Patterson's direct protests in the 1940s, to the inversions of Kincaid and Randall, and to the black Atlantans who resisted the establishment of the Margaret Mitchell House and Museum in the city, including two counts of arson on the building itself, the fight against the Lost Cause's most powerful artifact is a vital component of the story of *Gone with the Wind*, and any attempt to understand the phenomenon is incomplete without it. The resistance to *Gone with the Wind*, along with other white supremacist symbols, must continue.

Chapter 1: Origins of—and Resistance to—the *Gone with the Wind* Phenomenon in Memory and Popular Culture, 1936-1940

Margaret Mitchell published *Gone with the Wind* in 1936. Her 1,037 page romantic opus about the South tells the story of Scarlett O’Hara, the daughter of a wealthy planter family in Georgia, who endures loss and the destruction of a slave society during the Civil War. To research her book, Mitchell recalled afternoons as a child spent listening to her former-Confederate relatives and family friends as they, as she said, “refought the Civil War.” Mitchell remembered the former Confederates recall such victimizing narratives as “the burning and looting of Atlanta and the way the refugees from the town crowded the roads and trains to Macon,” both of which were images that had long been represented in the South’s Lost Cause veneration of the Confederacy and the Old South. Mitchell continued, “Certainly I could never have written my book without my memories of those old men.”¹⁰²

I understand Mitchell’s story in *Gone with the Wind* primarily as a product of a collective national memory that appeared in the wake of two dynamic memory transformations: the hegemonic establishment of national memory during the late-nineteenth century and the development of long-form, colorized cinema in the early-twentieth century. According to historian Michael Kammen, American memory as a whole changed in the late-nineteenth century as art (literature, performative celebrations and sites of national memory such as monuments) replaced religion as the primary means for Americans to understand their past. This transformation has been echoed by other memory scholars such as Pierre Nora, Eric Hobsbawm, and Andreas Huyssen who collectively argue that sites of national memory became much more prevalent as late-

¹⁰² Medora Perkerson, “Interview with Margaret Mitchell,” WSB Radio, Atlanta, Georgia, July 3, 1936.

nineteenth century Americans searched for a sense of “origin and stability” during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, to borrow Huyssen’s words, that provided a “depth of time and of space in a rapidly changing world that was experienced as transitory, uprooting and unstable.” As these theorists suggest, this new form of memory cultivated a sense of historical continuity and allegiance to the past that grounded national subjects within the nation itself, providing them with an identity reified on the landscape and in art. These memories, in other words, stressed white national solidarity—perceived through a belief in a national past that may have never existed, as was the case with Mitchell’s family members—and assumed primacy over non-nationalistic modes of remembrance, which since the twentieth century have been experienced and homogenized in collective consciousness through film.¹⁰³

The Lost Cause generation clearly imparted their romantic Lost Cause memories of benign slavery, “happy darky” slaves, and white southern victimization during the Civil War on to Mitchell. This transmission also occurred during the period of reconciliation that sought to mend lingering divisions between the North and South. According to historian David Blight, it was a “new nationalism that fueled the reunion,” although it left behind African Americans and positive memories of emancipation for the

¹⁰³ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 12, 33; Pierre Nora, “The Era of Commemorations,” in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, Vol. III, Lawrence Kritzman, ed., Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 609-638; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-16; Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Anton Kaes, “History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination,” *History and Memory* 2 (1990): 111-129; Quote from Andreas Huyssen, “Monumental Seduction,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Mieke Bal, Jonathon Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, eds. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), 199.

Lost Cause and its racism.¹⁰⁴ As Blight writes, “the sections reconciled as the races divided...[and] a segregated society demanded a segregated historical memory.”¹⁰⁵ The effect was allowing the North and the South to mend their wounds while accepting, and justifying, continued black racial oppression during Jim Crow. Put simply, justifying white supremacy has always been the *raison d’être* of Lost Cause memory, of which *Gone with the Wind*—which I argue itself becomes a distinct memory phenomenon—is the twentieth century’s most powerful and defining statement.

“Dear Mr. Dixon...I was practically raised on your books, and love them very much”: Margaret Mitchell, Thomas Dixon, *The Birth of a Nation*, and *Gone with the Wind*’s Racism

Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* also owed quite a bit of inspiration to the works of Thomas Dixon, Jr., author of a Ku Klux Klan trilogy that most notably included the novel *The Clansman* (1905), which was adapted into the infamous film *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915. Mitchell recalled organizing her neighborhood’s children for dramatizations of Dixon’s novels as an adolescent, which told the story of a triumphant Klan that saved the South from the ruin of “Negro rule” following emancipation. After the success of *Gone with the Wind*, Dixon wrote to Mitchell congratulating her on her success. Mitchell wrote back and expressed her gratitude. She added, “Dear Mr. Dixon...I was practically raised

¹⁰⁴ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 266.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 355, 361.

on your books, and love them very much. For many years I have had you on my conscience, and I suppose I might as well confess it now.”¹⁰⁶

Dixon’s novels—like the southern local color fiction, pro-Confederate textbooks, and the Dunning School scholarship that preceded it—was part of the print capitalism that disseminated information pertinent to the formation of the white southern nation in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ According to theorist Benedict Anderson, nations are wholly imagined, requiring that a national history be invented through a selective process of remembering, forgetting, or misrepresentation of past events important to the nation itself. These “imagined communities,” as Anderson calls them, then coalesce through media (e.g. newspapers containing national news alongside Lost Cause plantation stories, history textbooks, novels, and printed New South speeches) that create a common history, common causes, and common identities among the inhabitants who generally share some common feature such as language or, in this case, race. Inventing, or perpetuating, a common history in this way is particularly effective at times of national crisis or strife, such as during the period of reconciliation and the spread of Jim Crow in the early 1900s. But, as Anderson argues, this process is also a characteristic device of modern nations that continually need to forget past oppressions to secure national legitimacy, as well as a device that allows members of the nation to forget the harsh

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Mitchell, “Letter to Thomas Dixon, Jr., August 15, 1936, in *Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind Letters, 1936-1949*, ed. Richard Harwell (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 52-53.

¹⁰⁷ For good references on the influence of Lost Cause textbooks, academic scholarship, and college history departments at the turn of the twentieth century see Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*, 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009); Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, F.L.: University Press of Florida, 2003).

realities of past tragedies of which they need “unceasingly to be ‘reminded’” in order to ground their identity within the nation itself.¹⁰⁸

As an example of how nationalist memory operates, Anderson cites twentieth-century Americans who need to “remember/forget the hostilities of 1861-65 as a great ‘civil’ war between ‘brothers’” as a direct example, which he correctly notes, if not vaguely, is perpetuated by “a vast pedagogical industry.” Anderson also correctly speculates that had the Confederacy remained a separate sovereign nation-state, the Civil War “would have been replaced in [national] memory by something quite unbrotherly.” In other words, the needs of the white American nation would have not been about reconciling lingering tensions and therefore would not have invented a national past that sanitized the deep hatred experienced between the sections over the slavery question.¹⁰⁹

Dixon’s *The Clansman* was thus the product of this print capitalism and national memory cultivation process, and shaped the Lost Cause memory of white southern nationalism in the early-twentieth century. Dixon’s novels, like many southern writers before him, also helped ideologically justify the white supremacist project of Jim Crow apartheid by being a representation of a white national past that “forgot” the reality of slavery and the Civil War while simultaneously framing white southerners as opposed to black equality, and black equality itself as a danger to the nation. In other words, Dixon’s *The Clansman* helped assemble the southern nation around a history and collective memory that naturalized black racial subordination after Dunning School scholarship, as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall writes, had “purged the Lost Cause narrative of its rancor and

¹⁰⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 23-25, quote on 201.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

exaggeration...transform[ing] it into a story that the whole (white) nation could accept.”¹¹⁰ *The Clansman*, however, became *The Birth of a Nation*, a long-form film on a new mass cultural medium that brought Dixon’s racism to life on the big screen, surpassing what was possible via print culture and popularizing—making mainstream—Dunning School and Lost Cause ideology. Both Dixon’s novels and *Birth* were inspirations on Mitchell’s eventual work, just as they were on Dunning School practitioners such as Claude Bower and his 1929 attack on the Republican Party for establishing black political rights during Reconstruction entitled *The Tragic Era*. Until the 1930s, Dixon’s work fashioned how white Americans thought about slavery, Reconstruction, and, by extension, black citizenship in print and on screen, which translated into support for Jim Crow racial oppression. It would be surpassed in influence by *Gone with the Wind*.

For Mitchell, Dixon’s Reconstruction era most significantly influenced her representations of African Americans as unfit for civilized society following the Civil War. Dixon’s rendering of the “black beast rapist” stereotype—a fear long used to express white insecurity about diminishing white racial purity, from slavery throughout the period of lynching—also appeared in Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*, as did a favorable representation of the Ku Klux Klan, a white terrorist organization that used intimidation and violence to reassert white supremacy in the Reconstruction South that was devoid of slavery. Mitchell may not have venerated the Klan to the same degree as Dixon, but, as she writes in *Gone with the Wind*, she believed that the Klan was a “tragic necessity...when the ordinary processes of law and order had been overthrown by the

¹¹⁰ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘You Must Remember This’: Autobiography as Social Critique,” *Journal of American History* 85 (1998): 453.

invaders.” The Klan, according to Mitchell in her novel, was organized to combat “the peril of white women, many bereft by the war of male protection...It was the large number of outrages on women and the ever-present fear for the safety of their wives and daughters,” writes Mitchell, “that drove Southern men to cold and trembling fury and caused the Ku Klux Klan to spring up overnight.” *Gone with the Wind*’s Reconstruction, in Mitchell’s own words, was like Dixon’s: “Here was the astonishing spectacle of half a nation attempting, at the point of bayonet, to force upon the other half the rule of negroes, many of them scarcely one generation out of the African jungles.”¹¹¹

Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* was an amalgamation of the Lost Causism of her progenitors and the vicious anti-black racism of Dixon’s Reconstruction. Those two ideas, to be sure, have never been mutually exclusive—the latter is reliant on the former. But Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* was and remains the most complete version of Lost Cause ideology ever assembled that simultaneously provides a coherent explanation for the “Dark Days of Reconstruction” that followed the Civil War. Mitchell’s novel, in other words, seamlessly weaves a story of loss and white southern victimization into a historical era of white aristocracy and benign slavery, a war of Northern aggression that had nothing to do with slavery and that destroyed the Old South’s beautiful way of life, and a postwar period during which racial harmony was thrown out of balance when institutional slavery was destroyed and white southerners, especially women and the South’s supposed racial purity, were nearly razed by black freedom and Northern corruption. Mitchell’s heroes, on the other hand, were Klan members, much like Dixon.

¹¹¹ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Pocket Books, 2008), 914.

When *Gone with the Wind* appeared, few people who directly remembered the Civil War were alive. Its readership was thus a new generation—suffering from the struggles of the Great Depression—eager to mend lingering national ideological divisions between the North and the South about the cause and nature of the Civil War. Capitalizing on the reconciliationist moment, Mitchell’s novel was an immediate marketplace success and achieved a wide readership and popularity across the United States. *Gone with the Wind*, to be sure, was more popular among white southerners, but was reviewed favorably by virtually every reviewer in mainstream American newspapers and magazines. The journey of Scarlett O’Hara and the struggles of the white South certainly appealed to Depression-era Americans struggling with loss and financial instability. However, reviewers saw Scarlett’s plot as secondary importance to the historical renderings of the South’s past, and not necessarily central to what they saw as the greatness of the novel, unless reviewers discussed her victimization during the war in relation to the victimization of the entire South. *Gone with the Wind* instead grew into a sensation because of Mitchell’s Lost Causism during a period of high racial tension during the 1930s, allowing for the white nation to coalesce around a memory that justified and naturalized white resistance to struggles for racial equality. Tellingly, white reviewers heralded Mitchell’s Old South—a time she rendered as aristocratic and devoid of racial tensions—as “accurate” and “authentic” historical settings about which all Americans should learn.

By decentering slavery from the cause of the Civil War and rendering slaves as docile, “happy darkies,” the Lost Cause was the white nationalist ideology that had upheld white supremacy in the South since the end of the Civil War. The Lost Cause was,

in other words, a national origin mythology. To borrow terminology from Anderson, through the Lost Cause the South imagined the region as a community of white Americans who shared a national past centered around the Civil War, the nation's most important conflict that created modern America.¹¹² In the wake of the Civil War, the white South's imagined past increasingly was defined by the Lost Cause's romantic, and nostalgic, belief in antebellum aristocracy and racial harmony supported by a civilizing institution of black slavery. The founding mythology both made sense of the Civil War and the racial tensions that consistently followed by decentering slavery from the South's history and placing the blame for racial violence on the inability of African Americans to function in free society. Lost Causism, as a founding myth, also provided an imagined national identity to the region of the former Confederacy, and more, who sought to maintain white supremacy in the post-war era.

Post-war white southern nationalism spread as Lost Cause history, Confederate veneration, and loyal slave narratives came to dominate America's memorialization of the Civil War, history textbooks, entire academic departments, and local color fiction about the South. Lost Causism thus increasingly took root in white American memory as a means to understand the nation's past and to justify the continuation of white supremacy, despite resistance to the Lost Cause narrative from white northerners of the war generation and African Americans. African Americans, however, long understood how Lost Causism was not just a romantic myth, but also a white nationalist mythology sanctioned anti-black racial violence and political suppression in order to uphold and buttress white supremacy. In 1915, for instance, *The Birth of a Nation* inspired a

¹¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan, garnering the organization millions of members that secured to it political representation. White terrorism against African Americans—and Catholics, Jews, and other ethnic immigrants—increased following *The Birth of a Nation*'s premiere. Post-war white southern identity and Lost Causism were inextricable; white southern identity was a strain of white nationalism.

Accordingly, African Americans—along with American Jews, communist and labor groups—were quick to protest when the *Gone with the Wind*'s film rights were purchased by producer David O. Selznick and Selznick International Pictures. Selznick purchased the film rights before the Mitchell's novel had been on bookstore shelves for even one entire month. Activist groups proposed boycotts, appealed to censors to have the film banned, and, between 1936 and the film's premiere in 1939, the black press and Executive Secretary of the National Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) confronted Selznick and conservatively demanded that he remove the novel's harshest racism, including the use of the derogatory word "nigger," the black brute rapist, and mentions of the Klan. Attempts to ban film before the premiers failed, however, other than in a few urban black neighborhoods. Selznick responded to the protest and, fearing a resistance campaign similar to the NAACP's *The Birth of a Nation* protests, muted the film's harshest racism. Calls from the black press and the NAACP to make *Gone with the Wind* less racist worked. Importantly, however, more direct and concerted black resistance to *Gone with the Wind* continued as the film premiered in multiple cities across the North and at the 1940 Academy Awards.

Despite the "toning down" of Mitchell's racism, anti-black stereotypes abound in Selznick's *Gone with the Wind*. But by removing the film's derogatory language and

muting its malicious racism, Selznick turned Mitchell's complete version of the Lost Cause into a more palatable cultural product that could be visually and aurally experienced—allowing for a Lost Cause narrative to be experienced with little of the interpretive faculties demanded by other artifacts such as Confederate memorials that command interpretive, albeit blind, veneration. For a generation of white Americans already deeply indoctrinated with Lost Causist ideology, and eager to explain existing racial tensions in a way that justified the existing white supremacist social order, the film was an unprecedented success. *Gone with the Wind* far exceeded the production company's expectations. The white reception of *Gone with the Wind* again hailed the film's Lost Causism and the tragic destruction of the Old South, which still was a historical narrative with which white Americans were familiar, but more willingly accepting during the mid-twentieth century as the black civil rights movement began galvanizing. *Gone with the Wind's* muted racism has tellingly led whiteness scholars Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon to claim that Selznick's film, "in truth... is *Birth of a Nation* without the bedsheets and hoods of the Klan."¹¹³ But following the success of Selznick's film, the truth is that *Gone with the Wind* became its own, and entirely new, memory phenomenon.

According to historian Grace Elizabeth Hale, mass-market producers had long capitalized on the white South's Lost Causism by marketing products of subservient African Americans such as Aunt Jemima or Mammy that helped define American whiteness against a version of stereotyped blackness. Mass-produced products catering to white southerners, and presumably white Americans across the country, ranged from

¹¹³ Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon, *Screen Savivors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* (Lanham, M.Y.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 23.

household staple products to literature to film.¹¹⁴ Selznick's *Gone with the Wind*, however, not only shaped southern whiteness, and white identity, through its mass consumption, but also utilized a new mass-cultural media that could, as memory scholars have contended, affect collective and individual memory via its experiential nature.¹¹⁵ But, as I argue, an epic film that allowed white Americans to *experience* the complete and palatable white nationalist mythology of the South, not simply an important historical event, and that now appealed to a majority of white Americans across the country, *Gone with the Wind* homogenized American white memory of the Civil War era—the era central to the creation of modern America and its racial tensions. By extension, the experiential medium of the film homogenized white American identity around the founding mythology of Mitchell's and Selznick's Lost Causism. The white South's national mythology increasingly became white America's national mythology and collective memory of the Civil War-era in the wake of *Gone with the Wind*, forging two disparate views of the South and its past in the minds of white and black Americans. For the white South, after 1940, *Gone with the Wind*-ism was the new American ideology of white supremacy.

“There is certainly no Mason-Dixon boundary about the book.”: White America and the Initial Reception of *Gone with the Wind*

Writing for the *New Republic* in September 1936, almost three months after the original publication of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, white American writer

¹¹⁴ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

¹¹⁵ Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*; Kaes, “History and Film,” 111-129.

Malcolm Cowley authored the first perceptive, if not apologetic, review of the novel. Cowley's prose was both one of astonishment, highlighting the dates of every major marketplace and publishing success it enjoyed in its first four months, and one of disdain: "'Gone with the Wind' is an encyclopedia of the plantation legend...with all its episodes and all its characters and all its stage settings."¹¹⁶ From the pristine setting of the old plantation South, complete with faithful slaves and southern belles, to the War Between the States and the dark days of Reconstruction foiled by "the knightliness of the Ku Klux Klansmen," Cowley derided the legend as false, silly, "and vicious in its general effect on Southern life."¹¹⁷ Yet Cowley understood well that it was precisely the emotional appeal of this legend—presented in its whole, as he saw it, for the first time over Mitchell's 1,037 pages—that was responsible for *Gone with the Wind's* widespread success. As his final word Cowley still offered Mitchell praise for the "simple-minded courage" of her book "that suggests the great novelists of the past."¹¹⁸

Following Cowley's mostly derisive review of *Gone with the Wind*, an unnamed reviewer for the African American newspaper the *Chicago Defender* and the great black historian Lawrence D. Reddick are the only two reviewers to directly speak truth to Mitchell's Lost Causism. Unlike Cowley, there is nothing apologetic about their reviews. The *Defender's* reviewer first finds some truth in Mitchell's Reconstruction, at least concerning Scarlett's pursuit of wealth. "Not liking poverty," writes the reviewer, "[Scarlett] decides to be rich." But in her fictional pursuit of capitalistic wealth, Scarlett

¹¹⁶ Malcolm Cowley, "Going with the Wind," *New Republic*, September 16, 1936, reprinted in *Recasting: Gone with the Wind in American Culture*, edited by Darden Asbury Pyron (Miami: University Presses of Florida, 1983), 19.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

utilizes violent, and deadly, black convict labor. “All this she finds necessary in order to get wealth,” writes the reviewer, “Much of this part of the book is true.”¹¹⁹

After briefly addressing what small amount the reviewer saw as historical truth in the novel’s depiction of Reconstruction, the *Defender*’s reviewer scathingly rebukes the rest of the novel:

“It is remarkable that [Mitchell] cannot see with the same clear eye how wealth was gotten **before** the war...She sees [African Americans] as children, unable to build their own lives; she sees their owners as so kind they dared not breathe a word that might hurt the feelings of a slave...Not one example of mistreatment of slaves is shown; not one example of a slave, proud and wise, who wanted to be free...She has heard, however, of overseers...but she never shows him at his job of getting wealth out of the backs of the field hands.”¹²⁰

After addressing Mitchell’s Lost Causism, the *Defender*’s reviewer states the true impact of the book:

“We don’t believe that any book with a large circulation can be read by a million Americans without impressing the young and the credulous to believe hook, line, and sinker every printed word...A million copies of *Gone with the Wind* were sold in six months. Of the uncounted millions who have read it, few probably recognize the novel as an argument for slavery. The old forms are safely gone, but new forms of slave labor are

¹¹⁹ “Reviewer Points Out Motive Behind ‘Gone with the Wind’: Sees Author in Subtle Attempt to Justify New Form of Slavery,” *Chicago Defender*, March 13, 1937, 19.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

growing. Fascism will find many minds more friendly toward it because this book was read.”¹²¹

Four months after the publication of the *Defender*'s prescient review of *Gone with the Wind*, the great black historian Lawrence D. Reddick published a review of Mitchell's novel in a July 1937 issue of the *Journal of Negro History* (now the *Journal of African American History*) that responded to its immense popularity of the novel and echoed the sentiment of the *Defender*. Reddick wrote that *Gone with the Wind*

has had and will have an unusual influence in shaping, re-shaping and emphasizing the patterns in the public mind as these relate to the Civil War, Reconstruction and subsequent period. To many persons, who seldom read a history book, *Gone with the Wind* will represent the true account in fictionalized form of what actually happened.¹²²

African Americans sensed immediately the threat that a Lost Causist national mythology as complete as *Gone with the Wind* posed to African Americans.

Together, Cowley's, Reddick's, and the *Defender*'s reviews are the only three negative reviews of the novel that either mention or warn about the dangerous power that *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism posed to African American communities. Other than the *Defender*, the black press was silent on the novel following its initial publication. Notable black newspapers such as the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Baltimore's *Afro-American*, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and even the *Atlanta Daily World* failed to publish a single review. To be fair, no reviewer could have foreseen the cultural Behemoth that

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Lawrence D. Reddick, "Review of Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South and *Gone with the Wind*," *Journal of Negro History* 22 (1937): 365-366.

Gone with the Wind would become, nor could any reviewer envision the social power that it would wield as it ballooned into a lasting, multi-faceted memory phenomenon that more than anything else perpetuated and defined an anti-black, Lost Causist national mythology and identity throughout the twentieth century. Despite their clarity and seeming prophetism, neither Reddick nor the reviewer for the *Defender* knew how correct their words would become.

From Atlanta to New York to Boston to Chicago, reviews in the mainstream American media overwhelmingly praised Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind*'s. By December of 1936, Edward Weeks of the *New York Times* had interviewed “literally hundreds” of readers and reviewers of *Gone with the Wind* and proclaimed that “[t]here is certainly no Mason-Dixon boundary about the book.”¹²³ In the litany of *Gone with the Wind* reviews that were published in 1936 and 1937, the dramatic romance between Scarlett and Rhett and Scarlett’s struggle with poverty and loss largely seemed unimportant to the popularity of the novel. It was *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism—against which Reddick and the *Defender* warned—that instead captivated white reviewers who talked at length about what they believed to be an authentic historical setting for a fictional romance story that they may or may not have liked. For instance, writing for the *New York Times* immediately following the release of the novel in June, 1936, book critic Ralph Thompson—who was from New Jersey and attended Dartmouth—proclaimed that “[t]he historical background is the chief virtue of the book... [I]t is the story of the times rather than the unconvincing and somewhat absurd plot that gives Miss Mitchell’s work

¹²³ Edward Weeks, “What Makes a Book a Bestseller? The Phenomenal Success of ‘Gone with the Wind’ Prompts Some Reflections on Popular Novels of Yesterday and Today,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1936, BR2.

whatever importance may be attached to it.” Alluding to the Lost Causist idea of white, slave-owner victimization, Thompson continued, “[N]o reader can come away without a sense of the tragedy that overcame the planting families in 1865 and without a better understanding of the background of present-day Southern life.”¹²⁴

As alluded to by Cowley and the *Defender*'s reviewer, the novel's immediate success was sustained over the weeks and months that followed its initial publication: in less than one month on the shelves, *Gone with the Wind*'s film rights were purchased by Hollywood Producer David O. Selznick and Selznick International Pictures and one million copies of the novel had been published. Total sales far exceeded any other bestseller of fiction that year, with 50,000 copies reportedly sold in one day.¹²⁵ Praise from reviewers, like Thompson, a northerner who was captured by its Lost Cause legend, also continued: “‘Gone with the Wind’ is a remarkable book, a spectacular book,” wrote *Chicago Tribune* book reviewer and native Chicagoan Fanny Butcher, conceding that it wasn't as “stylistically great” as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. But like *War and Peace*, exclaimed Butcher, *Gone with the Wind* “will not be forgotten...[A] truly great book” that preserves “[t]he ‘spirit’ of the period” from the point of view of a War-time and Reconstruction-era southerner. Butcher's review was tellingly titled “War Trials of the Old South Made to Live.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Ralph Thompson, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1936, 17.

¹²⁵ Cowley, “Going with the Wind,” 17; Fanny Butcher, “14 Best Sellers Reach 100,000 in Year's Sales: ‘Gone with the Wind’ Not the Only Success,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 26 1936, 8; “50,000 of ‘Gone with the Wind’ Sold in a Day,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 5, 1936, 12; “Book Notes,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1936, 13; “Book Notes,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1936, 25.

¹²⁶ Fanny Butcher, “War Trials of the Old South Made to Live: Margaret Mitchell's Book to Be Remembered,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 4, 1936, 10.

Praise for *Gone with the Wind*'s racist myths was also explicit, often central, in the reviewers' opinions. In the *New York Times*, Thompson indignantly referred to "Yankee overlords" and to the Civil War as "the upset that ended such a beautiful civilization and allowed Negroes for a time to 'live in leisure while their former masters struggled and starved.'"¹²⁷ In the same review Thompson notes that *Gone with the Wind* is "not far removed from the moving picture called *The Birth of a Nation*," suggesting not only that the Lost Cause mythology of both maintain a high degree of historical accuracy, but that *Gone with the Wind*'s anti-back racism is on par with *Birth*'s black beast rapist, loyal mammy, and its narrative of tragedy and white victimization caused by black freedom. Indeed, it was and is.

Thompson further suggests the historical value of *Gone with the Wind* by praising the historical research behind the novel, claiming that it illuminates the same understanding of Southern life detailed in "straight history," such as Claude Bowers' best-selling *The Tragic Era*, which he mentioned by name.¹²⁸ For northerners like Thompson and Butcher, Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* appealed to already-existing Lost Causist sympathies already engrained by print culture and *Birth*, but, as Reddick warned, shaped how they came a critical era of the American past in the 1930s.

As for white southerners, the *Atlanta Journal*'s Sam Tupper, Jr. wrote:

"Miss Mitchell presents [the South] with remarkable understanding. By anecdote, by glowing scenes, by pleasantly ironic comments, she shows the Old South hating, loving, making interminable visits, dying, living

¹²⁷ Thompson, "Books of the Times," 17.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

again, scrambling back to power and integrity. She sees its beauty, its weakness, the doomed strength of its young manhood, its slaves who also are despots and as the war drums beat with a deeper note, neither the weak nor the strong escape her scrutiny.”¹²⁹

Tupper follows the completeness of Mitchell’s Lost Causism closely, especially with regard to her Dixonian Reconstruction: the slaves are despots, the white south victims, but as the former is subjugated, the latter returns to national glory.

Mitchell’s portrayal of freedmen as the villains of Reconstruction being accepted as accurate is a common theme in *Gone with the Wind* reviews. Mentions of the “dark days”—in which African Americans are blamed for the era’s perceived failures—are common. For instance, South Carolina fiction writer Julia Peterkin wrote in the *Washington Post*:

“Not only is [*Gone with the Wind*] a stirring drama of individual lives and an authentic account of the fortunes of a community of Southern plantation owners during the Civil War and the dark days of Reconstruction that followed, but it makes clear as no history ever did or could those racial and social prejudices that resulted in difference of opinion among Southerners which finally caused the destruction of the people who held so proudly to them.”¹³⁰

Peterkin was not merely a white supremacist that believed blacks unfit for civilized society. Her review also commended Mitchell’s rendering of the Lost Cause myth that

¹²⁹ Samuel Tupper, Jr., *Atlanta Journal*, June 28, 1936, reprinted in Harwell, ed., *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, 17.

¹³⁰ Peterkin, in *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, 21.

slavery was merely an unimportant feature of the Confederacy. “Those who lived in [the South],” Peterkin wrote, “were solidly united in a firm belief in ‘States Rights.’”¹³¹ “[T]he superior civilization” of the South was then destroyed by the flames of war and, “[w]hen peace was declared...the defeated South was made to suffer such bitter humiliation and punishment that the Northern armies would have been far more merciful if they had killed every man, woman and child outright.” Peterkin continues, “[p]overty, physical suffering, sorrow of every kind [had] broken stout hearts during the war, but the years that followed it were worse.” It was these so-called historical lessons of white southern victimization that led Peterkin to herald *Gone with the Wind* as great book that should be read by “[e]very lover of great books” and “everyone who has the least interest in the history of these United States.”¹³² Peterkin’s affinity for *Gone with the Wind* had little to do with the narrative plot and did not educate her to the South’s history. Instead, Mitchell’s novel delivered to her the Lost Causist national mythology in totality during the a period of black communist protest during the 1930s.

That such Lost Causist, laudatory reviews of *Gone with the Wind* came from southerners such as Tupper, Jr. and Peterkin in 1936 is hardly surprising. As research on memory confirms, people remember historical events in ways that fit familiar narratives and patterns. And debuting after southern local color writers such as Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, and the recent successes of *The Clansman* and *The Birth of a Nation* which had deeply instilled Lost Causist myth into the popular imagination of the

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 23.

New South, *Gone with the Wind* was highly anticipated and readily accepted.¹³³ Even famed southern writers Ellen Glasgow and Douglas Southall Freeman (who in no small part helped cement Lost-Cause history in twentieth-century literature with his Pulitzer-Prize winning hagiography of Robert E. Lee) commended Mitchell's novel and "fearless portrayal...of a lost tradition and a way of life."¹³⁴

However, as is evidenced by the favorable reviews in major American newspapers in the Northeast and northern Midwest—including Thompson and Butcher—the popularity of *Gone with the Wind* in 1936-7 was hardly a southern phenomenon. For instance, the *New York Times*' book reviewer J. Donald Adams wrote that "'Gone with the Wind' seems to me the best Civil War novel that has yet been written. It is an extraordinary blending of romantic and realistic treatment," while D.L. Mann of the Boston Transcript commented that the scenes and vignettes from the Civil War and Reconstruction eras that "provide the warp and the woof of such an historical novel. Mann commended *Gone with the Wind*'s historical background as a "noteworthy

¹³³ Malcolm Cowley's review of *Gone with the Wind* in September 1936 highlights the anticipation of the novel. "[T]he forthcoming novel of the real south in the sixties and seventies, by Margaret Mitchell," writes Cowley, enjoyed "a record-breaking advance sale...[T]wo weeks before publication—[the] Macmillan novel...piled up the largest advance sale of any book of recent years." Cowley, "Going with the Wind," 17.

¹³⁴ Quote from Ellen Glasgow, Macmillan Advertisement in the *New York Times*, June 30, 1936, reprinted in *Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind Letters, 1936-1949*, Richard Harwell, ed. (New York and London: Macmillan, 1976), 57. Douglas Southall Freeman's *R.E. Lee* (1935) was a landmark piece of southern scholarship that bridged academic history with Lost-Cause popular fiction traditions of the turn of the century. Freeman's popular history of Lee was an immediate success across the United States (it remains popular today) and undoubtedly added the perception of academic support to Mitchell's rendering of the Civil War era that's readership would dwarf even that of Freeman's. Freeman's praise of *Gone with the Wind* is confirmed in several letters written to him in response by Mitchell over the course of the correspondence in Harwell, *Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind Letters*, 77-78, 104, 289-291, 318, 372-373. For Freeman's impact on popular historical literature see David E. Johnson, *Douglas Southall Freeman* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2002).

achievement.”¹³⁵ Similarly, northern high-brow publications such as the *New York Sun* also heralded *Gone with the Wind* as “the finest historical novel ever written by an American” that should join the ranks of Tolstoy, Hardy, and Dickens.¹³⁶ *Gone with the Wind* undoubtedly appealed to generations of white northerners and southerners who had not experienced directly the sectional divide of the Civil War, but that wished reconcile lingering ideological divides in the face of the collective financial loss of white American during the Great Depression and the racial issues of the era.

From the North to the South, white reviewers of *Gone with the Wind* in 1936 and 1937 uniformly praised Mitchell’s Lost Causist mythology as if it was an achievement in historical scholarship. Such reviewers regularly praised Mitchell’s use of pastoral scenes from the Old South for adding historical vitality to the novel. Such reviewers commented on scenes that included Mitchell’s romantic renderings of aristocratic plantation life, southern belles, and “hummin’ darkies,” and were also remarked to signify the white South’s loss incurred during the war. These white reviewers maintained that the Lost Causist background detail, “magnificent in its assembling,” portrayed the tragedy of the war and Reconstruction years “with the vividness of a participant.”¹³⁷ Most memorable, according to a reviewer for Boston’s *North American Review*, mentioning the Klan through a Dunning School and Dixonian interpretation of Reconstruction, was

the burning and frightful sack of Atlanta; the endless filing past ruined plantations of the ragged Confederates, beaten by lice and dysentery as

¹³⁵ J. Donald Adams, “A Fine Novel of the Civil War: Miss Mitchell’s ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *New York Times*, July 5, 1936, BR1. Eleanor L. Van Alen, “Gone with the Wind,” *The North American Review*, 242 (Autumn, 1936): 203; D.L. Mann, *Boston Transcript*, June 27, 1936.

¹³⁶ *New York Sun* quoted and cited in Gomez-Galisteo, *The Wind is Never Gone*, 18.

¹³⁷ Butcher, “War Trials of the Old South Made to Live,” 10.

much as by superior forces; the fearful reign of terror of the carpetbaggers, backed by the Freedmen's Bureau in their effort to raise the Negroes; the organization of the night-riders, and their final victory over Governor Bullock and the regime of Reconstruction.¹³⁸

According to *The North American Review*, the real tragedy of the Civil War and Reconstruction was the victimization of the white South at the hands of carpetbaggers and free blacks. Only after the destruction of the South during the war and Reconstruction became too much, asserted the reviewer, did the heroic “night riders” claim ultimate victory by ending the white oppression of Reconstruction and restoring some semblance of the Old South way of life. Reframing the tragedy of the Civil War, the confederacy, and the South away from black oppression and toward white victimization in such a way is, and has been, the ideological center of Lost Causist mythologies since the end of the Civil War. It was precisely an ideological belief in that mythology of white southern victimization that sanctioned the very real terrorism, murder, and intimidation that the Klan perpetrated against African Americans during the Reconstruction era, and that sanctioned a praise-worthy review for such an interpretation from *The North American Review* decades later in 1936. Mitchell's novel was now becoming the standard bearer of that white supremacist ideology.

The Old South way of life that the Klan helped restore was a system of white supremacy no longer organized around institutional slavery. Reviews like those of *North American Review*, were not uncommon, with others claiming that Mitchell's characters—including the slaves, corrupt carpetbagging profiteers, vengeful scalawags, and the

¹³⁸ Van Alen, “Gone with the Wind,” 203.

Georgia Cracker—embodied “the whole social fabric of the ante-bellum, war time and Reconstruction South,” the last of which one reviewer believed “nearly razed” the entire region.¹³⁹ So engrained was the Lost Cause mythology of white southern victimization and the white South’s ultimate redemption into the nation’s popular understanding of the South by 1936 that the eminent Columbia and Amherst historian Henry Steele Commager, himself from Pennsylvania, the very state that Robert E. Lee and his slave-kidnapping army invaded before the Battle of Gettysburg, lauded the novel in over 2,000 words on the front page of the *New York Herald-Tribune* books section, calling it “a dramatic recreation of life itself” upheld by its “historical accuracy.” “[T]he story,” wrote Commager, was “told with such sincerity and passion, illuminated by such understanding, woven of the stuff of history and of disciplined imagination.”¹⁴⁰

It is clear that the first reviews of *Gone with the Wind* overwhelmingly praised Mitchell’s Lost Cause representation of the South and Civil War as historically authentic, or true, a history already naturalized in the white southern consciousness. Authenticating comments ranged from referring to the region as if its social and political structures were monolithic both before and after the war; relied on romantic, idyllic imagery of a white aristocracy; and framed the South’s destruction during the Civil War as a “heart-breaking sacrifice” to the “hate which [sic] swept over the land with Sherman’s army, the Yankee

¹³⁹ Adams, “A Fine Novel of the Civil War,” BR1; Butcher, “War Trials of the Old Made to Live,” 10.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Steele Commager, “The Civil War in Georgia’s Red Clay Hills Vividly Told From Viewpoint of the Women Left Behind,” *New York Herald-Tribune*, July 5, 1936, VII. Commager, for his part, completely changed his opinion about *Gone with the Wind* by the time he authored the introduction to the Limited Editions Club reprint of the novel in 1968. His introduction, titled “The Last of Its Genre,” was brief and critical of the Lost Cause and the book itself.

garrisons and the Carpetbaggers.”¹⁴¹ There were few exceptions to *Gone with the Wind* among white Americans. Cowley was a rare, still apologetic, bird. For instance, in a July 4th issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, the northern writer Stephen Vincent Benét—who is best known for his popular epic poem titled *John Brown’s Body* (1928)—lauded Mitchell’s knowledge of her southern people and the Civil War and Reconstruction eras as “vividly interesting” and “realistic in detail,” a proclamation that was echoed eight days later in the *Washington Post*: “Miss Mitchell is clear-eyed and well informed. She knows the South and its history as well as she knows the red hills of northern Georgia.”¹⁴² Like Benét even John Peale Bishop, a Princeton-educated poet born to a New England family—and who also authored one of the novel’s few negative reviews for the *New Republic*—proclaimed that despite Mitchell’s failure to create a worthwhile piece of literature, “the historical background [was] handled well and with an extraordinary sense of detail.”¹⁴³ Mitchell’s novel achieved Lost Cause totality, in vivid detail in a mass-marketed novel. It was read widely and welcomed by white Americans desperately seeking to protect white supremacy and to make sense of black resistance to their continued subjugation.

In May, 1937, Mitchell’s novel achieved more legitimacy when the president of Columbia University announced that *Gone with the Wind* as the winner of the year’s

¹⁴¹ Edward Weeks, “What Makes a Book a Best Seller?: The Phenomenal Success of ‘Gone with the Wind’ Prompts Some Reflections on Popular Novels of Yesterday and Today,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1936, BR2.

¹⁴² Stephen Vincent Benét, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 4, 1936, reprinted in “The Book of the Month: Reviews,” in *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, edited by Richard Harwell (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1983), 19-21; Julia Peterkin, *Washington Post*, July 12, 1936, reprinted in Harwell, ed., *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, 22.

¹⁴³ John Peale Bishop, “War and No Peace,” *New Republic* 87 (July 15, 1936): 301.

Pulitzer Prize for fiction. African American writer, journalist, and labor activist Frank Marshall Davis took to the black press to express his outrage:

“This year’s Pulitzer Prize for the novel went to Margaret Mitchell’s ‘Gone with the Wind’...The author went out of her way to support the institution of human slavery, praise the Uncle Toms of that period...and twist reconstruction era facts into a web of lies. It’s insidious propaganda had impressed too many whites without having it dignified with the coveted Pulitzer award.”¹⁴⁴

The power of *Gone with the Wind*’s historical background and sense of detail further increased two years later when it was released to American audiences as a major motion picture. The film reached audiences across the United States, and further eliminated the ideological Mason-Dixon boundary that had prevented complete reconciliation for previous generations. In a review for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, Canadian-American writer, critic, and philosopher Isabel Paterson perceptively, if unintentionally, explains the narrative power of *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism and its white nationalism over both white southerners and white non-southerners like herself: “A Southerner might judge best of the authenticity of background and details,” Paterson wrote. “[B]ut they carry conviction to the uninitiated, and if there are any errors they’ll never be seen.”¹⁴⁵

“Hollywood Goes Hitler One Better”: Building Resistance to the Production of *Gone with the Wind*, 1936-1939

¹⁴⁴ Frank Marshall Davis,

¹⁴⁵ Isabel Paterson, *New York Herald-Tribune*, June 30, 1936, reprinted in Harwell, ed., *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, 19.

Anticipation for the movie version of *Gone with the Wind* began one month after the novel's publication when David O. Selznick and Selznick International Pictures purchased its film rights in July of 1936. Fans of the novel often expressed their excitement as they fawned over the casting circus that played out in national newspapers and magazines. Chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) even threatened to boycott the film if English actress Vivien Leigh was cast to play Scarlett O'Hara. The boycott was proposed by several chapters of the UDC because Leigh was not southern-born, but never materialized.¹⁴⁶ If the fan frenzy over the film's production says anything, it's that the massive popularity of Mitchell's novel carried over to the movie and expectations were high. White America, however, was not the only demographic preparing for the release of *Gone with the Wind* on the silver screen. Unlike the UDC's utterly ridiculous cause to boycott, African American and Jewish protest mobilized against the harmful Lost Causism and racial stereotypes of *Gone with the Wind*.

Particularly sensitive to racism against any group during the era of Nazism in Europe and after the resurgence of the Klan, *Gone with the Wind* protests first appeared in the American Jewish community while the film was still being conceptualized. Writing to Selznick International Pictures in October, 1936, Jewish actor Hyman Meyer authored one of the earliest protests to the film, imploring

"I wish to register my protest against the making of *Gone with the Wind*.

The picture is a Negro baiting film that will only encourage such

¹⁴⁶ Marjorie Ross, "The Voice of a Movie Fan," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 4, 1937, F5; "U.D.C. Head Ends 'Scarlett Revolt,'" *Richmond Times Dispatch*, January 23, 1939, 5. For a full discussion of the frenzy generated by fans' anticipation of the film version of *Gone with the Wind* see *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, by Steve Wilson, forward by Robert Osborne (Austin, T.X.: University of Texas Press, 2014).

organizations as the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Legion to continue their terrorism and their violations of civil rights. I feel such a film will certainly not meet with the approval of the people but will be welcomed by the Fascists and Nazis of this country. Again let me urge you not to produce this ‘UnAmerican’ film.”¹⁴⁷

Meyer’s written protest, while commendable, was naïve: *Gone with the Wind* was certainly lauded by outspoken white supremacists, but, as the overwhelmingly positive reception of Mitchell’s novel had proved, the white public across the United States was more than willing to accept and venerate *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism. In the Spring of 1938, Rabbi Robert Jacobs wrote to Rabbi Barnett Brickner—chairman of the Social Justice Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis—warning him that production would soon begin of a film “shot through with an anti-Negro prejudice.” Jacobs also told Brickner that *Gone with the Wind* was based on a book that aroused “anti-Negro antipathy” among its white readers. In turn, Brickner wrote to Selznick cautioning him not to “arouse anti-racial feeling” and to “exercise the greatest care in the treatment of this theme.” Brickner also wrote a letter to the Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Walter White, warning him about *Gone with the Wind*’s anti-black racism.¹⁴⁸

Following Meyer, African American organizations protested the production of the film. Among the first, Pittsburgh’s Negro Youth Congress wrote a letter to Selznick International in January of 1937, echoing the *Chicago Defender*’s early reviewer of

¹⁴⁷ Hyman Meyer to Selznick International Pictures, October 29, 1936, Selznick Collection.

¹⁴⁸ Steve Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind* (Austin, T.X.: University of Texas Press, 2014), 58.

Mitchell's novel by calling *Gone with the Wind* "a glorification of the old rotten system of slavery, propaganda for race-hatreds and bigotry, and incitement to lynching."¹⁴⁹

Additionally, as historian Leonard Leff writes, the letter also threatened that "if the film were made...the seventy-thousand-member national Negro Youth Congress would boycott it, picket theaters, and elicit support from churches, liberal institutions, and 'especially the Jewish people' to rout its racial intolerance."¹⁵⁰

Other black groups and individuals sent similar protest letters to Selznick and his studio through the mail but, in mid 1938, the NAACP's Walter White finally penned a letter to Selznick on behalf of the organization central to the organizing of *The Birth of a Nation* protests more than two decades earlier. In the letter, White criticized Mitchell's historical representation of the Reconstruction Era and the negative stigmatization that such an interpretation would have on the black community. But unlike the threats to picket and boycott like the organization threatened in 1915, or like Pittsburgh's Negro Youth Congress was threatening months earlier, White indicated that he did not want production of the *Gone with the Wind* to cease and instead recommended that the producers read W.E.B. Dubois' *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (a powerful critique of Lost Cause history) and employ an African American historical advisor to remain on set during production.¹⁵¹ White wrote another letter to Selznick on June 28

¹⁴⁹ Lloyd Brown, Letter to Selznick, *Gone with the Wind* Papers, Motion Picture Association of America, New York City, as cited and quoted in Leonard J. Leff, "David Selznick's 'Gone with the Wind': 'The Negro Problem,'" *The Georgia Review* 38 (1984): 151.

¹⁵⁰ Leff, "David Selznick's 'Gone with the Wind,'" 151.

¹⁵¹ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Letter from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to David O. Selznick, June 7, 1938, W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries; Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, 58; Leff, David Selznick's 'Gone with the Wind,' 152.

saying that Selznick's correspondences with the NAACP were encouraging but still warned the production to crew not to pander to "the writing of history of the Reconstruction period [that] has been completely confederatized during these last two or three generations." White also perceptively alludes to the power that new mass cinema technologies would have on the American public when he writes that the film, "appealing...to both the visual and auditory senses, reaches so many Americans, particularly in the middle classes, that infinite harm could be done in a critical period like this when racial hatreds and prejudices are so alive."¹⁵² Following these pre-release correspondences with the production crew, White ultimately gives the film his stamp of approval and the NAACP fails to be a significant player in the black protests to Selznick's *Gone with the Wind*.

Despite the NAACP's limited involvement, the black press took action in early February, 1939, less than a year before *Gone with the Wind*'s premiered in Atlanta. Three articles led the charge: "Gone with the Wind Put On the Spot by Earl Morris: Predicts Picture will be worse than 'Birth of a Nation'" in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, "Race Actors Flayed for 'Gone with the Wind' Parts" in the *Chicago Defender*, and "Hollywood Goes Hitler One Better" in the *Los Angeles Sentinel*. In the first—written by the *Pittsburgh Courier*'s motion picture editor, Earl Morris, who sought out and obtained an early draft of *Gone with the Wind*'s screenplay—the author attacks the treatment of African Americans in the upcoming film and disparages the use of the word "nigger" in the script. Morris argued that the black actors who were cast in the film were committing "racial

¹⁵² National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Letter from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to David O. Selznick, June 28, 1938, W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

suicide” and were “economic slaves” to the production company that hired them. Morris urged readers of his article to voice their disapproval to the Production Code Administration of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.¹⁵³

Furthermore, in his article appearing in the *Defender* one week later, Morris continued his derision of *Gone with the Wind* as an “insult to the race” and chastised the black actors cast to play the film’s stereotypical slave characters for forgetting “about self-respect, pride, and duty to their race.” He further criticized the black actors’ disregard for the progressive efforts of the NAACP and the black press in their “money-hungry contest for a few days work in a motion picture in Hollywood.”¹⁵⁴ Morris concluded his column with harsh criticism of the film’s “grinning flunkeys and cotton picker” stereotypes and, again, for the use of the derogatory word in the script, stating that the film’s writers “must have worn the letter ‘N’ off their typewriters in writing the screen adaptation.” Mailing information was provided for the newspaper’s readership to demand that such derogatory words be stricken from the script and were implored to “stay at home when *Gone with the Wind* comes to [their] town and theater.”¹⁵⁵ As for the *Sentinel*, black activist and founder Leon Washington also called for the boycott of Selznick’s film and all others that the producer may create in the future. Washington charged that *Gone with the Wind* “stinks with the Preachment of racial inferiority” and

¹⁵³ Earl J. Morris, “Gone with the Put On the Pot by Earl Morris: Predicts Picture will be Worse than ‘Birth of a Nation,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 4, 1939, 25, as cited in Leonard J. Leff, “David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind’: ‘The Negro Problem,’” *The Georgia Review* 38 (1984): 158.

¹⁵⁴ Earl J. Morris, “Race Actors Flayed for ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Chicago Defender*, February 11, 1939, 19. Black actors and extras reportedly made \$50,000 for their roles in *Gone with the Wind*, according to Lucius C. Harper, “Dustin’ Off the News: How Movies Make Millions with Our Help,” *The Chicago Defender*, April 1, 1939, 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

drew an indirect comparison between the film and the propaganda campaign used by Hitler and the Nazi Party that laid the groundwork for their anti-Semitic policies.

Washington seemingly believed that *Gone with the Wind* did Hitler one better due to its quality and unquestioned and overwhelming popularity among white Americans.¹⁵⁶

Despite early protests by the American Jewish community and the conservative recommendations of the NAACP's Walter White, it was the protests levied and called for by the black press that elicited a quick response from Selznick, especially after word got back to the production company that Washington was actively organizing a boycott of the film in Los Angeles. At this same time, Morris wrote another five-page article titled "Sailing with the Breeze" that he mailed directly to Selznick's office. A letter was attached to the article informing Selznick that Morris had also sent it to 133 other news outlets across the country. In the new article, Morris criticized the film's lack of "racial self respect" and asked readers to imagine themselves standing before the white production crew reading a script that "contains the word 'Nigger' several times." Morris charged that "racial pride was being wafted away on the wings of a gust of 'Wind.'" ¹⁵⁷ Selznick, to be sure, was reluctant to strike the word from the script, just as he refused to hire the NAACP-recommended black historical advisor for fear that such a person would oppose the film's humorous scenes (i.e. Prissy).¹⁵⁸ But Selznick had also learned from the protest generated by *the Birth of a Nation*, and feared the backlash that nationally

¹⁵⁶ Leon Washington, "Hollywood Goes Hitler One Better," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 9, 1939, as cited in Leff, "David Selznick's 'Gone with the Wind,'" 159; Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, 116.

¹⁵⁷ Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, 116.

¹⁵⁸ Molly Haskell, *Frankly, My Dear: Gone with the Wind Revisited* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 202.

circulated black publications like the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Chicago Defender* might inspire. Selznick, fearing such backlash, invited Morris to the headquarters of Selznick International Pictures to observe how the race issue was being handled by production.¹⁵⁹ On February 18, Morris ran another article in the *Courier* titled “Offensive Word and KKK Sequence Deleted from Film Version of ‘Gone with the Wind.’”¹⁶⁰ Morris returned to Selznick International one month later to have his picture taken with the production designer and attempted to speak for the entirety of the black press when he gave the film his blessing after seeing actors of both races work together on the sound stage.¹⁶¹ According to Morris, the protest worked; production could continue.

As another gesture toward muting Mitchell’s harsh racism, Selznick rearranged the scene in which Scarlett is sexually assaulted by a freedman on her ride through the Shantytown. In the film’s depiction, the black beast rapist stereotype is removed and a white man violates her on screen. Not free from stereotype, however, the black man in the scene steals the horse. Selznick’s omission of such racist depictions, and especially direct references to the KKK, was not solely due to black protest threatening the profits of his film. Selznick—himself Jewish—understood well that the Klan had resurged after

¹⁵⁹ The *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender* were both nationally circulated publications, each with a circulation of more than 150,000 in 1940. Notably, the Baltimore *Afro-American* also had a circulation similar in size, but was not engaged in the *Gone with the Wind* resistance, though it did call for Hollywood protests in early 1940 when rumors that a color remake of *The Birth of a Nation* started circulating. Similarly, Another large black publication, the NAACP’s official journal, *The Crisis*, was not engaged in the *Gone with the Wind* protest and reviewed the film claiming that there was “little material, directly affecting Negroes as a race, to which objection can be made.” For *The Crisis*, this was a major departure from the journal’s vehement contestation to *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915. John Stevens, “The Black Reaction to *Gone with the Wind*,” *Journal of Popular Film* 4 (1973): 366, quote on 368, 370.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Leff, David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind,’” 159-160; Earl J. Morris, “Offensive Word and KKK Sequence Deleted from Film Version of ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 18, 1939, as cited in Wilson, *The Making of Gone with the Wind*, 117.

¹⁶¹ Leff, “David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind,’” 160.

the release of *The Birth of a Nation* and had also been terrorizing American Jews and Catholics. For that reason, he previously had turned down a potentially lucrative offer to remake *The Birth of a Nation* into a four-hour color epic. Selznick was also, at least statedly, of the opinion that African Americans “ought come out decidedly on the right side of the ledger” and declared that “as a member of a race that is suffering very keenly from persecution...I am most sensitive to the feelings of minority peoples.”¹⁶²

Despite Selznick’s actions toward toning down Mitchell’s racism, he hardly made *Gone with the Wind* devoid of harsh anti-black stereotypes and racism, nor was he willing to. For example, after Morris’ visit to the production studio, Selznick still wanted to explore opportunities in which the word “nigger” could be put back into the script. He was advised not to, and the offensive word “Darkie” was used instead.¹⁶³ Additionally, the film’s slave characters remained the one-dimensional loyal-slave caricatures that were depicted in the novel. The ineptness of the slaves in the film was deliberately made by Selznick to serve as comic relief. Even the seemingly omitted Klan scene still took place off scene, cryptically referred to as a “political meeting.” Every white southerner, if not white American, who saw the scene in 1939 and 1940 understood the reference.

The pre-release protests to *Gone with the Wind*’s racism levied by Morris and Washington—in combination with the threats posed by the depths of their readerships and calls to boycott—are the primary reasons for Selznick’s removal of the most racist elements of Mitchell’s novel in his film. Selznick, though, credited the white secretary of

¹⁶² National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Letter from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to David O. Selznick, June 20, 1938, W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries; Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 196-198, quote on 198.

¹⁶³ Leff, “David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind,’” 160.

the NAACP, Walter White, for the removal of the word “nigger.” However, Selznick’s reluctance to fully abandon the *Gone with the Wind* project, as he did the remake of *Birth*, however, combined with Morris’ willingness to accept less abrasive racial epithets and black representations created a muted version of Mitchell’s anti-black, Lost Cause racism. As such, the white nationalist mythology of the novel—and its complete representation of Lost Cause ideology—remained in the film in a subtler, more palatable, yet easily identifiable form. Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind*—released on, at the time, a new experiential mass media technology with the ability to homogenize collective memory—was welcomed by white America with more [need the word] than Mitchell’s novel. It was, in fact, Mitchell’s novel that had laid the groundwork and sparked the anticipation. Earl Morris’ prediction that *Gone with the Wind* would be worse than *The Birth of a Nation* would in fact come true, but not because its racism is more offensive. *Gone with the Wind* is worse than *Birth* precisely because his protest against derogatory epithets and on screen references to the KKK muted the most complete version of the Lost Cause myth ever assembled for audiences in the mid-twentieth century and still today. With Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind*, White America received a homogenized visual representation of one of the nation’s most important founding mythologies that many still see as acceptable and often celebratory.

“A bigger and better *Birth of a Nation*”: White Contemporaries’ Praise for David O. Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind*

David Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind* premiered on Friday, December 15, 1939, at the Loew’s Grand Theater in Atlanta. The premiere was nothing short of a spectacle:

the theater's façade was renovated to look like a plantation house, an image of Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler hung from the roof, and an estimated 300,000 white people, mostly southerners, crowded in the Atlanta streets for a multi-day event that included a parade and costume ball. Georgia's governor declared the premiere day a state holiday (the previous day was also declared a municipal half-holiday for the events) and four living Confederate veterans "received a thunderous 'Rebel' yell" as they passed through the artificial Twelve Oaks on their way into the screening.¹⁶⁴ The following day, the front page of the *New York Times* described the scene:

Brilliant pencils of light crossed arms in the sky, powerful rays played on the false Twelve Oaks [plantation entrance] and on the artificial garden built on the sidewalk in front of [the theater]...[M]en and women choristers, all Negroes, wore antebellum plantation garb, great wide-brimmed straw hats, bright cotton shirts and dresses and red bandanas...Women who ordinarily might occupy a small space took five to six times the ordinary amount because of the hooped skirts. Many of the male guests wore pre-war costumes, too...[A] fair sprinkling of the young men [wore] Confederate uniforms which [sic] had belonged to their grandfathers. Most of them wore their grandfather's swords.¹⁶⁵

The spectacle of *Gone with the Wind's* premiere offers a glimpse into the anticipation for the film. *Gone with the Wind* was cultural sensation unrivaled by other

¹⁶⁴ Meyer Berger, "Atlanta is Won by Film of the South: Rebel' Yells for Miss Mitchell Mingle with Applause and Cheers of 2,000 at Premiere," *New York Times*, December 16, 1939, 1.; "Gone with the Wind' Widely Acclaimed in Atlanta," *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 1939, A7.

¹⁶⁵ Berger, "Atlanta is Won by Film of the South," 1.

films at the time. 1939's highest grossing movie, *The Wizard of Oz* (*Gone with the Wind* was released in December, 1939, and earned most of its money in 1940), paled in comparison and did not receive a premiere nearly as spectacular. The Loew's premiere—with its Confederate veterans and African Americans costumed as slaves—speaks volumes about what the Civil War, their heritage, and, by extension, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causist rendering of the South's past meant to contemporary white southerners. But the week's festivities did not outshine the film. Film reviewers immediately praised *Gone with the Wind* for living up to expectation and being an “accurate transference” of Mitchell's novel—a novel that white Americans already believed accurately represented the past.¹⁶⁶

As the film rolled, the all-white audience “cheered and applauded at the announcement of war with the North,” wrote Meyer Berger of the *New York Times*. “They all but came to their feet when the soldiers marched out of the city. They cheered repeatedly at every mention of the Old South. Over and over at the opening bars of ‘Dixie.’”¹⁶⁷ It was obvious, as the *Chicago Defender*'s reviewer wrote a few years earlier of the novel, that the white audience was captured by the film's Lost Causism “hook, line and sinker.”¹⁶⁸ The love story plot was again of secondary importance; the dramatization of real Civil War events elicited the strongest audience responses. The *New York Times* reported that both men and women were moved to tears at the sight of wounded and dead Confederates laying *en masse* beneath the Confederate flag during the film's hospital

¹⁶⁶ “‘Gone with Wind’ Called Masterful Work of Screen,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1939, A11.

¹⁶⁷ Berger, “Atlanta is Won by Film of the South,” 1.

¹⁶⁸ “Reviewer Points Out Motive Behind ‘Gone with the Wind,’” 19.

scene. After the movie ended Atlanta's Mayor William B. Hartsfield thanked all 2,000 attendees in the theater, including the white cast and Margaret Mitchell, who were also in attendance. Mayor Hartsfield then asked the audience to applaud the black cast members, none of whom were present. The black actors were legally restricted from the event due to Georgia's Jim Crow laws.¹⁶⁹

The Loew's premiere signaled that *Gone with the Wind* would become a cultural giant. It also indicated how white audiences, especially in the South, were going to experience the film, providing them with the opportunity to not only celebrate Mitchell's beloved story, but to experience southern heritage. Like with the novel, journalists and reviewers focused on the film's Lost Causist history and were quick to declare it accurate and brought to life by the film. Meyer Berger of the *New York Times*, for instance, wrote that "a new generation, and a handful of the old, relived history tonight at the premiere of 'Gone with the Wind.'"¹⁷⁰ Later, Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* would again call the film a "realistic account...of several lives ebbing and flowing through a period of revolutionary change" and argued that "the tragic collapse of a civilization in 'Gone with the Wind'" was a trove of historical lessons: "The Civil War was an 'inevitable conflict,'" wrote Crowther, "just as the present war between the democracies and the Fascists was also inevitable. The consequences of the latter may some day prove as shattering."¹⁷¹ Crowther continued:

¹⁶⁹ Berger, "Atlanta is Won by Film of the South," 1.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Bosley Crowther, "Second 'Wind': Some Reasons For and Thoughts Upon Seeing 'GWTW' Over Again," *New York Times*, January 26, 1941, X5.

Today we are grimly aware of the horrible realities of destruction, and our reasons insistently tell us that because of it—win, lose or draw—the democracies are bound to experience some sort of unpredictable social change. And the fatal parallel which every great war has to another is drawn before our eyes.¹⁷²

That the Civil War was a conflict started for the protection of slavery and that the war brought about the destruction of a slave society and the freedom of more than four million people was not worth mentioning for Crowther. Just as in the Lost Cause memory of the war, the institution of slavery and the millions who toiled under it were invisible in his review. Instead, the real tragedy was the destruction of a civilization that ushered in an era of “shattering” consequences due to the social changes experienced during Reconstruction.

Reminiscent of the novel’s overwhelming positive reception, glowing film reviews expressing appreciation for *Gone with the Wind*’s history were common across the United States and negative reviews in the mainstream press were rare. According to one Gallup poll, more than 56 million Americans waited anxiously to see “an epic page of history made absorbingly visual” (at the time, the entire population of the U.S. was under 132 million).¹⁷³ One reviewer for the *Motion Picture Herald* called it “a bigger and

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Richard Griffith, “‘Gone’ Wins High Praise on Broadway,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1940, 6; “‘Gone with the Wind’ to Open Here Dec. 19: Double New York Premiere Set for Capitol and Astor,” *New York Times*, November 22, 1939, 17; Frank S. Nugent, “The Screen in Review: David Selznick’s ‘Gone with the Wind’ Has Its Long-Awaited Premiere at Astor and Capitol, Recalling Civil War Plantation Days of the South—Seen as Treating the Book with Great Fidelity,” *New York Times*, Dec. 20, 1939, 31; Quote from Edwin Shcallert, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Thrills Throng: Unveiling of Great War Feature Welcomed by Spectacular Assemblage of First-Nighters at Elaborate Premiere,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 1939, 13.

better *Birth of a Nation*”—alluding to not only the film’s perceived historical accuracy, but also to its cinematic importance—while others defended the film against what criticisms were levied against its historical narrative as “pride, not sectionalism.”¹⁷⁴ *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* remarked that the film was for all Americans, North and South, since it was the “story of great events in American history.”¹⁷⁵ Indeed it was, as more than 17,000 Bostonians purchased tickets on the first day of its release in the city that was once the center of the anti-slavery movement.¹⁷⁶ In the South, reception of *Gone with the Wind* endorsed southern exceptionalism. The editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, for instance, believed that the film was about a civilization that “seems never have to died—or, rather, to have died and risen in new strength and beauty.”¹⁷⁷ Others erroneously praised the film for “telling the truth” and “refraining from caricature, either the romantic exaggeration of Southern partiality or the impossible nobility of visionary Northerners.”¹⁷⁸ Interviewed

¹⁷⁴ *Motion Picture Herald*, December 16, 1939, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 118; Edwin Camp, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Stirs the South: Pageantry at Premiere of Film Revives Recollections and Symbols of Confederacy,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1939, 77.

¹⁷⁵ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 28, 1940, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 120.

¹⁷⁶ Tom Wicker, “Why, Miss Scarlett, How Well You’ve Aged,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1986, BR1. Political commentator Tom Wicker cited the number of Boston ticket purchases in his introduction for the fiftieth anniversary edition of *Gone with the Wind*. The introduction was also adapted and ran in the *New York Times*.

¹⁷⁷ *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 27, 1940, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 136-137; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 3, 1940, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 136; Quote in *Atlanta Journal*, December 14, 15, 1939, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 135.

¹⁷⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 13, 14, 15, 16, 1939, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 135.

by journalists, survivors of the Civil War were convinced that the film accurately portrayed their childhoods and the South's history.¹⁷⁹

White reviewers also frequently bought into the idea that the Old South was a laidback agrarian paradise of wealth and distinction, often regarding Tara and the planter class as representative of a historical white middle-class that lived throughout the region as a whole, while repeatedly failing to ask the most basic questions about *Gone with the Wind's* rendering of institutional slavery.¹⁸⁰ Instead, reviewers commented on Hattie McDaniel's portrayal of Mammy as "a thoroughly convincing Negro woman of the Old South, many of whom survive in many communities," and believed that Mammy represented "the ideals of the South" more than any other character.¹⁸¹ Referencing numerous non-southern reviewers, Campbell captures the sentiment of white America regarding Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* when he alludes to a representational change of the South ushered in by *Gone with the Wind*:

"Many reviewers...insisted that *GWTW* presented its theme without undue favoritism toward the South, a judgment which [sic] revealed the extent of the mythology's credibility. *GWTW* and its predecessors made a strong case that the region was not solely responsible for the Civil War; both sides were defending a lifestyle, a mode of society. The oversimplified

¹⁷⁹ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 13, 16, 1939, as cited in and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 135; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, January 27, 1940, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 137; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, January 27, 1940, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 137; *Nashville Banner*, December 16, 1939, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 137.

¹⁸⁰ Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 133-134, 138-139.

¹⁸¹ *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 27, 1940, as cited and quoted in Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 137; "Gone with the Wind' Called Masterful Work of Screen," A11.

pictures made the point, as one Connecticut writer phrased it, that people “merely misunderstood the motives underlying two completely different types of people” of two “contrasting sets of ideals.” Once the sincerity of the Confederate cause was understood and its way of life so lovingly recreated, even a Northerner could—as a Boston writer postulated—“rise up and whistle ‘Dixie’ along with the rabid Yankee-hating Georgians.”¹⁸²

The release of Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind* is a watershed moment in the history of the Lost Cause and, as scholars of Lost Cause memory have often stated in passing, made *Gone with the Wind* into the most powerful purveyor of Lost Cause memory during the twentieth century.¹⁸³ The film, like Mitchell’s novel, was incredibly popular among white Americans and certainly was not hampered by a Mason-Dixon boundary. *Gone with the Wind* instead performed extraordinarily well among almost all white viewers, with the notable exception of some aging Civil War veterans of the Union army who boycotted the movie and attempted to have it banned due to its depictions of a marauding Union soldier and Sherman’s army destroying the city while civilians were still fleeing.¹⁸⁴ Selznick appeared to have learned the lessons of prior films such as *The Birth of a Nation* and *So Red the Rose* that performed poorly among non-southern audiences due to their overt anti-North sentiments. By that virtue, Selznick had created

¹⁸² Campbell, Jr., *The Celluloid South*, 139.

¹⁸³ Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); David Wilson, “Introduction,” in Georgia Lee Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), xviii; Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know About the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 4; Brian Steel Wills, *Gone with the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema* (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 37.

¹⁸⁴ “Illinoisian Heads G.A.R.; Boycott of Movie Resolved,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 1, 1939, 16; G.A.R. Hears Protest On ‘Gone with Wind’ Vain in Pennsylvania, *Washington Evening Star*, September 1, 1939.

the most complete version of the Lost Cause to ever exist—on a medium that allowed viewers to experience their national past emotionally, homogenizing white memory around its visual imaginings and narrative—and that was also palatable to most generations of white Americans. The film’s racism, too, was significantly toned down from Mitchell’s version, ensuring that the film would not be so outlandishly offensive that it would be rejected by whites who in some capacity were sympathetic to the plights of the African American community. The reconciling capability of the film was not lost on viewers at the time. Writing for the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1939, journalist Robert Quillen, in an article titled “Atlanta Should be Proud of Tribute to the South,” wrote:

“‘Gone with the Wind’ is more than a great historical novel. It is an embassy of good will, a healer of ancient wounds...‘Gone with the Wind’...has done more than any other single influence in the last 75 years to erase sectional lines and make us one nation...[It] will march through all of America, conquering hearts as it goes.”¹⁸⁵

Following decades of veteran reunions, battlefield commemorations, and war in which southerners fought to show their patriotism for the United States, *Gone with the Wind* finally reconciled ideological divisions between the North and the South. To be sure, the white American nation had already accepted imperialism, scientific racism, and mounted resistance to immigrants from eastern Europe and Asia that they perceived threatened Anglo-Saxon dominance, so the white supremacy of the Lost Cause was usable for mid-twentieth century white Americans. The Civil War was thus framed as just a misunderstanding—the causes of the two sides equal—in light of white reconciliation

¹⁸⁵ Jennifer Word Dickey, “‘A Tough Little Patch of History’: Atlanta’s Marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* Memory,” (Ph.D. Diss.: Georgia State University, 2007), 38; Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 135.

and slavery framed as unimportant to either. Lingering sectional wounds were healed and blundering nineteenth century politicians and abolitionists were to blame for the lingering conflict. The Lost Cause was at this point hegemonic; the southern myth, to white America, was historical fact and allowed them to understand their present racial tensions through the lens of a collective national past.

“a weapon of terror against black America”: Radical African-American Resistance to David Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind*, 1939-1940

The success of *Gone with the Wind* among white America was not simply due to bad history lessons, nor can it be explained as mere entertainment. Something far deeper and more insidious was at work. As Campbell argues, *Gone with the Wind* appealed to white America because “[t]he South was portrayed as an uncomplicated society, in marked contrast to each story’s postwar alterations, and presented far better than any other production an impossible dream with which many viewers were fascinated” in the face of encroaching urban, commercial, and racial anxieties.¹⁸⁶ More important, however, was the reality that the Lost Cause is a founding myth—not just of the South, but also of all of white America. The Lost Cause, in other words, provides an explanation for one of the nation’s original sins: America’s racialized institution of chattel slavery. The Lost Cause, however, is not just a justification, but is also an exercise of heritage and nation-making that naturalized a belief that America is a white nation by distorting historical injustices with a belief in racial inferiority and historical myth. Such a conviction provided a justification for continued racial suppression by imagining a time when racial

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 127.

tensions were not as high. In other words, Lost Causism both justified racial violence and segregation and provided a historical cover, reinforced by white American identity, that imagined blacks resistant to the social order (and the illegitimate privileges it afforded to white people) as the true historical and current historical villains. The Lost Cause thus has never simply been an explanation for the Civil War and slavery written by white southerners who don't want to come out on the wrong side of history. The Lost Cause has always been a defense of, and argument for, continued white supremacy.

There is no better example of Lost Causist southern heritage being used to subjugate African Americans and uphold white social stature than the Jim Crow restrictions that kept African Americans out of the Loew's premiere, unless, of course, they were dressed as slaves and served white patrons. According to Grace Elizabeth Hale in *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, the culture of Jim Crow would never have existed in the South if white southerners did not believe in their national mythology of benign slavery and happy slaves. Only through historicizing, and hence naturalizing, Lost Causist myths into a coherent narrative could southern whites justify the implementation of a social order that disenfranchised, murdered, and restricted African Americans from public places. The Lost Cause ideology, in other words, served as that cultural glue that held together disparate white southern communities fearful of black equality around a set of regional and racial myths that justified Jim Crow, despite the real, complex, and varied histories of race and class divisions within those communities.¹⁸⁷ The cultural work provided by Lost Causist

¹⁸⁷ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998); Ivan Evans, *Cultures of Violence: Racial Violence and the Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 248.

artifacts, rituals, and celebrations were vital to this process of creating and sustaining a white nationalist memory of the Civil War and slavery. As Hale writes,

“[t]he 1939 Atlanta pageant of *Gone With the Wind* stood as the pinnacle of race making...The spectacle embodied the contemporary universalization of southern segregation on the one hand and yet its national exposure on the other...[T]he pageant was a...very public staging of *Gone With the Wind*'s performance of 'history' as a narration of the origins of modern southern whiteness.”¹⁸⁸

White Americans did not notice the nation-making that was taking place around the Lost Causist phenomenon called *Gone with the Wind*. They instead bought into the myth's lies about slavery in the face of 1930s racial tension. African Americans, however, understood well the violence and oppression sanctioned by nationalist mythologies like *Gone with the Wind*. They responded accordingly.

Following the release of *Gone with the Wind* to theaters, backlash in the black press started immediately. Black poet Melvin B. Tolson wrote with a clarity that white America did not, and many could not, recognize. Writing for the *Washington Tribune*, Tolson proclaimed that “‘Gone with the Wind is more dangerous than ‘Birth of a Nation.’” He called it nothing more than “anti-Negro, anti-Yankee, KKK propaganda...a falsification of history.” Alluding to Selznick's more palatable, toned-down film version, Tolson continued, “‘The Birth of a Nation’ was such a barefaced lie that a moron could see through it. ‘Gone with the Wind’ is such a subtle lie that it will be swallowed as the

¹⁸⁸ Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 283.

truth by millions of whites and blacks alike.”¹⁸⁹ Tolson understood, evidenced by his outlining of the Lost Cause myth, how the film would affect white American viewers. Such viewers, he writes, would internalize that

The North was wrong in fighting to free the black man...Negroes didn't want to be free anyway. Slaves were happy. The greatest pleasure of the slave was to serve massa...All slaves were black; no white men had any mulatto children. There were no slave markets. Yankee soldiers went through Georgia raping white virgins. Negroes loved (with an undying love) the white masters, and hated the poor whites because they didn't own Negroes. Dixie was a heaven on earth until the damned Yankees and carpetbaggers came...The Negroes were so dumb that they hated the very Yankees who wanted to free them. All masters were gentlemen—without high-yellow mistresses.¹⁹⁰

Tolson concluded that “[t]hese are the untruthful things white people, all over the world, will believe when they see ‘Gone with the Wind.’” Such a film, as he understood it, was evidence that “Southern whites [understood] Negroes.” By his calculation that was the reason such myths were present in modern films and “the reason [whites] treat [blacks] as they do. [Whites] need the Ku Klux Klan to keep Negroes in their place.”¹⁹¹

Similarly, in a column entitled “Dripping From Other Pens,” in the *Chicago Defender*, African American communist leader William L. Patterson praised the city of

¹⁸⁹ Tolson, “‘Gone with the Wind’ is More Dangerous than ‘Birth of a Nation,’” 141.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 143-144.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Chicago's banning of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1939, a goal he notes was only accomplished by sustained protest. He then called for other "anti-democratic" films to be banned as well, and marked *Gone with the Wind* "as another such vicious propaganda movie."¹⁹² The *Pittsburgh Courier* also reengaged in the anti-*Gone with the Wind* resistance by publishing a lengthy cartoon titled "Gone with the Wind," in which a wind, labeled "Propaganda Films," blew papers marked "Facts" off of a Hollywood producer's desk."¹⁹³ More importantly, however, Patterson dedicated a lengthy piece to the actual power behind *Gone with the Wind* in the *Defender* a few months later, after its unprecedented popularity and cultural power became clearer following its release. He writes:

"Gone with the Wind" has glorified slavery. In glorifying the slavery of yesterday it has deliberately thrown down the gage of battle to those who are seeking to advance democracy today. 'Gone with the Wind' has martyred the southern plantation owner. In martyring this relic of barbarism "Gone with the Wind" not only "morally justifies" the slave breeding pen and the degradation of Negro womanhood and manhood, it has scorned upon and desecrated the love that democratic white America has for freedom and truth. The Smell of the slave market is upon the picture. Let me say here, that the slave market of yesterday with black man and woman upon the block is 'morally justified' in 'Gone with the Wind,' in order that the terror of the landlords, the Klan and the lynching

¹⁹² Patterson, "Stop 'Birth of a Nation,'" 11.

¹⁹³ "Gone with the Wind" Cartoon, as referenced in Stevens, "The Black Reaction to *Gone with the Wind*, 367.

bee of today will be favorably understood and accepted. The return of slave conditions is the objective.¹⁹⁴

Patterson only got more forceful and more lucid as he wrote, calling *Gone with the Wind* a “sequel to ‘The Birth of a Nation’...Infinitely more vicious.” Patterson understood well that *Gone with the Wind* derived its power from the Lost Cause white nationalist myth and added to it “infamy by reason of the time at which it [was] launched”—a time when Klan membership and violence was growing and as economic and political conditions grew worse for African Americans left behind by New Deal.¹⁹⁵ Patterson continues:

Approximately half of the Negro population of the country is without work...Millions are without relief of any kind...The Klan is riding. In Atlanta on the 25th of November 8,000 Klansmen marched. Undoubtedly they have called for ‘Gone with the Wind’...At the same time the Negro people are beginning to appreciate that there is need for national unity. Ours is a people’s struggle. We [now] begin to see it so... ‘Gone with the Wind’ comes at such a moment. Can anyone doubt by that its release was a conscious matter...aimed at the white sharecropper, the jobless white workers, the poverty stricken white migrants roaming the country in their jalopies, the literate white youth who are cut off from school because their

¹⁹⁴ William L. Patterson, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Lies about the Civil War, It Glorifies Slavery, Sons of Rebels Cheer It, A Farce on Democracy,” *Chicago Defender*, January 6, 1940, 15.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

landlords looted the school treasury. ‘Gone with the Wind’ is aimed at American Democracy.¹⁹⁶

Patterson recognized that *Gone with the Wind*’s appearance was inherently tied to the racial struggle of the era, labeling it “a weapon of terror against black America... a weapon of lies and misrepresentation calculated to turn white America away from the democratic struggle and against Negroes.”¹⁹⁷ In other words, Patterson knew in 1940 that *Gone with the Wind* derived its power and its appeal to white Americans from the southern myth it so thoroughly, and vividly, displayed. He knew that the myths and stereotypes it upheld served to unite white Americans—many of whom should instead unite with the black race in a struggle against the “economic royalists”—with a perceived collective national past and values of racial superiority that upheld, justified, and naturalized the white supremacist order. For Patterson, as is true of the phenomenon, historical and racial misrepresentation was central to the success of *Gone with the Wind* in white America, as evidenced by “[t]he entire preparation for the disgraceful premiere of ‘Gone with the Wind’ and the still more provocative manner in which it was carried through with its rebel yells and Negro baiting.” This, to Patterson, was proof of *Gone with the Wind*’s “un-American character” and its central purpose: “the moral justification for the denial of all demands for full and complete democratic rights” of the black race.¹⁹⁸ The phenomenon’s sustained success and popularity in white America throughout the twentieth century and to the contemporary moment—eras marred by anti-black racism—is further verification.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

With regard to a black communist like Patterson, it would be too simple to trace his understanding of the deepest underlying motives of propaganda films like *Gone with the Wind* to the “big industrialists” who divided and subjugated workforces through racial conflict, to plutocracy, due to his mention of them in his columns. Undoubtedly, such conflict did benefit his “economic royalists” by suppressing wages, worsening work conditions, fragmenting the labor struggle, hampering unionization, and diverting attention away from the intertwined realities of the capitalist, state, and imperial systems. However, Patterson was not merely a class reductionist, nor did his article speak of housing and wage discrimination as vague starting points of racism exercised for ill-defined reasons. Instead, Patterson understood that racial and historical myths—rooted in a desire for and sense of white superiority dating back to the era slavery—were not only central to the propaganda, but were also central to the white culture that underpinned the horrendous system of white supremacy leveraged against blacks by *Gone with the Wind*, by the Klan, by the political order of Jim Crow, and by the employers and landlords that upheld and benefited from the system across the nation. To put another way, for Patterson, the racism of the day was not merely rooted in disproportionate black poverty, but was also a deliberate exercise of white supremacist power and ideology within American society and politics that intersected with class and that was utilized by an oppressive system of capitalism that not only creates inequalities, but that exacerbates those that already exist. One need not look any further than the New Deal legislation with which black America in 1940 was deeply familiar. That legislation, meant to improve poor American’s quality of life, left behind black agricultural workers and failed to address the political and civil inequalities of Jim Crow while the KKK seized direct and

powerful influence in state and national politics. Accordingly, Patterson then branded the existing ideology of white supremacy with *Gone with the Wind*, knowing that it would serve the ideology's myths more insidiously, and longer, than was possible for *The Birth of a Nation* or any other cultural artifact before it. Patterson thus concluded by calling for the ban of *Gone with the Wind* and for black citizens the country over to appeal to Washington and demand that the "subversive and un-American" film be removed from theaters. "'Gone with the Wind' is a warning that cannot go unheeded," he wrote.¹⁹⁹

With *Gone with the Wind*, Patterson and African Americans across the United States saw what white Americans newspapers called "a revival of the spirit of the old South," only now across the country.²⁰⁰ *Gone with the Wind*, as many black Americans understood immediately, had much larger issues than historical inaccuracies at its heart. Understanding the intrinsic link between a cultural product like *Gone with the Wind* and the Lost Causist national myth that it carries, and the threat it posed to black communities, Patterson then compiled a list of demands for protestors to make to Washington officials, fearing the violence and persecution that *Gone with the Wind* might inspire. Patterson wrote, "Negro America can demand that:

1. A concerted persistent and systematic campaign shall be waged by every department of the United States...[to stop the] spread of all forms of racial hatred and prejudices to the end that no expression of racial discrimination shall be possible in government circles.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

2. That the federal government shall sharply direct the attention of the country as a whole to the growing wave of Klan and other un-American persecution of the Negro people.
3. That the democratic rights and civil liberties of the Negro people shall be maintained inviolate.
4. There must be an assurance from responsible governmental heads that the Constitution in its entirety shall apply and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments specifically shall apply in all matters pertaining to the Negro people.”²⁰¹

One week after Patterson’s piece, the editorial board of the *Chicago Defender* echoed Patterson’s fear that *Gone with the Wind*’s “anti-Negro” and “viciously un-American” propaganda would incite mass violence and the suppression of civil liberties by selling the lies of the “lynch inciting South” to the entire nation. The editorial board wrote: “At the throat of black America, ‘Gone with the Wind’ is poised like a dagger...men at the highest places of government silent... The black man is becoming in America is becoming the victim of a Hitlerian campaign of a savage nature.” The board then asked, “Is it not time for a mass protest?” calling the film “the voice of the lyncher coming from the screen,” and then answered: “Let our pulpits voice their protests and our public men get busy... The attack sweeps from the economic and political fronts to the cultural front. We must organize our indignation. The National Negro Congress and the [NAACP] have a task ahead.”²⁰² The NAACP under Walter White would not engage in

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² “‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Chicago Defender*, January 13, 1940, 14.

the protest, but shortly after the *Defender's* call to action, Chicago's labor and black church leaders organized an appeal to the Chicago Board of Censors to ban the film. The appeal failed, but eighteen prominent church, labor, and black business leaders in Chicago published and signed a public statement that called upon all "lovers of freedom and democracy, all who truly stand for the units of the American people, to join us in the protest against the presentation of this film." The statement read:

"Nothing that has come out of Hollywood in recent years insults and maligns the glorious history of the Negro people in America like this piece of anti-Civil War propaganda. Negro people in America were never docile slaves. The history of the Revolutionary War of 1776 and the war of 1812 is filled with heroic deeds performed by Negro slaves. These enslaved men and women were fighting not only for liberation of this country from British tyranny, not only for the extension of the immortal democratic principles of Jefferson, Thomas Paine, and others, but they were also fighting as well to end the infamous institution of human slavery and to...secure their own freedom. 'Gone with the Wind' has made mockery of the magnificent past of these black Americans."²⁰³

The public statement is a clear refutation of Lost Cause myths about slavery and the slaves, and was yet another call to action. When the statement was released to Chicago's public, Patterson organized and led demonstrations against the film at two theaters in Chicago.

On the night of January 25, 1940, a cold wind blew off of Lake Michigan as Selznick's opus made its debut in Chicago. The film, as expected, attracted large

²⁰³ "Protest Film as Incitement for Lynchings," *Kansas Whip*, February 3, 1940, 1.

audiences, overwhelmingly white. Patterson arrived at the film's release with more than 100 picketers. "The pickets," according to the *Chicago Defender*, "made up of both races, represented the International Labor Defense, The National Negro Congress, the Workers Alliance, and the American Student Union."²⁰⁴ Patterson's protestors marched in front of both the Woods and Oriental downtown theaters, urging boycotts of the film and carrying large banners that read "Boycott Gone with the Wind," "Negroes Were Never Docile Slaves," "Gone with the Wind Slanders the Poor White South," "Gone with the Wind Stirs Up Race Prejudice," and "Abraham Lincoln Would Have Banned Gone with the Wind."²⁰⁵ Protestors chastised white patrons at the theaters saying that *Gone with the Wind* "constituted a lynch incitement such as 'led to the disgraceful riots of 1919 in Chicago."²⁰⁶

Protests continued in Chicago on February 5, picketers again carrying banners that decried the racial violence sanctioned by *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism. "Gone with the Wind Incites Race Hatred" and "Gone with the Wind Is a Blow At American Democracy" were two on display.²⁰⁷ As a result of the discontent, the film was not released to theaters in Chicago's South Side where more than 300,000 African Americans lived following the protests, but it would be screened to white audiences elsewhere in the city.²⁰⁸ The Chicago protestors were thus successful at keeping *Gone with the Wind* out

²⁰⁴ "Chicagoans Picket 'Gone with the Wind': More than 100 Urge Boycott of Epic Film," *Chicago Defender*, February 3, 1940, 1.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ "Protest Film as Incitement for Lynchings," 1.

²⁰⁷ "Picket 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Chicago Defender*, February 10, 1940, 11.

²⁰⁸ "Chicagoans Picket 'Gone with the Wind,'" 1.

of their own communities, but were unable to stop its release to the white areas of the city that they were largely segregated from and held little power. *Gone with the Wind*'s premiere followed the city's lines of segregation.

The *Defender*'s readership was national and Patterson's columns were read widely. *Gone with the Wind* protests erupted in other American cities. On March 9, picketers organized by the National Negro Congress gathered outside of Washington D.C.'s Lincoln Theater with signs that read "You'd Be Sweet Too Under A Whip" and "Gone with the Wind Hangs the Free Negro."²⁰⁹ In Canton, Ohio, several attorneys led a group of all-black protestors in a failed attempt to have the movie banned from local theaters. The *Defender*, in response, published an editorial cartoon of a cowboy branded "Gone with the Wind" using a lynch rope to keep a white and black man from shaking hands.²¹⁰ In New York City, early January, black New Yorkers likened *Gone with the Wind* to *The Birth of a Nation* in letters demanding that Mayor Fiorello La Guardia take action against the film, building on the simultaneous protest of more than twenty NYC labor unions that "drew up and signed a resolution...condemning 'Gone with the Wind'... [as] reactionary and [for] using every opportunity to slander and belittle the [black] Race." The resolution represented thousands of city workers and also "claimed that the picture was aimed at trying to destroy the growing co-operation between workers of the races."²¹¹ Additionally, demonstrations were planned against the film then being screened on Broadway, prompting management of the downtown theaters to take action

²⁰⁹ *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 9, 1940, as cited in Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War*, 218; Photograph of *Gone with the Wind* Protest, Washington D.C., 1940, Scurlock Studios Records, ca. 1905-1994, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

²¹⁰ Chadwick; *The Reel Civil War*, 218; Stevens, "The Black Reaction to *Gone with the Wind*," 368.

²¹¹ "Unions Rap 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Chicago Defender*, January 13, 1940, 4.

to thwart the protests.²¹² Due to the efforts by theater management, in addition to internal conflicts among black leaders in Harlem, the Broadway protests were halted, though the fire for protest was rekindled as plans were made to release *Gone with the Wind* in Harlem's legendary Victoria theater on April 4, complete with a firework show, a dizzying light display, and celebrity speeches.²¹³ The release of Selznick's racist film in the heart of the neighborhood that hosted the 1920s black cultural renaissance did not happen. Once again, the release of *Gone with the Wind* followed segregation lines in a northern city.

Protests continued at what, to many, was *Gone with the Wind*'s most legendary night. At the Academy Awards in 1940, black protestors assembled at the Ambassador Hotel after months spent urging Hattie McDaniel to refuse the Academy Award for best supporting actress on the grounds that her character Mammy was a racial stereotype long popular among white southerners. To be clear, her successful nomination for the award was not solely merit based, and was instead a result of a long campaign by Selznick's public relations department to paradoxically promote both black equality in films and, more importantly, to quiet racial criticism of *Gone with the Wind*.²¹⁴ In other words, Selznick International took black protest seriously, but attempted to ameliorate cries of racism by actively pushing for blacks getting work in Hollywood, even if they played the stereotypes that justified their own suppression. For McDaniel, however, her answer to criticism was mostly different variations of "I would rather make seven hundred dollars a

²¹² "Harlem to Protest Film 'Gone with the Wind': Movie Called Second 'Birth of a Nation,'" *Chicago Defender*, January 6, 1940, 2.

²¹³ "Harlem in Divided on 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1940, 20.

²¹⁴ Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War*, 219.

week playing a maid than seven dollars being one.”²¹⁵ Her retorts were similar to public statements made by black actor Oscar Polk, who justified his decision to play the slave character “Pork” by claiming that such characters were “true to life” and that the black race “should be proud [to] have risen so far above the status of [enslavement].”²¹⁶ Such statements were never satisfactory to black Americans who recognized the white ideological power in the myth and the national past it defined, even though many sympathized with the actors and praised their acting abilities. Columnist Al Monroe’s response in the *Chicago Defender* is emblematic:

Certainly [*Gone with the Wind*] was written to glorify the South and, the irony of it all is that the very victims of the brutality during slavery and the Civil War were to serve as the glorifiers... [But] our battle is not with the authors or producer of ‘Gone with the Wind’ or its actors but the South itself.²¹⁷

At the awards banquet in Coconut Grove, CA, McDaniel sat separate from her white cast mates and won best supporting actress and received the award. In her acceptance speech, with the Oscar sitting on the podium in front of her, McDaniel thanked the Academy and said, “I shall always hold it as a beacon for anything that I may be able to do in the future. I sincerely hope I shall always be a credit to my race and to the motion picture industry.”²¹⁸ Anti-racism activists were furious. The NAACP-head Walter

²¹⁵ Hattie McDaniel, quoted in Haskell, *Frankly, My Dear*, 214.

²¹⁶ Oscar Polk, “Oscar Polk Defends ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Chicago Defender*, April 8, 1939, 21. Polk also did not want boycotts or protests to the film to continue.

²¹⁷ Monroe, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Has Too Many Insults,” 21.

²¹⁸ Hattie McDaniel Acceptance Speech, 12th Annual Academy Awards, Los Angeles, California, February 29, 1940.

White put his inaction aside and launched an attack that charged McDaniel guilty of racial betrayal, particularly because Selznick did not heed his advice to hire a black historical advisor.²¹⁹ White would later comment that “[w]hatever sentiment there was for federal anti-lynching laws evaporated during the *Gone with the Wind* vogue,” an observation of a very real consequence of *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism.²²⁰ Despite her sincerity and the moving nature of her speech, the black caricatures played by actors such as McDaniel angered African Americans, and, as a result of *Gone with the Wind*’s success, continued to be a fixture of Hollywood film-making for decades to come.

Gone with the Wind protests occurred across the United States, though only in the northern states due to Jim Crow restrictions on black presence in public space in the South. Regardless, protestors—particularly black protestors with connection to communist and labor groups—scolded theatergoers outside of multiple box offices with their anti-*Gone with the Wind* shouts and banners, forcing theater management and local police to take action against them. In the end these protests would do very little to stop *Gone with the Wind* outside of areas like Chicago’s South Side and Harlem, further representing the ideological and physical divide between a white America taken by the Lost Cause myth—at best, oblivious to its consequences—and a segregated black America that understood the myth’s horrific consequences well. As journalism scholar John D. Stevens writes, “[i]t is doubtful that many whites even knew that the film was

²¹⁹ Haskell, *Frankly, My Dear*, 213-214.

²²⁰ Walter white, as quoted in Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War*, 218; also in Peter Noble, *The Negro in Films* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kinnikat Press, 1948), 78.

controversial in the black community,” despite the presence of the pickets and their publicity in the black press.²²¹

However, such protest does represent a sustained and concerted effort by black Americans, with the help of labor organizations and some white Americans, to resist the white supremacist order by taking aim at its underlying justifications and logics. The *Gone with the Wind* protests are thus indicative of the long struggle of African Americans, and their increasing organization, in the United States for equality prior to the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties—a struggle that *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causist myth was called forth to delegitimize. Furthermore, the protest to the film's release indicates that black Americans understood well the power and influence of the myths that undergirded *Gone with the Wind*'s creation as well as the threat it posed as a possible longstanding artifact to those myths. Understanding *Gone with the Wind* in this way remains elusive to the white viewers, readers, and participants in the phenomenon to this day.

²²¹ Stevens, “The Black Reaction to *Gone with the Wind*,” 366.

Chapter 2: *Gone with the Wind's* Pervasive Cultural Influence in Twentieth-century Fiction and Film

Despite organized resistance to *Gone with the Wind* amongst America's black and Jewish communities, both the novel and the film were unprecedented popular culture successes, driven by white America. Mitchell's novel remained the most popular novel in America for years following its publication in 1936, both benefiting from and bolstering the anticipation and eventual popularity of Selznick's 1939 film. The popularity of *Gone with the Wind* did not fade and, due to the powerful Lost Cause national narrative it contained, only increased in influence and created a new memory phenomenon that melded white nationalist founding mythologies with popular culture fiction that trafficked through mass cultural media technologies. By the end of 1941, the film and novel were not standalone cultural products, but were instead a distinct nationalistic memory phenomenon called *Gone with the Wind*.

As the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon developed, importantly, it came to be understood as the white national memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction during the decades leading up to the civil rights movement. As the phenomenon grew in influence, its impact is seen on cultural and consumerist products that brought *Gone with the Wind* to a public eager to consume it. *Gone with the Wind* was, in other words, marketed heavily and on everything from clothing to whiskey to home décor. Hollywood and popular novels that took the Civil War era as their subjects also lived in the shadow of *Gone with the Wind*, which not affected not only what the authors and filmmakers believed about the South and Civil War but also how their novels and films would be

marketed to the general public. *Gone with the Wind*'s mythology thus became the *de facto* imagining of the Civil War era, the central moment in the nation's past.

The *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon continued to grow as its imagery and mythology was celebrated, commercialized on everyday consumer items, and as its mythology transcended Mitchell's and Selznick's novel and film to become the white national popular memory of the Civil War. However, *Gone with the Wind* itself never went away, securing numerous rereleases across the United States during the twentieth century. Most importantly, the film, decades old, remained one of the most popular movies in the country as white patrons flocked to movie houses to consume its Lost Causeism during the African American civil rights movement of the 1960s. The Lost Cause, defined by *Gone with the Wind*, provided white Americans not only with a refuge from the racial tension across the U.S., but also with a usable historical narrative to justify their resistance to black equality and civil rights. Consequently, as I demonstrate, *Gone with the Wind*'s popularity remained extraordinarily high throughout the century, resonating with the white America most at times of increased racial tensions, or around landmark events such as the Civil War Centennial in the 1960s or the release of *Roots* in 1977. *Gone with the Wind*, in short, helped Americans justify white supremacy and resist black equality by allowing them to ignore, and be hostile to, the realities of historical racial oppression.

“Pressing the Bible closely”: Record Popularity and *Gone with the Wind* as a Distinct Memory Phenomenon, 1936-1942

In both novel and film, *Gone with the Wind* was a sensation among white Americans, not just white southerners. Mitchell's novel remained the "outstanding 'best seller' in the country" throughout 1937, despite reduced sales. In April of that year, almost one year following its publication, the *New York Times* reported that *Gone with the Wind*'s "weekly sales are still in the four figures, which is large considering the time since its publication."²²² By February, 1938, about four months shy of the anniversary of its second year in publication, total copies printed almost totaled an enormous 1.5 million.²²³ For reference, the best-selling novel of 1939, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, was printed only 430,000 times in its first ten months on shelves.²²⁴

Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* was published at a time in which the Civil-War generation was dying off. In 1938, the same year as the final Gettysburg Battlefield reunion for Union and Confederate veterans, only an estimated 8,000 Civil War veterans were still alive, and fewer than 2,000 attended the Blue-Grey reunion. The average age of the Civil War veterans who attended the reunion in 1938 was ninety-four.²²⁵ For comparison, 56,000 Civil War veterans attended the fiftieth-anniversary reunion at Gettysburg in 1913, two years before the release of *The Birth of a Nation*.²²⁶ *Gone with the Wind*, then, was released to a much different American public than Thomas Dixon,

²²² "Best Seller Sales Off: 'Gone with the Wind' is Affected by Setting of \$3 Price," *New York Times*, April 4, 1937, 63.

²²³ "Book Notes," *New York Times*, February 9, 1938, 17.

²²⁴ "1939 Book Awards Given by Critics: Elgin Groseclose's 'Ararat' is Picked as Work Which Failed to Get Due Recognition," *New York Times*, February 14, 1940, 25.

²²⁵ Gettysburg National Military Park, "Anniversary Reunions of Civil War Veterans," retrieved on April 12, 2017, <https://publications.usa.gov/epublications/gettysburg/h.htm>.

²²⁶ Report of the Pennsylvania Commission: Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, Presented to John K. Tener, Governor of Pennsylvania, December 31, 1913, 212.

Jr.'s, novels and *The Birth of a Nation*, the success of which was hampered outside of the South due to its complete vilification of the North and total victimization of the white South. Quite simply, more northern Americans of the Civil War generation—who could directly remember the deep sectional divide of the Civil War era and still carried much of that ideological division with them—were still alive in 1915 to reject *The Birth of a Nation*. Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, on the other hand, was largely released to post-war generations of white Americans who—in the face of Depression-era economic anxieties and racial tensions—were willing and eager to accept *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism. Notably, a few living veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) still did try to boycott Selznick's film.

To this American public, Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* brought the most complete version of the Lost Cause and Dixonian Reconstruction—or a “Confederatized” interpretation of Reconstruction, as the NAACP's Walter White called it—to mass consumer markets in the United States already familiar with both the mythology and consumer products that catered to white identity via anti-black stereotypes. White Americans gorged themselves on Mitchell's aristocratic white South and her “happy darkies”—obedient and docile while in bondage—to assuage their insecurities during a time of high social anxiety that they perceived as being similar to Mitchell's Reconstruction. Mitchell's Lost Causism was thus made available—via the mass-marketed medium of her novel—to a new generation of white Americans not only already familiar with, and susceptible to, the Lost Cause, but who also did not experience the sectional conflict. Her complete version of the Southern founding mythology—which explained the Civil War by decentering slavery and replaced the back history with racist

stereotypes—was accepted and praised by white Americans for its Lost Causism specifically, spreading the white South’s founding mythology in a fashion similar to Andersonian print cultures. Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* not only shaped the collective memory of the Civil War-era, but its Lost Causism shaped white American identity as a whole by providing it with a national memory of the past that explained racial tensions and white poverty in the post-war era. This identity then created American whiteness in the mid-twentieth century, and centered an ideological belief in black inferiority that justified, factualized, and naturalized the maintenance of America’s white supremacist social order.

That Mitchell’s novel was important to white Americans during the late 1930s is understatement: after nearly three years on bookshelves, a 1939 survey by the American Institute of Public Opinion revealed that “Mitchell’s record-breaking novel of the South and the Civil War” was “pressing the Bible closely” as the single most popular book on American bookshelves. Tellingly, the poll also revealed that *Gone with the Wind* ranked first among all Eastern and New England respondents, surpassing the Bible as the novel of “the greatest interest for contemporary Americans.” Mitchell’s novel, that is, performed exceedingly well on the northern side of the Mason-Dixon line. Among southerners, Midwesterners and Westerners, as well as among men and people over the age of thirty, the Bible was still ranked as more important.²²⁷

²²⁷ Robert E. May, “*Gone with the Wind* as Southern History: A Reappraisal,” *Southern Quarterly* 17 (1978): 51; George H. Gallup, “‘Gone with Wind’ Trails Bible in Public Interest,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 1939, C6. The poll revealed that “‘Gone with the Wind’ came in first with women, with younger persons and with Easterners and New Englanders.” The novel today has sold over 30,000,000 copies worldwide and has been translated into thirty-two languages.

By the end of 1941, Mitchell's 1936 novel was not just a stand-alone popular cultural phenomenon. The release of Selznick's film in 1939, for instance, increased the popularity of Mitchell's novel even as it stood on the shoulders of Mitchell's success and influence. Upon its release, Selznick's film, too, was enormously popular, living up to the white public's high expectations that were generated during the years of production. By the beginning of 1940, and despite concerted black protest, the film had amassed over \$1 million in ticket sales and won ten total Academy Awards (eight competitive and two honorary), including Best Picture, on thirteen nominations later that year. By the end of 1940, *Gone with the Wind* attracted more than twenty-six million viewers as it premiered in roadshow-style releases in cities across the United States. When the film was given a general release in 1941, it attracted another 5.5 million viewers in January and February of that year. The *New York Times* also reported that the film played in approximately 580 theaters across the United States during its first release and that 5,000 to 6,000 more select engagements were planned across the nation.²²⁸ In Washington D.C., when the film was in its final week of its first general release, attendance during those weeks totaled approximately 500,000, "far in excess of the record set for a comparable period" the previous year. All told, Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* generated \$390 million (more than \$6.3 billion in 2016 dollars) in sales during its initial release and surpassed the 30 million-viewer mark by February 1941.²²⁹ By March 1942, *Gone with the Wind* continued to perform extraordinarily well and had been watched by more than 52 million

²²⁸ "'Gone with the Wind' Seen by 30 Million: Film that Drew 26,000,000 at First Showing in 1939-40 Adds 5,500,000 to Total," *New York Times*, February 15, 1941, 8; "Epic Cinema Shows Again," *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 1941, 10; "'Gone' Stays at Theaters," *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1941, 13; "'Gone' Back on Screens," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1941, A10; "Gone with the Wind Back: Film Will Return to Broadway for Third Time on March 31," *New York Times*, March 17, 1942, 25.

²²⁹ "'Gone with the Wind' Seen by 30 Million," 8.

paid admissions and played at more than 12,000 select engagements around the United States.²³⁰

The film, like the novel, was again popular more for its Lost Causism than for the main plot. Commenters on the film thus praised its representations of the Old South and Reconstruction as accurate history. The film, as a new mass media technology, however, was able to accomplish new feats in collective memory than had the novel. That is, Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* allowed white American viewers to experience the emotions of Mitchell's Lost Causism visually and aurally. By muting Mitchell's most racist scenes, Selznick created a cultural product that delivered the Lost Cause founding mythology in its entirety and that allowed most white Americans in the 1940s to convene with their national heritage. In the process, the film appealed and shaped their white American identity around a mythology that the new media technologies homogenized in collective memory, reinforcing beliefs in white supremacy and black inferiority. In the wake of the film's highly anticipated premiere, *Gone with the Wind* took shape as a new memory phenomenon that homogenized white collective memory of the Civil War era and, as a national founding mythology, allowed little room for white Americans who valued their heritage and white racial power to descent.

By the end of 1941, the white nationalist memory phenomenon known as *Gone with the Wind* began merging Mitchell's and Selznick's Lost Causism in white American conscious. There are important differences between the two versions, to be sure, but the completeness of the Lost Cause and Dixonian Reconstruction were entirely compatible, creating a coherent national narrative that remained, like the Lost Cause itself, a defense

²³⁰ "Gone with the Wind' Back," 25.

and celebration of white supremacy. By 1942, as argued by scholar Roger Lyle Brown, *Gone with the Wind* was a merger of “the novel with the movie, ultimately referring to neither, but rather to a set of characters, place names, and vague and various assumptions of southern history and culture.”²³¹ *Gone with the Wind*, in other words, was solidified as a “‘compote’ that has come to represent the South in [white] collective memory.”²³² *Gone with the Wind*, however, also became a phenomenon that was much larger than the merger of novel and film in popular memory. Instead, *Gone with the Wind*-ism was also integrated into the white American identity as founding mythology that made sense of their national past, completely reconciling white ideological divisions about the Civil War era. Such a phenomenon then influenced other cultural products and experiences; the imagined South—and the imagined American past—increasingly became viewed through the lens of *Gone with the Wind*, no matter the medium, or consumer product, that took the South’s past as its theme. The *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon continued to expand throughout the twentieth century to include mass-marketed household products and would influence the creation of later films and novels. African Americans continued to resist *Gone with the Wind*’s ideological power and the national mythology it defined.

“merrymaking in the Deep South”: The Mass Commercialization of *Gone with the Wind* circa 1937-1942

The celebration of Mitchell’s novel transcended reviews and literary awards. In 1937, for instance, *Gone with the Wind* continued to be a popular sensation, celebrated

²³¹ Roger Lyle Brown, “Tara Infirm: The Troubled History of a Southern Theme” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University: 1998), 35, as cited and quoted in Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 8.

²³² Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 8.

across the United States. In East Hampton, New York, a *Gone with the Wind*-themed costume ball attracted several hundred white guests to an “Open House at Scarlett O’Hara’s Plantation” while, 3,000 miles away, actor Jack Oakie and his wife hosted a *Gone with the Wind* anniversary party at their Los Angeles mansion adorned with cotton growing in the gardens, a “colored” orchestra, and “dusky ‘slaves,’ in true plantation garb,” serving fried chicken, corn pone, and other “Go’gia delicacies.”²³³ Each party was highly publicized in widely circulated newspapers. In the South itself, the novel and its many supposed lessons were the subjects of Protestant sermons, further demonstrating the Lost Cause’s ability to resonate as the civil religion of the South within religious institutions, while a tourism boom was initiated in the city of Atlanta as thousands of visitors sought to find Mitchell’s fictional plantation Tara.²³⁴ Immediately following the influx of tourists, the Atlanta Historical Society and Atlanta Convention Bureau responded to the tourist influx and ceaseless requests for directions to the locations in the novel by offering maps and brochures for Atlanta’s Civil War-related sites.²³⁵ After the premiere of the film version, two writers for the *Washington Evening Star* reported that 50,000 high schools (by their estimation) planned to use a *Gone with the Wind* theme for their junior-senior proms in 1940 and provided advice on how to convert a school

²³³ “Ball Leads Parties at East Hampton: Costume Event at Maidstone Club Tonight Attracts Weekend Hosts,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1937, 19; Quotes from “Hundreds at Ball in East Hampton: ‘Gone with the Wind’ Party at Maidstone Club Attracts Many in Costume,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1937, 30; Marshall Kester, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Anniversary Fete Held at Southland Oakie ‘Plantation’: Guests Appear in Ante-bellum Costumes,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1937, D10.

²³⁴ Robert Burns, “Gone with the Wind,” Sermon Preached in Peachtree Christian Church, November 8, 1936; M. Carmen Gomez-Galisteo, *The Wind is Never Gone: Sequel, Parodies and Rewritings of Gone with the Wind* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 3.

²³⁵ Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (New York: Verso, 1996), 42; Jennifer W. Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and the Politics of Memory* (Fayetteville, A.R.: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 5.

gymnasium into a plantation. Following their instructions, the writers boasted, “will help create the glamorous atmosphere of a night in the old South.”²³⁶

Commercial merchandizers were quick to capitalize on the sensation. Fashion companies in Chicago sold *Gone with the Wind* wedding dresses and other wedding attire that recreated the southern myth at consumers’ most special and costly days.²³⁷ In 1937, a New York dress manufacturer asked Mitchell’s publisher, Macmillan, for permission to include the book’s title and jacket design on a cotton dress while the northern-based Pepperell Manufacturing company received permission to include six scenes from the novel on special *Gone with the Wind*-themed chintz. The scenes on the chintz pattern included images of Tara, a Civil War battle, Mammy, and slaves picking cotton in a plantation field. The Parker Pen Company was denied a request to sell pens with the title and Mitchell’s name printed on them.²³⁸

According to historian Karen L. Cox, Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind* began the process of commercial tie-ins to popular culture products.²³⁹ To be sure, many merchandizer’s requests were denied, but many others were allowed and *Gone with the Wind* products abounded by 1939. So much did *Gone with the Wind* products proliferate that Macy’s department store in New York converted seven floors of its store into an exhibition it called “The Old South Comes North” where products associated with the

²³⁶ Kay Caldwell and Alden Harrison, “Prom Time Is Just Ahead and It Is None Too Soon To Start Plans for It,” *Washington Evening Star*, April 23, 1940, 28.

²³⁷ Margot Advertisement in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 16, 1937, E2. *Gone with the Wind* ignited a memorabilia and merchandizing phenomenon after the publication of the novel. To name a few, merchandizers pedaled *Gone with the Wind*-themed dolls, buttons, postcards, jewelry, framed stills, clothing, decorations, collectible stamps, cigarettes, and food and drinks.

²³⁸ Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 50-51.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

film were sold. Displays included “Scarlett’s Bedroom” and “Rhett Butler’s Dressing Room.”²⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, *Gone with the Wind* was embraced by adoring American audiences and consumers like no other book before it but, as its popularity grew, its imagery was not merely or innocently consumed, but also reinforced the white imagining of the South and its real history. So convincing was this recreation and commercialization of *Gone with the Wind*’s Old South in the material world that the *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed that “[I]ittle doubt was left in the minds of [Oakie Plantation] invitees that they were merrymaking in the ‘Deep South.’”²⁴¹

“a new interest in that tragic period of American history”: Margaret Mitchell’s Impact on Southern Literature, 1937-1953

In May of 1937, Mitchell received her highest literary honor when the president of Columbia University announced *Gone with the Wind* as the Pulitzer Prize winning for most distinguished novel of the previous year, adding even more legitimacy to the popularity of its Lost Causism and, by extension, buttressing the authority of its historical setting.²⁴² The notable African American writer, journalist, and labor activist Frank Marshall Davis took to the black press to express his outrage:

“This year’s Pulitzer Prize for the novel went to Margaret Mitchell’s ‘Gone with the Wind’...The author went out of her way to support the institution of human slavery, praise the Uncle Toms of that period...and

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 51-51.

²⁴¹ Kester, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Anniversary Fete Held at Southland Oakie ‘Plantation,’” D10.

²⁴² “Pulitzer Prize for Novel Won by ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *New York Times*, May 4, 1937, 1; “Margaret Mitchell’s Book Wins Her Pulitzer Prize,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1937, 1.

twist reconstruction era facts into a web of lies. It's insidious propaganda had impressed too many whites without having it dignified with the coveted Pulitzer award."²⁴³

It's not as if Mitchell's novel needed a Pulitzer to legitimate its literary power (*Gone with the Wind* had previously won what is now called the American Book Award), although the award certainly cemented its legacy and represented its national popularity among lay readers and critics alike. Instead, by 1937, as literary critics noticed, the success of *Gone with the Wind* had spawned "a flood of books about the South"—both fictional and scholarly—and also served as the Litmus test against which they would be judged.²⁴⁴ With regard to the latter, historians Richard Dwyer and Robert E. May in their own analyses of *Gone with the Wind*'s reception, passingly claim Mitchell's book "has a greater bearing upon the American public's perception of the Old South, Civil War, and Reconstruction... than any other single piece of literature or media." The reason: *Gone with the Wind* provided the catalyst for southern academics to turn completely to the legend in order to understand their region.²⁴⁵ In so doing, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism was granted further intellectual coherence, harkening back to the historical scholarship of late-nineteenth century while gaining legitimacy for the Dunning School, and again became embedded into the South's academic institutions while at the same time it embodied the region's white mindset about its collective past. *Gone with the Wind* again followed in the footsteps of *The Birth of a Nation*, initiating a white American

²⁴³ Frank Marshall Davis,

²⁴⁴ Charles Leavelle, "Christmas Book Reviews: Dixie Authors are Fewer but Better in 1938," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 10, 1938, 14.

²⁴⁵ Richard Dwyer, "The Case of the Cool Reception," in Pyron, *Recasting*, 22; Quote from May, "*Gone with the Wind* as Southern History," 51.

interest in their national past through the lens of the Lost Causism. The warm reception of the Confederate sympathizer Robert Selph Henry's *The Story of Reconstruction* (1938) in both the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times* is telling:

“Many thousands of readers of ‘Gone with the Wind’ have had awakened within them a new interest in that tragic period of American history known as the ‘Reconstruction’...[A] time when real bitterness between North and South was created...[and] ignorant majorities imposed their will upon the various States of the South, and they worked on the theory that the ‘government is a giver of gifts.’ While the people starved, the members of legislative bodies bought liquor and golden spittoons. Sincere fanatics kept hate alive in the cause of human rights.”²⁴⁶

Henry's *The Story of Reconstruction* was indebted to the Dunning School and blamed the failures of Reconstruction on the greed of the occupying North and ignorance of the freedmen who sought to right the wrongs of slavery by establishing a new era of human rights through government intervention. This interpretation of Reconstruction history, built on racial stereotypes and Old South myths about slavery, was hardly new in 1938. However, like many works of fiction, southern historical literature like Henry's was received positively by reviewers but often in reference to *Gone with the Wind*'s imagery. Mitchell's novel thus endorsed and crafted an image of the South in American popular culture and the national historical memory that became a *de facto* frame of reference against which all literary representations of the South was measured.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.; Block quote from “Era of Hate that's Now Gone With the Wind,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1938, C6.

Mitchell's novel also impacted how popular fiction about the Civil War era was written and received by the white public. Andrew Lytle's *The Long Night* (1936), a novel set in the Deep South during the Civil War, for instance, was in the works before Mitchell's publication yet still "follow[ed] in the wake of GWTW... [and] quickly reached the top of the bestseller lists" because of it, or at least one can reason in large part.²⁴⁷ Similarly, Elizabeth Pickett Chevalier's best-selling *Drivin' Woman* (1942) and Leslie White Turner's *Look Away, Look Away* (1943)—both novels set on southern plantation during the "carpetbagger-ruled" period of Reconstruction—were referenced in relation to the legacy of Mitchell's novel, the reviewers hoping that both novels continue it.²⁴⁸ "White," as one reviewer writes, "based his book on historical facts...on the reconstruction era that paints in brilliant, broad strokes all the decadence of the plantation aristocrats of Dixie."²⁴⁹ Similarly, in the 1953, southern novelist Elizabeth Boatwright Coker's popular novel *India Allen*—about a Scarlett-esque heroine set in Civil War-era South Carolina—was praised by reviewers as "reminiscent of Margaret Mitchell's 'Gone with the Wind'" for its "descriptive scenes of plantation life, social gatherings in town and country settings and battleground action during the Civil War." The reviewer also praised as a unique effect Coker's rendering of an African-American character who was bought and freed from slavery and subsequently became a cruel slave owner herself

²⁴⁷ Quote from Fred T. Marsh, "Mystery and Terror in Mr. Lytle's Novel of the South: *The Long Night*," *New York Times*, September 6, 1936, BR9; Richard Dwyer, "The Case of the Cool Reception," in Pyron, *Recasting*, 23-24.

²⁴⁸ "Here is Novel to Rival 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 1, 1942, 23; Charles Driscoll, "New York Day By Day," *Painesville Telegraph*, November 5, 1941, 4; Katherine Woods, ""'Drivin' Woman and Other New Works of Fiction,'" *New York Times*, July 5, 1942, BR6; Ben Burns, "Books: Novel of Reconstruction," *The Chicago Defender*, February 26, 1944, 13.

²⁴⁹ Burns, "Novel of Reconstruction," 13.

before her “savage leadership” failed during “the period of carpetbag ascendancy,” though, in terms of the Lost Cause, he also thought that such a cruel slave owner was unbelievable. Despite Coker’s novel following an almost identical narrative framework, *India Allen* was mostly panned by the *New York Times* reviewer for failing to live up to the legacy of Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind*. As the reviewer proclaimed “Forever Scarlett.”²⁵⁰

Even famed southern writer William Faulkner, argues cultural historian Joel Williamson, was subsequently and thereafter read in light of *Gone with the Wind* and cast as “as a character in a ‘Tara’ play” while “there was...a rising inclination to read his fiction as a description and apologia for, if not, indeed, a laudation of that South rather than for what it actually was—a profound indictment of the legend.”²⁵¹ So entrenched was the Mitchell-endorsed version of the South that not even the likes of Faulkner could escape its influence on white American readers.

“Can there be a new ‘Gone with the Wind’”: The Long Cinematic Shadow of *Gone with the Wind*, 1938-2003

The first film that felt the powerful effect of *Gone with the Wind* was another plantation fantasy, *Jezebel*. Released one year prior to the film *Gone with the Wind* in 1938, *Jezebel* was Warner Brothers’ deliberate attempt to capitalize on the *Gone with the Wind*-charged climate that resulted from Mitchell’s book and the publicity for Selznick’s anticipated film version among the American public. And *Jezebel* was a national success,

²⁵⁰ Henry Cavendish, “Forever Scarlett: India Allan,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1953, BR12.

²⁵¹ Dwyer, “The Case of the Cool Reception,” 24; Quote from Joel Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 263.

though some credit for its popularity can be attributed to its departure from overtly anti-North attitudes that doomed the fates of previous plantation films such as *So Red the Rose* (1935) outside of the South.²⁵² Both the producer of *Jezebel* and, more importantly, David Selznick heeded the warnings of *So Red the Rose* and muted anti-North attitudes to the point that they were mostly suggested by indirect comparisons between the supposedly-superior antebellum plantation society of the South and the rest of the United States.²⁵³ Similarly, due to black protest, Selznick also muted the most racially harsh scenes from the novel and did not include references to the Ku Klux Klan or derogatory usage of the word “nigger.” The result: *Gone with the Wind* dwarfed the success of *Jezebel* by being a more palatable southern representation and appealed the reconciliationist ideology of the “cult of reunion,” as it has been called, that valued the Lost Cause’s racial myths and nostalgia for the so-called heroism and valiance of the Civil War-era but that celebrated white men of both the North and South.²⁵⁴ This muting and its reconciliationist appeal to the post-war generation is in no small way responsible for the phenomenon transcending the South and its popular longevity, a feat its predecessor *The Birth of a Nation* has not enjoyed.

Therefore, Hollywood took notice of the success of *Gone with the Wind* and sought to profit by capturing the nation’s romantic sentiment toward the South in upcoming films. *Virginia* (1941), for instance, was explained as *Gone with the Wind* in Virginia and rendered a fallen civilization on a pristine landscape, complete with Yankee

²⁵² Edward D.C. Campbell, “The Old South as National Epic,” in Harwell, *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, 176; Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 93, 119.

²⁵³ Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 119.

²⁵⁴ For a discussion of the “cult of reconciliation” see Elizabeth R. Varon, *Appomattox: Victory, Defeat, and Freedom at the End of the Civil War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 252.

invaders and a belle who, intending to sell her family plantation for a quick profit, develops a strong connection to her land. Once again, the South is represented as an exceptional region outside of the logics of capitalistic profit and valued for its aristocratic and harmonious Old South history and the stereotypical characters that still populate it. Slavery, of course, is an afterthought in *Virginia*. In one telling scene, the protagonist, a Virginia expatriate to the North, returns to sell her old family home but instead takes up roots again in part because she cannot break the heart of an old family slave who naively offers her \$50,000 in worthless Confederate money for the plantation's salvation. In another, an elderly African American returns to his former plantation home—site of his happiest days as a slave—to die in peace. Both scenes are made in the image of the O'Hara's field hands and Mammy who all remain loyal to Scarlett and refuse to leave the land once the South had fallen and their freedom granted.²⁵⁵

Yet such scenes became scarcer throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and reviewers more critical of films that took the South as their topic. These changes can be attributed to the historical contexts of the post-Depression era that saw diminished need for escapist fantasies in more prosperous times, a burgeoning black civil rights movement, and eventual civil rights' legal victories in the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, during the years of World War II, production companies dropped references to the slave institution because the Bureau of Motion Pictures, a subsidiary of the Office of War Information, made sure that America was presented as a defender of justice on film. Despite this, Hollywood hardly mirrored liberal politics of the mid-twentieth century and realized that

²⁵⁵ Edward H. Griffith, *Virginia*, DVD (Hollywood, C.A.: Paramount Pictures, orig. rel. 1941). Bosley Crowther, "The Screen; 'Virginia,' a Highly Romantic Drama of the Old Dominion and its Folks, at the Paramount," *New York Times*, January 29, 1941, 21; Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 142.

conservative antebellum themes remained popular, and therefore profitable, among an American society that also encompassed violent white resistance to black civil rights throughout the country. Old South romance thus still had a home in American popular culture and remained a significant part of Hollywood's production.²⁵⁶

The Santa Fe Trail (1940), *The Vanishing Virginian* (1941), *Lady From Louisiana* (1941), *Saratoga Trunk* (1945), *The Song of the South* (1946), *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947), *The Toast of New Orleans* (1950), *Showboat* (1951), *The Sun Shines Bright* (1954), and *The Horse Soldiers* (1959) were all Hollywood efforts that appealed directly to the southern legend cemented by *Gone with the Wind*. Most notably, however, Disney's *The Song of the South* (1946)—a part live-action, part animated blockbuster based on Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus characters—proved how immensely popular the plantation legend still was among white audiences. One review from the *Chicago Defender*, albeit critical of its racist themes, proclaimed that *The Song of the South* was “the most discussed picture since ‘Gone with the Wind,’” comparing the two in light of the latter.²⁵⁷ Similarly, at the Atlanta premiere, nearly 5,000 members of the audience burst into applause numerous times at any hint “of the Old South's Glory” while a stereotypical slave was employed to decorate the theater with supposed authenticity.²⁵⁸ *The Song of the South's* premiere itself was a recapturing of the *Gone with the Wind* experience, despite its being marketed to both children and adults. In yet another debt to Selznick's and Mitchell's creation, Hattie McDaniel reprised her role as a happy kitchen

²⁵⁶ Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 143-147.

²⁵⁷ “‘Uncle Remus’ and Supporting Cast in Most Talked of Picture Since ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Chicago Defender*, December 14, 1946, 10.

²⁵⁸ *Atlanta Journal*, November 13, 1946, as reprinted and quoted in Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 151; *Atlanta Constitution*, November 13, 1946, as reprinted and quoted in Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 151.

servant still loyal to the household after the Civil War, as the film was (often mistakenly) actually set in a post-war period where racial harmony, and thus black loyalty, was still possible. The *Gone with the Wind* Effect thus still exerted itself on later cultural products that quite transparently tried to recreate the historical imagery of the 1939 film, to still much fanfare, and despite the appearance of films that subverted the racial structures it maintained.

Like *Gone with the Wind* reviewers nearly a decade earlier, some reviewers regarded highly *The Song of the South* highly for “its vivid recordings of beautiful way of life.”²⁵⁹ Other films, too, continued to be cast in *Gone with the Wind*’s shadow. *The Foxes of Harrow* (1947), for instance, was criticized by some as a Magnolia cliché yet still regaled by others as recreating “some of the greatness of *Gone with the Wind*.”²⁶⁰ 1957’s *Band of Angels*—a romance set in the Old South that attempted to recreate the success of Selznick’s film by starring Clark Gable—was indeed hailed, as Campbell writes, in “[t]owns as diverse as Charlotte and Indianapolis...as another *Gone with the Wind*.”²⁶¹ The film *Raintree County* (1957), based on the 1948 novel of the same name, was a stated attempt to recreate the success of *Gone with the Wind*’s agrarian paradise down to the set design and hoopskirt costumes, despite some emancipationist themes in the plot. “Can there be a new ‘Gone with the Wind’?” asked one writer who hoped that

²⁵⁹ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 29, 1946, as reprinted and quoted in Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 152.

²⁶⁰ *Washington Post*, October 10, 1947, as reprinted and quoted in Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 162; Quote from *Miami Herald*, October 2, 1947, as reprinted and quoted in Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 162.

²⁶¹ Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 168.

the film could give an “impression of life” similar to that of *Gone with the Wind*.²⁶² *Raintree County*, told from the perspective of an outsider to the South, ultimately failed to recreate such success, but not before releasing to large crowds reminiscent of “the splurge of local color and Southern hospitality of those that celebrated the world opening of ‘Gone with the Wind’ in Atlanta.”²⁶³ The celebrated premiere in Louisville, Kentucky, was also complete with events spanning multiple days, including a formal southern ball. *Raintree County*, eighteen years later, was “evidently intended” to recapture the spirit and profits of *Gone with the Wind* by appealing to the Lost Cause sentiment engrained in white memory of the South and the racial logics of the nation by the latter. Following *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause rubric, *Raintree County* was the fifth highest-grossing film of 1957.²⁶⁴

As the black civil rights movement forced race relations in the South into the forefront of American consciousness during the 1950s and 1960s, Hollywood reflected and promoted these changes by producing more emancipationist themes in Civil-War-related films. Additionally, as the Vietnam War increasingly became less popular after 1965, most Civil War films reflected the anti-war opinion that all combat should be condemned, and the production of war films, in general, waned. Yet Lost Cause themes persisted, even in films that sought to move away from the southern legend. 1965’s *Shenandoah*, following the passage of the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, for instance, is both an anti-war and anti-slavery film that places the institution of slavery at

²⁶² Edwin Schallert, “‘Raintree County’ Cost May Reach \$8,000,000,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1955, B9.

²⁶³ Bosley Crowther, “‘Raintree County’ has Festive Debut,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1957, 32.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; Peter Krämer, *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 113.

the center of the Confederate cause and has a humanizing portrayal of African Americans, but still invokes themes of white southern victimization and tragedy by portraying southerners as far-outnumbered, ragged soldiers returning to a ravaged landscape in the South.²⁶⁵

Furthermore, “[e]ven Steven Spielberg’s much-praised film of black writer Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* (1985)—in terms of image, colour, music, and logo—is very much a tribute to [*Gone with the Wind*], according to historian Helen Taylor.”²⁶⁶ The 1993 film *Sommersby* also utilizes Lost Causist themes in its portrayal of Confederates, writes Gary Gallagher, “as ragged as the ‘tattered Cavaliers’ returning home in *Gone with the Wind* [while he] travels through [the] devastated country side en route to Tennessee.” Such representations, according to Gallagher, “echoes Scarlett’s journey from Atlanta to Tara,” and undoubtedly evoked sympathy from Lost Cause supporters if they could stomach the anti-Confederate themes of the films.²⁶⁷ *Sommersby*, too, reuses the image of the O’Hara women toiling in the ruins of their plantation next to former slaves, demonstrating Lost Cause ideas of white southern victimization and loss at the hands of a brutal enemy.²⁶⁸

More to the point, Gallagher notices strong Lost Cause themes in *Gettysburg* (1993), an adaptation of Michael Shaara’s novel *The Killer Angels*, and as recently as the 2003 film *Gods and Generals*. Both films, argues Gallagher, relegate slavery to the

²⁶⁵ Robert Arthur and Andrew W. McLaglin, *Shenandoah*, DVD (Universal City, C.A.: Universal Studios, 2003) [orig. rel. 1965]; Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 51-54.

²⁶⁶ Helen Taylor, *Scarlett’s Women: Gone with the Wind and Its Female Fans* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 166.

²⁶⁷ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 59.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 59-61.

margins of the war in which its white characters are fighting. In *Gettysburg*, for instance, freedom from foreign rule and the tyranny of the North are invoked as the main cause among Confederate common soldiers. One Tennessean, when asked why Confederate soldiers are fighting, responds “I don’t know about some other folk, but I ain’t fightin’ for no darkies one way or the other. I’m fightin’ for my rights. All of us here, that’s what we’re fightin’ for.”²⁶⁹ The rights the character was speaking of did not include the right to own and profit off of a human being as a slave. Furthermore, there is a notable absence of blackness from the films, except for a loyal slave character in *Gods and Generals* that shares a familial bond with her owners and wishes them well, despite the complication that she desires freedom.²⁷⁰ The Civil War itself, in these films, is thus presented as a conflict fought by and for great white men for reasons other than slavery. This is a message in the image of *Gone with the Wind* and the reconciliationist sentiments it inspired and upheld in viewers across the United States who viewed the war as a civilizational conflict. *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause myths proved resilient despite cultural products that tried to seemingly move away from them.

Lost Cause themes less directly connected to *Gone with the Wind*’s South also persisted in many films throughout the twentieth century, especially after the movement of white Americans to the suburbs created two profitable film markets targeted at “urban” audiences (see the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s) and suburban whites. Even a smattering of westerns—*Alvarez Kelly* (1966); *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1967); *The Undefeated* (1969); *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976); and *Ride with the Devil*

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 57; Moctesuma Esparza, Robert Katz and Ronald F. Maxwell, *Gettysburg*, DVD (Atlanta, G.A: Turner Entertainment, 2005) [orig. rel. 1993].

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 57, 76-77.

(1999)—were nothing more than poor attempts to dress up a victimized white southerner for a ride through the American West to regain his lost honor. Films that adapted resolutely pro-Union perspectives also remained overwhelmingly rare in the face of strong lingering reconciliationist and anti-war sentiment, as they still do. *Gone with the Wind*'s popularity, in fact, did stem from the perception of supposed reconciliationist themes, such as both of the causes of the North and South being misunderstood by the other. Thus, it is reasonable to contend that *Gone with the Wind* set the bar for appealing to the cult of reunion and its sentiment, representing the mended sectional wounds through its impact, while still containing subtle anti-North sentiments along with Scarlett's and Rhett's disillusionment with the Confederacy—ideas that would have been rejected by both northerners and white southerners in earlier eras of the Lost Cause. 1989's *Glory* and 2012's *Lincoln* are the most notable examples of outright pro-Union narratives on a very short list. As Gallagher writes, the Union cause "is Hollywood's real lost cause."²⁷¹ *Gone with the Wind* power in white national memory proved to make the production of such films very difficult for most of the twentieth century, and unquestionably has cast a long shadow, still exerting power and influence over cultural production in the present.²⁷² *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism, in other words, embedded itself into both popular culture and the national consciousness. With regard to the latter, it also became the *de facto* representation of the Southern past imagined and expected by the white nation. The relationship between producing popular culture in light

²⁷¹ Ibid., 114.

²⁷² Even PBS's 2016 Civil-War drama *Mercy Street* was billed by its executive producer as "*M.A.S.H.* meets *Gone with the Wind*," albeit with black characters that have "plot and humanity." Clint Schemmer, "M.A.S.H. Meets 'Gone with the Wind' in New PBS Civil War-era Drama," January 12, 2016, accessed January 12, 2016, http://www.fredericksburg.com/features/history/m-a-s-h-meets-gone-with-the-wind-in/article_8da49010-f183-57e7-b9c7-f56d1faf42aa.html.

of *Gone with the Wind* to make money off of national subjects predisposed to, and expecting to experience, a version of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism was interlinked, and self-perpetuating.

“This film has a peculiar vitality about it”: Rereleases, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the 1954 Celebration of *Gone with the Wind*'s Fifteenth Anniversary

Gone with the Wind left an indelible mark on American popular culture in the twentieth century but itself was never far from the white nation's gaze. Before the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Selznick's film was officially rereleased to American theaters four times after its first national release in 1940: in 1942, 1947, 1954, and 1961.²⁷³ Each of the rereleases was successful among white audiences, and critics still praised the film as an epic historical drama, mostly, again, for its Lost Causism and as a representation of authentic history and southern struggle. Throughout the civil rights era, *Gone with the Wind* was one of America's most popular movies, which increased its ability to affect later productions of southern and Civil War films. However, *Gone with the Wind*, as the *de facto* imagining of the Civil War era, was more than simply a frame of reference for new cultural productions. Its specific Lost Causism, instead, remained hegemonic, and a highly desired experience for white Americans during the high racial tension of the black civil rights movement.

The rereleases of *Gone with the Wind* during the 1940s were continuations of the success that the film enjoyed during its original release. The movie was still remotely new. 1954, however—the same year that the United States Supreme Court unanimously

²⁷³ Philip K. Scheuer, “A Town Called Hollywood: Selznick Smiles as ‘Wind’ Blows Again,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1954, D2.

ruled state-sanctioned segregation in public unconstitutional—marked the first significant *Gone with the Wind* celebration for its fifteenth anniversary. As white opposition to integration ignited across the South, white theatergoers across America prepared to relive the mythical glory and tragic struggle of *Gone with the Wind*'s Old South. For its fifteenth anniversary, the film grossed approximately \$7 million (about \$63.5 million today) during a national release, one of the highest film grosses of that year.²⁷⁴

Gone with the Wind's 1954 rerelease, or its “Second World Premiere,” as the *Atlanta Constitution* called it, kicked off in grand spectacle at the Loews Grand Theater “with all the pomp Atlanta could muster.”²⁷⁵ The Loews anniversary re-premiere ran on the evening of Thursday, May 20th, three days after the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. It was not a quiet affair: *Gone with the Wind*-themed parties were planned, Loews Grand Theater was again modeled to look like a columned plantation, the city hosted a parade, celebrity guests and patrons alike donned antebellum costumes, and the film was for the first time being shown in widescreen and stereophonic sound, adding more depth and vividness to the viewers experience of the Lost Cause myth. The proceeds from the event were also used to establish a “living memorial” to Margaret Mitchell, who was struck by a car and died in 1949, in the form of a scholarship fund to send a Georgian to Smith College in Massachusetts, the women’s

²⁷⁴ Krämer, *The New Hollywood*, 112; Howard Thompson, “‘Wind’ is Reaping Another Harvest: 5th Revival of Civil War Film is Box-office Bonanza,” *New York Times*, April 8, 1961, 12.

²⁷⁵ Medora Field Perkerson, “Second World Premiere for *Gone with the Wind*: A Living Memorial to Margaret Mitchell will be Established with Proceeds from the Performance,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 16, 1954, SM6; Quote from Paul Jones, “*GWTW* Opens Again; Impact Tremendous,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 21, 1954, 1.

college that Mitchell attended for a brief time.²⁷⁶ At the anniversary celebration itself, the *Constitution* reported that viewers erupted in “spontaneous outbursts [as if] they were enjoying the film for the first time,” reminiscent of the cheers that emanated from the crowd during the 1939 premiere. *New York Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther, who lauded the *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causeism after its first run in theaters, reminded his readers that “the world’s most looked-at film” was still “popular beyond any film ever made.” “There is little in it about the Negroes or the great Southern middle class of whites,” writes Crowther, but “wholly the Southern aristocracy...which, broken and bewildered, was ravished in the War Between the States...the agony of the old slave-ocracy is brilliantly etched upon the screen.”²⁷⁷ In new wide-screen projection and stereophonic sound, Crowther again praises the film for the supposed accuracy and completeness of its Lost Cause mythology—a lesson in the history of the tragedy and victimization of the white South. Crowther writes,

“[You] get in this picture a great illustrative display of the wreckage and calamity of our nation’s most woeful tragedy. No movie has ever shown it with such trenchant and shattering imagery—not even ‘The Birth of a Nation’...The shots of Atlanta, besieged and burning; of plantations laid to waste, of people in utter desolation and, especially that greatest shot of all—the wounded in the square outside the station—say more than books

²⁷⁶ Ibid.; Sue Brown Sterne, “Part to Precede 15th Anniversary GWTW ‘Premiere,’” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 16, 1954, 2E; Jones, “*GWTW* Opens Again, 1; Jim Waldrop, “Old, Young Line Up for HWTW Here,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 20, 1954, 8D.

²⁷⁷ Bosley Crowther, “Fifth Time Around: Critic Hails Return of ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *New York Times*, June 6, 1954, X1.

of words. History—one striking chapter of it—is viewed directly in ‘Gone with the Wind.’”²⁷⁸

Crowther concluded by calling all in the nation to see the film during its anniversary rerelease in 1954: “You can tell your grandchildren how you watched the old south disappear one night.”²⁷⁹

White America felt the same way about *Gone with the Wind*'s rerelease in 1954 as Crowther. Old and young lined the streets. Jim Waldrop, a journalist for the *Constitution*, reported in June that in Atlanta “[m]ore than 145,000 persons during the past four weeks have crowded, pushed, or stood in queues several blocks long to see...the 15-year-old movie...[Lines] begin to form early. And the last fans don't leave the theater until well after midnight.”²⁸⁰ The film, Waldrop continued, attracted “a whole new generation who have never seen ‘GWTW,’ pouring into the theaters to see what the dickens is all about.” Waldrop notes that “oldtimers who have seen the picture several times” made up a large portion of the audiences, but he also reports that the younger generation flocked to the film. “Teen-agers have suddenly discovered why their mothers are so agog over Clark Gable,” wrote Waldrop, “and many of the younger generation are really looking at Vivien Leigh for the first time.” But as Waldrop further argues, the re-release of *Gone with the Wind* was not just popular among all generations of Atlantans for its above-average acting. Lost Causism remained the primary draw. According to Waldrop, the “tragedy” of the fall of the white South attracted audiences because it was emotional, experiential, or, to use his language, “heartrending.” Similarly, the film’s humor, much of

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Jim Waldrop, “Old, Young Line Up For GWTW Here,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 20, 1954, 8D.

which utilized anti-black stereotypes of ignorance and dependency for effect, played to white audiences as “screamingly funny.” Mammy, who Waldrop described as “a warm, human figure,” was another of the “ingredients which make ‘GWTW’ such a magnificent film.” As the African-American civil rights movement picked up, anti-segregation protest increasingly direct, and in the wake of the *Brown v. Board* ruling, white southerners, as Waldrop notes, continued to find the mythological Mammy “a nostalgic memory” of when racial tensions didn’t boil and black people were kept in their place.²⁸¹ Lost Causism, again was the appeal.

One day after the anniversary re-premiere in Atlanta, *Gone with the Wind* opened in San Francisco, CA; Kansas City, MO; Syracuse, NY; Toledo, OH; Houston, TX; and Providence, RI. Following those engagements, the film was given a general release in large- and small-market areas in July.²⁸² “Fantastic crowds” gathered at the San Francisco and New York theaters in the weeks following the film’s rerelease, noted Waldrop.²⁸³ In Washington D.C., an editorial in the *Washington Post* claimed that the author “returned to Tara” for *Gone with the Wind*’s fifteenth year, “instantly recapture[d]...[by] the atmosphere of the Old South’s golden era.” Tara, Twelve Oaks, and the film’s representation of the tragic Battle of Atlanta and the Confederate dead laying in the rail-yard were the writer’s favorite qualities; not the love story.²⁸⁴ Similarly, in Boston, *Gone with the Wind* returned “with all the fanfare of a new production” while, in Los Angeles,

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.; Jim Waldrop, “GWTW Comes Back to Town in Widescreen Next Month: Show to Mark 15th Year of Mitchell Classic,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 4, 1954, 2C.

²⁸³ Waldrop, “Old, Young Line Up For GWTW Here,” 8D.

²⁸⁴ Leo Sullivan, “Scarlett and Rhett Relive Drama of the Old South,” *Washington Post*, July 20, 1954, 18.

thousands gathered for the “new reshowing...which certainly overshadowed most Hollywood openings in the excitement it seemed to generate on the part of the general public.²⁸⁵ The *Los Angeles Times*—claiming that the film accurately captured the “cataclysm” of the Civil War, “the Negro folk and others that composed a realm unto itself,” and the romantic lifestyle of “the last domain of cavaliers and gallantry”—described the impact that *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causist experience still had on viewers:

“This film has a peculiar vitality about it...It therefore offers a strange, uncanny impression to those who have known it before. No other picture, perhaps, could evoke the same effect in such a striking way. The eerie impression it stirs is unsurpassed...[F]or any generation this is a picture of both splendor and enormous worth...it will deserve through the years many a reseeing.”²⁸⁶

As it was during *Gone with the Wind*’s original premiere, the 1954 rerelease was a sensation across white America, and certainly its popularity again had no Mason-Dixon Line. The film, importantly, won new fans during the 1950s civil rights era and was as popular among the younger generation as it was older Americans, many who had already seen the film. Not to be forgotten, Mitchell’s eighteen-year-old novel, the narrative foundation of the entire *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon, also experienced an additional surge in popularity on the heels of the anniversary celebration, according to the

²⁸⁵ “Theater, Music, and Dance—Boston Film Prospects: Widescreen for Revival of ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 21, 1954, 11; Edwin Schallert, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Great in Revival,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1954, B7.

²⁸⁶ Schallert, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Great in Revival,” B7.

Constitution.²⁸⁷ In fact, by mid-1954, Macmillan had allowed the issue of two new editions, one that was compressed into an 864-page “pocket book.”²⁸⁸ “Publishers and producers,” wrote Waldrop, do not expect ‘Gone with the Wind’ to ever die.”²⁸⁹ Perhaps equally prophetic, the *Los Angeles Times* claimed that *Gone with the Wind*, its story of the Civil War, and its characters “will live and live and live far beyond this present time.”²⁹⁰ Americans would not wait long for another celebration, and another chance to experience *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause in mass on the big screen during the black civil rights movement.

“Untimely Propaganda”: Reception of *Gone with the Wind*’s Civil War Centennial Rerelease at the Height of the Civil Rights Movement, 1961

Gone with the Wind’s fifteenth anniversary re-release was a massive success for MGM, grossing \$7 million. That the Lost Cause statement of the film returned mere days after the *Brown v. Board of Education* cannot be understated, even if the anniversary celebration was in the works before 1954 and the proximity of rerelease to the day of the ruling was coincidental. The film still provided white Americans the country over with the opportunity to convene with the Lost Cause, the modern nation’s most pernicious founding mythology, and provided them refuge from increasing racial tension. Like the 1954 rerelease, *Gone with the Wind*’s fifth rerelease took place during the civil rights era,

²⁸⁷ Waldrop, “GWTW Comes Back to Town in Widescreen Next Month,” 2C.

²⁸⁸ Paul Jordan-Smith, “Books and Authors: ‘Gone with the Wind’ Sets Another Mark; It’s Due as an 864-Page Pocket Book,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1954, D7; Gertrude Martin, “Book Reviews by Gertrude Martin,” *Chicago Defender*, July 10, 1954, 2; “Gone with the Wind,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1954, B9.

²⁸⁹ Waldrop, “GWTW Comes Back to Town in Widescreen Next Month,” 2C.

²⁹⁰ Schallert, “‘Gone with the Wind’ Great in Revival,” B7.

in 1961, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Civil War during the national Civil War Centennial celebration. In 1961, however, and amidst a more vigorous movement against Jim Crow segregation in the South—in particular nonviolent sit-ins that successfully turned segregation policies in public spaces such as lunch counters, parks, theaters, and swimming pools—*Gone with the Wind* was an even bigger success among white America than in 1954.

In 1957, a Joint Resolution in Congress created the United States Civil War Centennial Commission, tasked with organizing the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Civil War between the years of 1961 and 1965. Four professional historians—Allan Nevis, Bell Irvin Wiley, John A. Krout, and Bruce Catton—were appointed to lead the commission and to encourage the creation of state commissions in each of the forty-eight states, particularly those states that existed during the Civil War. Broadly, in this vision, the celebrations would be based on the individual states in which each specific celebration took place and organized to coincide with the 100th anniversary of each major Civil War event as they took place. The centennial celebration itself, according to historian Robert J. Cook, was “an exercise in Cold War nationalism.”²⁹¹ For Congress, the commission was created to provide the nation with a narrative of American triumph, demonstrating amid the Cold War how America emerged from its greatest and most divisive conflict with greater national power, unity, and expanded freedom. Taking place during the civil rights movement, this ahistorical approach failed horrendously, especially as white southerners rallied their celebrations behind the ideology of the Lost

²⁹¹ Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge, L.A.: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 2.

Cause. The centennial celebrations carried on through 1965, but tensions during the first year caused the festivities to fizzle.

Tensions caused by southern Lost Causism emerged almost immediately when the centennial kicked off. The most famous racial flare-up of the centennial took place in April, 1961, when a black commissioner from the New Jersey committee named Madaline A. Williams, a long-time state assembly woman, was denied entrance into the segregated Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston, S.C, where a Fort Sumter commemoration event was being held. The event sparked outrage, including NAACP protest, and nearly derailed the entire centennial commemoration, causing the commission's executive director to be ousted from his position. White southerners defended the action and the controversy led President John F. Kennedy, until that point mostly silent on American racial issues, to engage with the civil rights movement.²⁹²

In early 1961, two large events in Montgomery, AL, and Jackson, MS, that commemorated secession and the appointment of Jefferson Davis as the President of the Confederate State of the America also outlined the problems with the southern commissions. With the direct intent to forward the Lost Causist version of the Civil War during a time when they saw their society as under siege by African Americans, communists, or any do-gooding white that disagreed with Jim Crow segregation, white Southerners celebrated in Jackson and Montgomery with great enthusiasm. In Montgomery, a fair—that included a southern ball, speeches made by re-enactors, and a southern belle contest in which women dressed up like Scarlett O'Hara—was attended by 50,000. Similarly, in Jackson, MS, thousands of white men organized into militia-style units that donned Confederate greys and joined a secession parade that stretched for six

²⁹² Ibid., 98-118.

miles. The procession followed an enormous Confederate flag owned by the University of Mississippi. Following the parade, Mississippi governor Ross Barnett, clad as a Confederate officer, reenacted Mississippi's 1861 secession convention in front of 5,000 white Mississippians. These efforts to recapture the spirit of the Confederate in Montgomery and Jackson helped reinvigorate and galvanize white resistance to the black civil rights movement in those states, especially as white residents increasingly organized to save Jim Crow. Throughout the South, membership in the Sons of Confederate Veterans—an organization founded in 1896 to forward Lost Causism—resurged. In Jackson, on the same day as the secession parade, black students protesting the incarceration of nine sit-in demonstrators were tear gassed and attacked by police dogs.²⁹³

In the supposedly more progressive city of Atlanta, centennial events planned for March 8-10, 1961. The celebration was centered around three events: a Civil War-era fashion show; an antebellum-themed costume ball at the Biltmore Hotel that, according to an Atlanta news agency, “revives a happy hour during the War Between the States;” and, on the final climactic day, a recreation of the grand premiere of *Gone with the Wind* at the Loews theater.²⁹⁴ Anticipation for the *Gone with the Wind* re-premiere built quickly. In February, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that the re-premier was a sellout. The re-premiere, however, and unlike the events in Jackson and Montgomery, attracted numerous guests from outside of the event's home state. “Many letters have come in from the North and from the Middle West requesting tickets,” stated a commission agent

²⁹³ Ibid., 80-85; Alyssa D. Warrick, “‘Mississippi’s Greatest Hour’” The Mississippi Civil War Centennial and Southern Resistance,” *Southern Cultures* 19 (2013): 96-112.

²⁹⁴ Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 85; Harriet Horton, “Plans Boiling for Second Premiere of ‘GWTW’ in March,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 23, 1961, 4A.

to a reporter for the *Constitution*. “It is unbelievable... one man wrote from up North and asked that I confirm receipt of his letter and the reservations by wire, adding that ‘I am not a Georgian but a Yankee and want to be sure that I get seats.’”²⁹⁵

Requests for tickets to the re-premiere came in droves; so much so, that the centennial commission opened a special office in the Loews Grand building more than one month in advance solely to handle ticket requests for the *Gone with the Wind* event.²⁹⁶ “People have been so interested and anxious for tickets that some have asked for the most expensive in the house,” claimed one centennial commission agent.²⁹⁷ Southerners, however, remained the most enthusiastic, and revealed again that they valued the film for its Lost Causist mythology, not for the Scarlett and Rhett narrative. “One woman called,” according to Loews’ *Gone with the Wind* headquarters, “and talked for what seemed like hours. She said that bringing this picture back was wonderful because it was part of [the South’s] heritage and should be considered a part of the education of every child in Georgia...It will show the Yankees what type of people we have here,” she claimed. “They seem to have forgotten.” Yet another woman from Alabama, echoing that sentiment, said “that she wanted tickets so that she could bring her seven grandchildren...I just want them to see how we lived and that we had wonderful men.”²⁹⁸ Even journalist Bosley Crowther, who praised the film in 1941 as a realistic account of the Civil War-era in a pointedly Lost Causist review that compared the

²⁹⁵ Yolande Gwin, “Tickets go with the Wind; Centennial Will Be Sellout,” *Atlanta Constitution*, February 26, 1961, 10E.

²⁹⁶ “Civil War Centennial, ‘GWTW’ Quarters Opened,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 22, 1961, 36.

²⁹⁷ Gwin, “Tickets Go with the Wind,” 10E.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

destruction of the Old South to the destruction of Europe at the hands of the Nazis, returned to the pages of the *New York Times* in 1961 to herald *Gone with the Wind*, along with the release of the film *Mein Kampf*, as “History Revived.” The film, even twenty-one years later, proclaimed Crowther, “imparts reality...having to do with Southern gentry and the changes forced upon it by the War Between the States.” Crowther again implied that the white South was victimized, drawing further comparisons to the victimization of Europe by the Nazis in *Mein Kampf*.²⁹⁹ At best, the horror of slavery and its central role in causing the Civil War eluded Crowther, a racist schooled in the Lost Cause, as it did many white Americans. At worst, Crowther was a white supremacist—as many more white Americans also were—that refused to admit that it was the Confederates, the ancestors of those white Americans, who would have made a more apt comparison to the Nazis.

Amidst the civil rights movement of the 1960s and perceived government overreach into their segregated society, white southerners who attended the *Gone with the Wind* re-premiere clearly demonstrated—like their counterparts in Jackson and Montgomery—that the Lost Cause was the history that should be expressed, celebrated, and learned during the centennial. One columnist for the *Constitution* even lamented that the Atlanta censor would not permit a screening of *The Birth of a Nation* during the festivities, citing that the film had “been under heavy fire from a number of ‘liberal’ groups.”³⁰⁰ The same columnist, however, was far from disappointed with the planned

²⁹⁹ Bosley Crowther, “History Revived: Screen Imparts Reality in Two Strong Films,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1961, X1.

³⁰⁰ Harriet Horton, “Centennial Won’t Include ‘Birth of Nation’ Showing,” *Atlanta Constitution*, February 6, 1961, 3A.

Gone with the Wind event, writing that “Everything I know about the Civil War I learned from seeing ‘Gone with the Wind’ about two dozen times... Those who haven’t seen it weren’t born at the right time. Those who don’t go back to see it again are un-American crackpots.”³⁰¹ *Gone with the Wind* was the more palatable and less offensive of the possible movies, a form of censorship from which it derives much of its power to stay popular, and the re-premiere was one of the most popular of the entire centennial’s events.

The actual re-premiere ceremony on March 10th was another *Gone with the Wind* sensation. The event was still a sellout, and the Atlanta elite celebrated by hosting *Gone with the Wind*-themed parties across the city for other elite southerners and non-southerners attending the festivities.³⁰² At the event itself, attendees swooned as producer David Selznick and two of the film’s stars, Vivien Leigh and Olivia de Havilland, were in attendance. The event made headlines across the country.³⁰³ The success of *Gone with the Wind* as a centennial event would, however, continue beyond the March 10th weekend, as the film would be rereleased in fifty American cities and more than 100 smaller-market venues across the United States. White Americans, again, flocked to movie houses to watch the film just as they had done two decades earlier. From Atlanta to New York to Chicago to Los Angeles, *Gone with the Wind* was, according to the *New York Times*, a

³⁰¹ Horton, “Plans Boiling for Second Premiere of ‘GWTW’ in March,” 4A.

³⁰² “Festive Parties Being Planned for Centennial,” *Atlanta Constitution*, March 5, 1961, 9E.

³⁰³ Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 85; Harriet Horton, “Plans Boiling for Second Premiere of ‘GWTW’ in March,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 23, 1961, 4A.

“box-office bonanza” and performed particularly well in smaller suburban areas.³⁰⁴ Once its rerelease was over later that year, the film had grossed domestically approximately \$14 million (more than \$114 million in 2016 dollars), which was one of the most profitable box-office returns for any movie since its original 1939-40 run. In fact, MGM reported that the centennial rerelease was Metro’s highest grossing film since 1954, which was the previous rerelease of *Gone with the Wind* that took place during the same year as the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling.³⁰⁵

Raking in \$14 million for the centennial, *Gone with the Wind* was the second highest-grossing movie of 1961. In earnings, the twenty-two year old movie trailed only *West Side Story*, which grossed \$20 million. *West Side Story* was, in fact, a formidable opponent for highest grossing film since it was both new as a film but also had a large established following from its time on Broadway. *West Side Story* also appealed to more diverse audiences and attracted viewers from across racial boundaries. *Gone with the Wind*, however, was the second biggest movie of 1961 based on a domestic viewership that was overwhelmingly white. African Americans, in any significant number, cannot be expected to have attended the showings. Like in 1954, African Americans did not form a concerted resistance movement to *Gone with the Wind* as they had in 1939/40, but opposition to the rerelease was voiced by numerous civil rights groups.³⁰⁶ The *Chicago Defender* reported that *Gone with the Wind* was “assailed bitterly” by African Americans at the time and the fact that a false Lost Cause narrative was featured “as a part of [the]

³⁰⁴ “‘Gone with the Wind’ to Reopen Here this Friday,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1961, B8; “‘Gone with the Wind’ Returning,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 9, 1961, E11; Crowther, “History Revived,” X1; Quote from Thompson, “‘Wind’ is Reaping Another Harvest,” 12.

³⁰⁵ Thompson, “‘Wind’ is Reaping Another Harvest,” 12; Ronald Bryden, “Gone with the Wind: Gone,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1968, B9.

³⁰⁶ “‘Gone with the Wind’ Set For ‘Repeat’ Run,” *Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1961, 21.

Civil War Centennial adds to fire of attack.”³⁰⁷ Due to the Lost Causism of the film, the 1961 rerelease of *Gone with the Wind* was “considered untimely propaganda” by African American civil rights groups, the *Defender* wrote. As sit-ins and freedom riders tested the limits of new anti-segregation laws in the South, activist groups voiced only opposition to the return of *Gone with the Wind*, a direct contrast to the white America that were more than eager to directly experience the memory of the Lost Cause.³⁰⁸

For the divisive and controversial Civil War centennial celebration, *Gone with the Wind*'s rerelease was one of the most successful features and proved to be one Civil-War commemoration that white Americans across the United States agreed on. Once again, the film provided white Americans with a safe and more “politically correct” Lost Causism that they could experience and revel in while the racial dynamics of American society changed outside of theaters. Perversely, *Gone with the Wind* would become even more popular as the civil rights era continued. It was rereleased again when the black civil rights movement grew more radical and as race riots swept across the country.

“an instance of ‘old times that are not to be forgotten’”: *Gone with the Wind*, White Flight, Race Riots, and Blaxploitation during the Hollywood Roadshow Era, 1967-1973

In the years between *Gone with the Wind* rereleases, the film never failed to make money. In fact, by 1967, the movie had been dubbed in twenty-four different languages and, according to MGM itself,

³⁰⁷ “‘Gone with the Wind’ Picture Due Back For Theater Spotlight,” *Chicago Defender*, March 25, 1961, 19.

³⁰⁸ “‘Gone with the Wind’ Set For ‘Repeat’ Run,” 21.

“play[ed] somewhere in the world every week of every year...[T]he film, which played four years continuously in London and Paris, was equally in big in Japan, Brazil, and Malaya. It has been shown successfully in Poland, Yugoslavia and has been subtitled for audiences speaking Hebrew, Flemish, Arabic, Turkish and Chinese.”³⁰⁹

The film also continued to play frequently at special screenings in the United States during the intervening years between rereleases. The only place seemingly off limits to *Gone with the Wind* in the mid-twentieth century was the Soviet Union, only because the Russians would not pay MGM enough money to screen the American film.³¹⁰

The 1950s started the creation of a new era in American cinema as the ruling in *United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc.* (1948) broke apart Hollywood studio monopolies and the increasing availability of movies on television caused weekly attendance levels at American cinemas to plummet. Notably, the decrease in American cinema attendance did not hurt *Gone with the Wind*'s commemorative performances in 1954 or 1961. But according to film studies scholar Peter Krämer, during the 1950s, the “industry which had previously revolved around mass production and habitual consumption...now became hit driven, with major blockbuster success depending on a film's ability to draw in the large majority of the American population who had stopped going to the cinema on a weekly basis.”³¹¹ In the 1950s and 1960s, major studios, in other words, came to rely on one or two runaway hits per year—such as Cecil DeMille's circus

³⁰⁹ Vincent Canby, “A Large-Screen, Stereophonic Version of ‘Gone with the Wind’ Will Open Across U.S. this Fall,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1967, 46.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Peter Krämer, *The New Hollywood*, 22, 28-29.

spectacular *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952) or the enormously popular *The Sound of Music* (1965)—that far outpaced the consumption of competitors. Blockbusters, rather than the shorter films that people attend habitually, were thus tailor-made by studios for the Hollywood roadshow theatrical release, or reserved seat engagement, in select cities across the country.

Blockbusters made for the roadshow held a special status among films; they similarly had huge budgets, were excessive in length, featured the era's biggest movie stars, and tickets to them were sold at premium prices. Screenings of roadshow blockbusters were exclusive events. They did not play continuously throughout the day and seats were instead reserved in advance to only a few scheduled performances. Unsurprisingly, musicals and historical epics, especially those with religious themes—such as 1956's *The Ten Commandments* and 1959's *Ben Hur*—were among the biggest new hits of the roadshow era. By the mid-1960s new roadshow epics and musicals were the most popular movies annually, far outpacing film's released to general theaters dominated by teenage attendees.³¹² Thus was the environment that a reformatted *Gone with the Wind* was rereleased into, and it became one of the biggest films of the new era.

Gone with the Wind was rereleased officially again on October 4, 1967, in a new, highly anticipated 70-mm large-screen format with stereophonic sound.³¹³ The new version was tailor-made for success on the circuit of roadshow theater spectacles, where

³¹² Ibid., 21, 26-29, 40.

³¹³ Terry Kay, "'Gone with the Wind'—The Magic Returns Again," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 1, 1967, 7F; Bosley Crowther, "Screen: 'Gone with the Wind': Bigger Than Ever," *New York Times*, October 11, 1967, 41; Robert Windeler, "'Gone with the Wind' Back in Atlanta: Renovated 1939 Movie Has a Festive Premiere," *New York Times*, October 5, 1967, 46.

the film would stay for one year and would return in 1971/72.³¹⁴ The rerelease also occurred in the wake of a wave of more than 150 “race riots” that swept across the country during the summer. More specifically, MGM announced the film’s return in late July in the immediate aftermath of the year’s two most violent disturbances in Newark, NJ, and Detroit, MI. In Newark, twenty-six people died in the unrest sparked when black cab driver John Smith was pulled over and severely beaten by police officers during the traffic stop. Similarly, the Detroit riot ignited following a police raid on an unlicensed bar provoked confrontations between officers and observers. Forty-three people lost their lives during the Detroit violence.

After-hours bars, traffic violations, or any other trivial law breaking activity were not the causes of the violence in Newark, Detroit, or any of the other locations of race riots during the long summer of 1967. Systemic police brutality against minority and poor citizens was not solely at the heart of the disturbances either, though the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders—better known as the Kerner Commission—appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate the 1967 riots—found that “police actions were ‘final’ incidents before the outbreak of violence in 12 of the 24 surveyed disorders.”³¹⁵ Long histories of police brutality against African American residents of American cities is certainly an important element in the frustration that boiled over into the unrest of 1967, as are histories of racial profiling, anti-back discrimination in housing and work pay, the poor status of black Vietnam veterans, and extreme poverty spurred by deindustrialization and the “white flight” of white people, tax

³¹⁴ Ronald Bryden, “Gone with the Wind: Gone,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1968, B9.

³¹⁵ Kerner Commission, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968).

revenue, and economic opportunity to the suburbs. Federal urban renewal projects and freeway construction also had destroyed once thriving black communities, leaving thousands displaced and poor. In Detroit, the unlicensed bar itself was a product of anti-black discrimination since many of the city's bars and restaurants barred black people and would-be black business owners were often denied permits to open their own. An unlicensed bar was one of the places in Detroit in which African Americans could socialize and, in the case of the raid that sparked the 1967 uprising, to celebrate the return to safety of two black soldiers from Vietnam. Throughout the history of those abuses, it is also vital to understand that black activists consistently organized against the structures of white supremacy and built vigorous civil rights movements in their cities.

Given all of these ingredients, the disturbances are thus better understood as products of societal white supremacy, the downfall of which white Americans consistently resisted, as they do today. Even the Federal government's Kerner Commission was on the right track, writing that "[s]egregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood," the commission's report continued, "is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."³¹⁶ The uprisings of 1967 were responses to a white supremacist society. Their labeling as race riots is incorrect, unless one is talking about the police response. The concentrated disturbances of 1967 instead were forms of political rebellion resisting not only the power abuses in American

³¹⁶ Ibid.

ghettos, but also the black powerlessness suffered in America's white supremacist society.

Both riots in Newark and Detroit lasted for more than five days and resulted in sixty-nine deaths, thousands of injuries and arrests, and millions of dollars in property destruction, overwhelmingly suffered by African Americans and their communities. The police rioted, and entire city blocks that comprised black neighborhoods were destroyed and lay in ruin. In Detroit alone, the police arrested thousands of African Americans, most of which were baseless, and, in an act of terrorism, firebombed black businesses—notably a black bookstore that served as a meeting place for black activists. What's more, as the media misrepresented the rioting areas as battlegrounds plagued by roving bands of organized black militias, the vast majority of deaths were in reality African Americans, armed only with bottles and rocks, if armed at all, killed by police officers and National Guardsmen who were authorized to use their weapons at will.

As a result, the rebellions further stoked white fear, leading to increased calls for “law and order” from conservatives, which increasingly caused succeeding governments to wage a “war on crime” that abandoned social democratic reforms completely and instead incarcerated thousands struggling in impoverished, deindustrialized communities of color. Similarly, increased white fear also exacerbated white flight, again deepening the black economic and political plights that lay at the root of the violence and the white supremacist and exploitatively capitalist system that undergirded the creation of the black ghetto.³¹⁷ As a result, the Kerner Commission famously warned of increasing racial

³¹⁷ For a comprehensive look at the riots of 1967, their causes, and legacies, see Malcolm McLaughlin, *The Long, Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*, 2014 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

division across the United States. “This is our basic conclusion,” the commission wrote: “[o]ur nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”³¹⁸ As Federal and state governments ignored the warning, and instead embraced militarized law and order, the white nation would once again indicate its belief in a separate history that created the conditions of black ghettos; A history separate from that of African Americans. White Americans again embraced nostalgia for a simpler time when slavery kept racial violence at bay. Lost Causism was again deployed as *Gone with the Wind* was rereleased to American theaters.

The return of *Gone with the Wind* was announced by MGM on July 25, 1967, while the five-day riot in Detroit was still ongoing. Short of a direct confession, there is no way to determine if MGM executives released *Gone with the Wind* intentionally amid the violence to capitalize on the film’s Lost Causist escapism to a mythological period of antebellum racial harmony, when slavery maintained law and order, or because it was the timing in which the 70-mm version of the film became available. However, MGM executives demonstrated, at the very least, that they were acutely aware of the political climate in America and the impact that a *Gone with the Wind* rerelease might have, which was not celebrating any meaningful anniversary or milestone, and decided to release the film anyway. According to MGM executives, they were very much aware of the potential for protest, but downplayed concerns about the film’s racism by stating that Hattie McDaniel won an Oscar for her performance and claiming that “the film [accurately] portrays characters in a particular historical period, and they believe the showing [would]

³¹⁸ Kerner Commission, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*.

be accepted without incident.”³¹⁹ MGM also fully expected the film’s rerelease to profit despite increased “racial awareness,” as detailed by the *New York Times* following the announcement of the rerelease in 1967. The *Times* wrote,

“[MGM’s] executives expressed no fear that the film, based on Margaret Mitchell’s extremely romantic view of the pre-Civil War South, may be cynically received by contemporary audiences, who are now more aware of racial stereotypes than at any other time in the film’s history.”³²⁰

The MGM executives were correct: *Gone with the Wind* was rereleased yet again on the Hollywood Roadshow circuit and proved to be more popular among white audiences in the late roadshow era than during earlier rereleases. In fact, Selznick’s film was the biggest movie of the entire period between 1967-1976, attracting large audiences of white Americans across the United States, and experienced very little resistance. With regard to protest, an anti-*Gone with the Wind* letter was published in a prominent African American newspaper in Norfolk, VA, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference openly voiced opposition to the rerelease, calling it “disturbing.” Large-scale organized protest at theaters, however, did not occur.³²¹ The only direct resistance the film did experience in 1967 took place in Baltimore, as anti-racism activists picketed the Hippodrome Theater in makeshift KKK robes made out of bed sheets. Protestors in Baltimore called the film’s racism

³¹⁹ Nicholas Gage, “Gone with the Wind, Like Death and Taxes, Is Always with Us: Movie Will ‘Premiere’ Again this Week; Big Gross Seen; Negroes Disturbed by Film,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 2, 1967, 1.

³²⁰ Canby, “A Large-Screen, Stereophonic Version of ‘Gone with the Wind’ Will Open Across U.S. this Fall,” 46.

³²¹ Otis Watson, “Letter to the Editor: ‘Gone with the Wind’ Should Go!,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, February 10, 1968, A11; Quote from Gage, “Gone with the Wind, Like Death and Taxes Is Always with Us,” 1.

despicable and demanded equal billing on the theater marquee for Hattie McDaniel. *Gone with the Wind* was not removed from any theaters but, in Baltimore, pickets ceased after the theater agreed to add McDaniel's name to the marquee.³²²

Amid the protests and violence of the late-1960s, perhaps some white Americans might have been more cynical about the racial stereotypes in the film. As Krämer writes in *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars*, "race was an important issue in half of the top ten hits [in 1967]" as, he argues, "Hollywood responded to changes in the American public by...producing more and more films which were, broadly speaking, in line with the changing values and concerns."³²³ According to Krämer, the era's more progressive films that featured black actors or confronted racial anxieties such as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) and *In the Heat of the Night* (1967) attracted large audiences because they "mirrored increasingly liberal attitudes towards sex, race, and ethnicity."³²⁴ Even Bosley Crowther lamented in a 1967 editorial that "sympathy with the leading characters in [*Gone with the Wind*] may be affected as a consequence" of the "hypersensitive...race-conscious day."³²⁵ Unsurprisingly, Crowther still loved the film, and his worries were unfounded.

Krämer acknowledges that the popularity of *Gone with the Wind* in 1967, along with the stacks of racist hate mail received by Stanley Kramer, producer-director of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, indicate that racially progressive films were more

³²² "Robed Protest Gets Hattie on Broadway," *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 21, 1967, 1.

³²³ Krämer, *The New Hollywood*, 55, 87.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 87.

³²⁵ Crowther, "Screen: 'Gone with the Wind,'" 41.

controversial outside of the mainstream media.³²⁶ Indeed, Krämer is correct, but where racially progressive films were controversial among the white American public in the late 1960s, that same public found consensus around *Gone with the Wind*. White Americans, in other words, proved that they still loved the film and that they were more than willing to experience the mythological racial harmony of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism while simultaneously resisting the black fight against white supremacy—a fight that in 1967 had grown more violent and more radical after activist Stokely Carmichael coined the phrase “black power” and advocated for armed self-defense. Quite perversely, *Gone with the Wind*, due in large part to white national founding mythology it defined, was the biggest movie of the entire civil rights era in the United States, powered entirely by white consumers, and grew only more popular as the fight for black equality became more radical in the face of white resistance, deepening poverty, and a refusal by the U.S. government to institute meaningful systematic change to America’s governing power structures. As Crowther again raved in 1967, the film was still spectacular, and “one is constantly reminded by the elaborate antebellum atmosphere and the candor of the individual attitudes, Negroes’ as well as whites’, that this is the folding of a romance that has merged into the character of legend and even myth.”³²⁷

Gone with the Wind's Lost Causist legend was a sensation once again in 1967 and 1968. Predictably, the roadshow tour kicked off at the Loews Grand Theater in Atlanta before opening to theaters in Los Angeles and New York City, a city and state in which race riots occurred before MGM announced the theater openings. Fans in the three

³²⁶ Ibid., 55-56.

³²⁷ Crowther, “Screen: ‘Gone with the Wind,’” 41.

cities were eager to see the film, and by the end of July had already purchased \$503,000 worth of reservations, Mitchell's novel surged in sales, and tourists found increased interest in the Atlanta area's plantation landmarks. In Atlanta itself, celebrities were flown in and three days of parades and balls again preceded the "premiere" screening of the new 70-mm version. The staff at Loews donned Confederate uniforms and plantation columns were placed in front of the theater, as "Atlanta hailed the return of *Gone with the Wind*" once again. By February, 1968, the film had been released across the country and had made more than \$15 million in ticket sales in only three months, slightly less than half of the film's total gross during that rerelease.³²⁸

After *Gone with the Wind* was released to special theaters after its premieres in Atlanta, New York, and Los Angeles, it is vitally important to understand *where* the film was watched by white audiences, not just *how* they celebrated and watched it. As historian Edward Campbell notes, the continued success of *Gone with the Wind* in the late 1960s and early 1970s was entirely contingent on the white suburban film market, or the white-flight film market, for whom, Campbell writes, *Gone with the Wind* remained "an instance of 'old times that are not to be forgotten.'"³²⁹ The only other theatrical options for white viewers to experience a historical film about the Old South and the Civil War eras—especially as war films became less popular during the on-going

³²⁸ Kay, "'Gone with the Wind'—The Magic Returns Again," 7F; Canby, "A Large-Screen, Stereophonic Version of 'Gone with the Wind' Will Open Across U.S. this Fall," 46; Bill Dial, "'Gone with the Wind' Stars Parade Here Again," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 3, 1967, 1; Kathryn Johnson, "Atlanta Hails Return of 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1967, A5; Robert P. Hay, "'Gone with the Wind' Stirs Atlanta anew: Book in Demand, Plantation Identified," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1967, 4; Windeler, "'Gone with the Wind' Back in Atlanta," *New York Times*, October 5, 1967, 46; Robert Cross, "Triumphant Return for the All-time Favorite Movie: *Gone with the Wind*," *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1967, E2; "'Wind' rerun Earns \$15-million So Far," *New York Times*, February 15, 1968, 46.

³²⁹ Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 176.

Vietnam war—were the Blaxploitation films that capitalized on urban black markets. Films such as *Slaves* (1969), *The Quadroon* [a.k.a. *The Color of Truth*] (1971), and *Mandingo* (1975) were mostly historically dubious adventure, revenge, or lustful mixed-race sexual fantasies devoid of context and that reduced slavery to spectacle, often employing black stereotypes. Such films were rightfully criticized by black academics for failing to challenge “the general moral and artistic malaise affecting white America” by fully probing the cruelty and systemic nature of white supremacy in both the past and the present.³³⁰ Blaxploitation films about slavery, however, did deliver mostly-black audiences with images of brutal slave beatings, the horrors of slave auctions, and occasionally challenged racist white values, particularly mixed-race sexual relationships. (Notably, the poster for the film *Mandingo* was intentionally modeled after the poster of *Gone with the Wind* and featured two men, one black and one white, tenderly holding women of the other race in their arms). Blaxploitation films, in other words, did provide more accurate counter-narratives by both presenting interracial sex as a historical reality and by depicting American slavery as only a brutalizing, evil institution, despite being mostly spectacle. That a film like *Mandingo* was a step in the right direction for representations of slavery speaks volumes about the state of how slavery was portrayed and understood America’s cultural institutions.

White audiences, though, did not consume Blaxploitation films about slavery on any significant scale which, to be sure, it must be noted that such films were never made to attract large white suburban audiences. But, for those white suburban audiences, they mostly forewent seeing *Slaves* or *Mandingo*, and remained in the confines of their suburbs, a location that, as literary scholar Catherine Jurca argues, attracted whites on the

³³⁰ Larry Neal, “Beware of the Tar Baby,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1969, D13.

hope of emotional and middle-class fulfillment, only to leave them unsatisfied. White suburban Americans, she further contends, then came to believe that they—fortunate, affluent property owners, the segregators of white flight that monopolized access to vital political and economic resources—were the unfortunate, the dispossessed, the subjugated, the victimized, the disenfranchised, and that, in their eyes, reimagined their white flight as white diaspora.³³¹ In the suburbs during the civil rights era, these whites had the opportunity to experience a similar story of white victimization and dispossession—bolstered by black unrest that was caused by increased black freedom—in vivid color, on a 70-mm screen, by way of the white nation’s founding myth of white supremacy. And they did. White suburbanites flocked to watch *Gone with the Wind* in 1967 at the highest rates since its original premiere.

White consumption of *Gone with the Wind* in 1967 is more difficult to analyze because reviewers in the nation’s mainstream newspapers did not interview audience members nor did they take to the press to glorify *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism with the same intensity that they did in 1939; its narrative and the high-value of the movie were already accepted in white America. For those that did, however, coverage of the rerelease was almost entirely positive, and only a few mentions were made to “unflattering” black stereotypes. Even articles about the black characters tended to focus on their anticipated return to the rerelease at Loews’ or Hattie McDaniel’s career success rather than critically analyzing the meaning of such stereotypes during the civil rights movement, despite African Americans’ pointing out the negative effects of such

³³¹ Catherine Jurca, *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

stereotypes for decades.³³² Polls conducted during the roadshow period provide another source, and confirm that *Gone with the Wind* was still by far America's favorite movie. And this was not just true among older generations. As Krämer alludes, the polls revealed that Selznick's film was still attracting new fans, male and female, and was the most popular movie among all college-aged Americans and older educated males, despite being ostensibly associated with older female audiences.³³³ But the most telling evidence of *Gone with the Wind*'s resonance among insecure white audiences—fearful of threats posed to white supremacy by black rebellion—of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causist myth was the astonishing eagerness and voraciousness with which white America consumed the twenty-eight-year-old film during the roadshow era. After its 1967 national roadshow tour ended, *Gone with the Wind* ranked as the second highest grossing film of the year, making \$36 million dollars off of theaters viewings alone (approximately \$312 million dollars today). It trailed only the brand new smash-hit blockbuster *The Graduate*, which grossed \$105 million, \$44 million of which was made off of rentals. The third highest grossing of 1967 was *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* which made \$26 million.³³⁴

White America fueled *Gone with the Wind*'s astounding success, tellingly, causing it to gross \$10 million more than a successful blockbuster that attracted far more

³³² Robert Windeler, "Gone with the Wind Back in Atlanta: Renovated 1939 Movie has Festive Premiere," *New York Times*, October 5, 1967, 46; Bosley Crowther, "Gone with the; Bigger than Ever," *New York Times*, October 11, 1967, 41; Kathryn Johnson, "Atlanta Hails return of 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1967, A5; Robert Cross, "Triumphant Return for the All-Time Favorite Movie: Gone with the Wind," *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1967, e2; "Gone with the Wind' Brought Fame to Actress Hattie McDaniel," *Chicago Daily Defender*, September 29, 1971, 14; "'Wind' Rerun Earns \$15-Million So Far," *New York Times*, February 15, 1968, 46.

³³³ Krämer, *The New Hollywood*, 46.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55-56, 106.

diverse audiences and that appealed to a supposedly more liberal-minded America. In each of the following years of the roadshow era, *Gone with the Wind*'s earning in 1967, the most violent year of racial disturbances, would have ranked it among those year's top-five films, the territory of only new films released for the first time in those years.³³⁵ In fact, *Gone with the Wind* did appear again during the roadshow era, building on its massive success in 1967, and was officially rereleased on the circuit again in 1971. Although *Gone with the Wind* didn't resonate among white audiences in 1971 as much as it did in the more violent year of 1967, and didn't crack that year's top ten films, it remained popular regardless. As Krämer admits, "in almost every conceivable way, *Gone with the Wind* was the most outstanding film in American culture during the period of 1967-76," as it grossed millions of dollars during its official rereleases in 1967 and 1971 and raked in an additional \$36 million in rentals during the same time period.³³⁶ According to Krämer, if all of its revenue during the period of 1967-76 is adjusted for inflation, *Gone with the Wind* might qualify as one of the New Hollywood Top 14. What's more, the film also premiered on television for the first time in 1976 to astronomical ratings.³³⁷ Selznick's 1939 *Lost Cause* statement, in other words, was by far the most spectacular film during the violent years of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The myth was not only still relevant in American memory, but it still actively attracted white audiences anxious about the threats to white supremacy that they perceived around them during the era. The myth, if anything grew stronger. And finally, if the highly celebrated

³³⁵ Ibid., 106.

³³⁶ Ibid., 46.

³³⁷ Ibid., 46, 110.

rereleases in 1954 and 1961 are included, *Gone with the Wind* was the biggest film in American Culture during the entire civil rights era, thanks entirely to white audiences.

“God, did the Old South ever need destroying”: Black Intellectuals in the 1960s and 70s

Gone with the Wind was the most spectacular cultural phenomenon in America from 1954 to 1976, just as it was in 1939-1940. By 1976, Selznick’s film was thirty-seven years old and remained the defining narrative of the Lost Cause during the twentieth century. As the fight for black equality and civil rights grew more vigorous, and, by 1968, more radical, white Americans increasingly throughout three periods of the film’s rereleases communed with the *Gone with the Wind*’s national founding mythology. Other Hollywood mainstream films about the Civil War also could not escape *Gone with the Wind*’s gravity, despite a few such as *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976)? that diverged from elements of *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism. For the most part, however, Mitchell’s and Selznick’s Lost Cause remained hegemonic in white American memory, especially during an era of high racial tension; its central myths and anti-black stereotypes mostly unaltered in white consciousness. After *Gone with the Wind*, Hollywood both tried to recapture *Gone with the Wind*’s essence and in some cases to move on to new ideas. Hollywood never accomplished the former and the new ideas failed to unsettle *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Cause, at least outside of black markets that they provided with Blaxploitation films. Regardless of their popularity, or their audiences, all films about the Civil War era lived in *Gone with the Wind*’s shadow throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

Occupied with sit-ins, marches, and other direct demonstrations against Jim Crow segregation, African Americans did not mount a large campaign of direct resistance to *Gone with the Wind*'s rereleases in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Baltimore picketers in Fall of 1967 provided the only direct confrontation with the film in theaters. A few cultural commenters, sitting opposite nostalgists like Crowther, however, did take notice to the role that the Lost Cause played in white America memory and *Gone with the Wind*'s role in that process. Writing in the *New York Times* in 1969, poet and theater professor Doris E. Abramson—who authored the groundbreaking study of racism endemic in mid-twentieth century theater, *Negro Playwrights in the American Theater, 1925-1959*, that same year—recommended a list of black writers that could provide “an informal cultural overview” of the representation of African Americans, and their history, in American culture. Abramson recommends a series of plays about the Civil War era “that would contradict the forced sentimentality of ‘Gone with the Wind.’” As the title of her letter states, plays such as black playwright Theodore Ward’s *Our Lan’* (1947)—a moving play about the African-American spirit as seen through a freedman living during Reconstruction—could potentially provide “antidotes to ‘Gone with the Wind.’” Through the plays she recommended, if they were to be made into feature films, and respected by Hollywood producers, Abramson writes, “America might learn something about the Civil War.”³³⁸

While suggesting plays that might serve as antidotes to *Gone with the Wind*, Abramson directly references Larry Neal’s scathing *New York Times* editorial about racial representation in Hollywood, “Beware of the Tar Baby,” published only one month before her own letter. In “Beware of the Tar Baby,” Neal, a black poet, actor, and icon of

³³⁸ Doris E. Abramson, “Antidotes to ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *New York Times*, September 7, 1969, D16.

the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s and 1970s, compares mid-twentieth century liberal Hollywood to the Rabbit in one of the Brer Rabbit and Tar baby tales:

“The Rabbit, ditty bopping down a Southern road, comes across a Tar Baby that the Fox has set up as a trap. The Rabbit, for all his cunning, has been taught to display good manners. So he speaks to the Tar Baby who, naturally, does not reply. After many attempts to get the Tar Baby to speak, the Rabbit hauls off and strikes him with his fists, getting them stuck in the hot, soft tar. He kicks the Tar Baby next, only to become embedded in the black substance. With hands and legs encased in the tar, he is left only with his head to use as a battering ram. You know the rest of the story. The head also gets stuck in the hot black tar, and finally the Rabbit becomes a prisoner of the Tar Baby—a prisoner of Blackness. Helpless and ready for the fire.

Hollywood, traditionally the Fox, is in much the same fix today as the Rabbit. But unlike the Rabbit of black folklore who finally escaped into a briar patch, the Hollywood bunny simply plunges deeper and deeper into the tar, only to emerge more and more confused...the Fire looms largely.³³⁹

Neal’s specific admonishments were for the wave of Blaxploitation films that ostensibly focus on the black experience in America but that, in Neal’s words, failed to deliver audiences a “profound understanding of the nature of human oppression, and the

³³⁹ Neal, “Beware of the Tar Baby,” D13.

ways in which man counters that oppression—either to overcome it, or to be destroyed by it.” Neal continued,

“Now because of the revolutionary tempo of these times, Hollywood and its satellites have been suddenly forced to confront the black experience in all of its human complexity...are seldom successful, because...they really haven’t changed that much at all. The force of a falsely perceived history renders most of their attempts meaningless, and finally almost as inane as the oversimplifications of the past.”³⁴⁰

While Neal did not directly reference *Gone with the Wind* in his article, its historical mythology was surely on his mind, and his argument prodded Abramson to recommend a list of *Gone with the Wind* antidotes to counter white America’s falsely perceived history. To be sure, she was correct, *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism, seared into white memory through screen, desperately needed an antidote, as it still does. However, white America must be willing to learn from and accept the antidote, not just when it is convenient, but must turn away from the Lost Cause, and thus their whiteness, completely. Neal, recognized this, writing that the state of Hollywood “makes one almost yearn for the days when a racist was clearly a racist, and his art marked him as such.” He continued to the point:

“Today, the most banal films issue forth from the would-be good guys. You know the type: The white boy who thinks he’s hip; or the one who dreams himself a latent revolutionary. These are the ones most full of bull. What Hollywood really needs, along with some serious people, is a George Wallace of the film world. A Cracker who will really say what’s

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

on his white mind. Maybe he will make films about gutless white liberals. Maybe he'll really polarize things. He might even radicalize the NAACP. Maybe his films will cause riots; cause theaters to burn, and fore Black people to get their thing together independently. In a perverted kind of way, it would really be a groove. The full force of all the lies and the hate swirling out there."³⁴¹

Neal's polemics were correct in their sentimentality. Liberal Hollywood—despite the fact that films such as *Slaves and Mandingo* presented slavery as an institution of horrific violence, black exploitation and victimhood, and had some commentary on the reality of whiteness through scenes of miscegenation—never significantly challenged the white founding myth, nor did it capture the true black experience in 1960s America, or the true historical depths of white resistance to black equality. White Americans instead flocked not to see a film as polarizing as Neal described—not made by a George Wallace—but to see a beloved story, perceived as not egregiously offensive, made by a white woman from Georgia, who never asked the praise and acclaim she received, and a Jewish Hollywood producer. *Gone with the Wind*—the Lost Cause's overt, malicious racism muted on film, though its mythology firmly in tact—standardized the lies and oversimplifications of the past about which Abramson and Neal cautioned. The myth was accepted by white Americans of all political stripes, even those who professed to be open-minded, and it left an indelible mark it had left on Hollywood's Civil War and slavery. Amazingly, it still remained the most popular of even the new films it influenced.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

In the mid-1970s, the desegregation of public schools, which was a grindingly slow process since the 1954 *Brown v. Board* ruling, was the issue at the epicenter of racial tension. White Americans across the nation resisted the policies to bus black students into white schools, often resulting in riots and violence directed at African Americans. In 1976, amid this violence, *Gone with the Wind* made its wildly successful television premiere. But in 1975, Jamaica Kincaid—a black Antiguan-American writer best known for stylistic writings that explore personal, intimate relationships and exhibit anti-colonial themes—noticed the cultural power that the Lost Cause mythology carried. Kincaid, in a short essay titled “If Mammies Ruled the World” (1975), targeted *Gone with the Wind* directly. In the essay, Kincaid says that she has seen the film four times and likes it very much. However, Kincaid blatantly states that she does not enjoy Scarlett, whom she calls a “petulant little bitch,” or the “dashing chump” Rhett. In the essay, Kincaid loathes the Old South. Instead, her love is for Hattie McDaniel, the Mammy, because Mammy was too good for the likes of the O’Haras, or any real plantation master for that matter. “Mammies,” writes Kincaid, “love you for no reason at all. [Mammy] is fair, loving, loyal, nurturing, supportive, protective, generous, and devoted...[she] is the sort of person to whom you can say, ‘I just raped fourteen children and I killed eight of them,’ and she’ll say, ‘isn’t that terrible, I love you anyway.’”³⁴² It is worth letting Kincaid’s words do the speaking:

“Black people do not like the image of a Mammy anymore...What I imagine black people are really objecting to when they disapprove of

³⁴² Jamaica Kincaid, “If Mammies Ruled the World,” in *The Village Voice Anthology (1956-1980): Twenty-five Years of Writing from The Village Voice*, ed. Geoffrey Stokes (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1982), 54.

Mammies, tap dancers and moochers, is the system that produced those things. Richard Goldstein told me that he thought *Gone with the Wind* was the first disaster movie. I hadn't really thought of it that way, but God, did the Old South ever need destroying. The Old South remains one of the most vivid examples of why white people in America won't be able to look themselves clearly in the eyes for a long time. White southerners have always appeared to me to be the savages of the North American continent. I first heard about George Wallace standing in the school door when I was about ten years old. My teacher read it to us from *Time* magazine. She asked us what we thought of such a person and I told her that since Alabama was on the other side of the Mississippi, it must be part of the jungle, therefore George Wallace was a savage and we should send him little Gideon Bibles. I didn't know civilized people behaved in that way. Scarlett and Rhett and Melanie and Ashley were not civilized people and that's why they didn't deserve a Mammy. But the worst part of it is, they have successfully ruined for us any ideas about having Mammies."³⁴³

The power of Kincaid's words is the inversion of Lost Cause discourse that specifically targets *Gone with the Wind*, which Kincaid understood carried enormous cultural power in white America. The loyal and loving Mammy, as she described her, had been an important part of plantation literature lore since the latter half of the nineteenth century. And Kincaid didn't challenge the romance. She instead proclaimed that the white masters and their families did not deserve Mammy's loyalty and cast them as the savages in need of civilizing, inverting racial stereotypes.

³⁴³ Ibid., 55.

While there was little direct protest to *Gone with the Wind* during civil rights era, its role in American memory, and its hold on white culture, did not go unnoticed. To be sure, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism, its influence, was a large part of Neal's Tar Baby, trapping Hollywood and white viewers, polite or not, as they were sympathetic to the memory it imitates and its harmful lies about American history, blackness, and the current state of black America. Although, white America was never trapped in blackness, they were and are trapped in whiteness, a whiteness that Kincaid exposed for its lack of humanity and the violence of its history. The white masters of the Old South did not deserve romanticizing and, like the historical Old South itself, the Old South of the Lost Cause needs to be destroyed. In 1976, a successful production that told the truth about slavery and the black experience in America premiered on national television—a production that did provide a popular counter-narrative to Lost Causism that Abramson, Neal, and Kincaid desperately knew needed to exist. When *Roots* was slated for a premiere in 1976, during the ongoing desegregation riots, *Gone with the Wind* made its television premiere alongside it.

“Who would ever expect so much excitement over a 37-year-old motion picture?”:

Ongoing Opposition to Integration, *Roots*, and the Reception of *Gone with the Wind*'s 1976 Television Debut

In 1976, *Gone with the Wind* would achieve another landmark accomplishment in its already long history when it made its television premiere. The television premiere, like its rereleases to theaters, occurred when national racial tensions were heightened, and

when the T.V. miniseries *Roots*, a powerful counter-narrative to *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism, was scheduled to be premiere.

By 1975, America, North and South, had been embroiled in a national crises over the forced busing of students, white and black, to desegregate public schools. Desegregation was slow, but the implementation of policy to facilitate busing was often met with white protests, riots, and counter-legislation that deemed federally mandated integration “unconstitutional.” In 1950s Virginia, the desegregation of public schools was met with the machine-politician Senator Harry F. Byrd’s campaign of “Massive Resistance,” a strategy that sought to circumvent federal mandate by such tactics as providing tuition grants to students of anti-integration parents and by closing down and withholding state funds from schools that attempted to integrate. Many outraged white Virginia families supported Byrd, and resisted by employing anti-black stereotypes, arguing that black children in their white schools would decrease the quality of education. A decade later, following the *Bradley v. Richmond School Board* case in 1970—in which Judge Robert Merhige, Jr. ordered a limited citywide busing in Richmond, VA—opposition from white parents was sparked once again, resulting in increased white flight to suburban private schools that were being founded for the purpose of resisting integration. Merhige’s ruling was overturned two year later in 1972 and—although many of the laws of Massive Resistance were also overturned by state and federal courts—white resistance school equality continued in Virginia.

Resistance to school integration played out in cities and counties across the United States in the 1970s, from California to Delaware. In the town of Milton, just outside of Pensacola, Florida, racial tensions surrounding a long history of segregation

and police abuses boiled over when recently integrated black students protested Escambia County High School's rebel mascot and use of the Confederate flag on school grounds, which were adopted by the white student body of the newly constructed school in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Controversy over the mascot had been simmering since integration at the school began. But on February 4, 1976, following a failed attempt to vote for a mascot change, white Escambia students provoked black students by attempting to raise a Confederate flag the next school day. Violence erupted, and four students were shot in the ensuing fights, thirty more injured. \$5,000 in damage was done to the school. No fatalities were suffered, but almost 2,000 students, white and black, were involved in the day's turmoil. Two days after the Escambia riot, representatives of the Ku Klux Klan chapters from Alabama, Georgia, and Florida rode an eighty-vehicle caravan into Milton and paraded in full regalia. The Klan rally protested school integration and the potential changing of the high school's mascot, and attracted 450 people from the local area. Only one person was arrested for their role in the riot, Raymond Lindsay, a twenty-three year old African American who wasn't a student. In the weeks that followed, tensions remained high, and white community members threatened school board members and burned crosses in the yards of black residents.³⁴⁴

The most violent opposition to integration, however, occurred Boston, Massachusetts, where white resistance to integration had been ongoing since the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. As African Americans protested Boston's segregated school system, and the white schools that were favored, the city school board

³⁴⁴ Wayne King, "Racial Animosity Turns to Violence in Pensacola, Fla., on Issue of Calling High School Teams 'Rebels,'" *New York Times*, March 7, 1976, 33.

denied the charges that disproportionate funding and segregation existed. In fact, following the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, white Bostonians used the language of the bill itself to resist integration by focusing attention on southern states that segregated students by policy, and away from northern residential and school segregation not dictated by state and local laws. According to Section 410, Article D of the 1964 act, “‘desegregation’ shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance.” The language of article D was put there by northern supporters of the bill who feared that integration would target the *de facto* segregation in their white schools, many of which were located in *de facto* segregated white flight suburbs. White Bostonians maintained the canard into the 1970s, and as segregate schools decreased in the South, segregation everywhere else as whites fled their children to geographically separated schools in the suburbs.³⁴⁵ Anti-integration northern whites were supported by not only the likes of George Wallace, but the Nixon administration that frequently opposed busing, in its words, “for the sake of children” and because “not every school in every community must always reflect the racial composition of the system as a whole.”³⁴⁶ The administration’s rhetoric was, to be sure, Southern Strategy era dog whistles aimed at whites angered over desegregation. As segregation outside of the South worsened, white resistance tightened, so much so that the African American civil rights icon Benjamin E. Mays cleverly noticed that what he called the “Mason-Nixon Line” was now “gone with the wind”—North and South southernized.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2009); David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy & White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

³⁴⁶ Benjamin E. Mays, “Mason-Nixon Line Gone with the Wind,” *Chicago Defender*, October 2, 1971, 8.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Despite sustained resistance by white Bostonians, in June 1974, Judge Wendell Arthur Garrity, Jr. ruled that Boston's *de facto* segregation was discriminatory against African American students. In September, the forced busing of black and white students to segregated public schools of the other race, though black students comprised most of those bused outside of their own neighborhoods. Racial tensions quickly boiled over, and white Bostonians, particularly those from the Irish-Catholic neighborhood of South Boston, rioted. Rioters threatened black children and threw bricks and bottles at the school buses on which they travelled. After months of rioting, the National Guard was called in to enforce the desegregation order, quelling the white unrest. White protests to court-ordered busing, however, continued, and protestors insisted that they only opposed forced busing and were not racist. But on April 4, 1976, months before the nation's Bicentennial, the notion of non-racist white protestors was shattered when a group of high-school students who were skipping their Monday classes joined an anti-busing protest taking place at Boston City Hall. The students, all white, were swept away in the fervor of the protest—which was intensified by the white patriotism of the Bicentennial—and attacked a young black lawyer, named Ted Landsmark, on his way to City Hall. As Landsmark was attacked, Stanley Forman, a photojournalist for the *Boston Herald American*, captured the moment that the teenager who had been holding the American flag wielded it against Landsmark as a weapon, seeming to drive its point through Landsmark like a pike. The infamous photograph, forever known as “The Soiling of Old Glory,” circulated around the country, winning Forman his second Pulitzer Prize. The racism of the anti-busing protests was thoroughly revealed.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁸ Louis P. Masur, *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of a Photograph that Shocked America* (London, Bloomsbury Press, 2009).

While white America resisted school integration throughout the 1970s, *Gone with the Wind* was scheduled for its Network Television debut on NBC-TV in November 1976. Two years prior, NBC paid MGM \$10 million for the rights to air the film in two parts over two consecutive nights, making the film, as the *Atlanta Constitution* reported, “the most expensive single program ever offered on network television.”³⁴⁹ As the nation’s newspapers reported, Americans anxiously awaited the television premiere throughout a year marked by racial unrest over school desegregation.³⁵⁰ One writer for the *Washington Post* wrote in celebration of the debut, and who called its debut a “blessing,”

“Who would ever expect so much excitement over a 37-year-old motion picture? Well, ‘Gone with the Wind’ was released in 1939, but it is hardly any movie. It is a major motion picture event. If the slang had been around in those days, the film would have been called ‘a happening.’”³⁵¹

Indeed the television debut of *Gone with the Wind* was a happening, as all of its celebrated re-premieres were. NBC researchers estimated that 110 million viewers would tune in for the debut, far eclipsing the previous record for the largest television audience for a single television program held by *Ben Hur* at 86 million viewers. In Georgia, an hour-long celebratory documentary featuring nostalgic reminiscences about

³⁴⁹ Ander Vanocur, “Signing a 42-Film Package for TV Viewing: Television A Deal for 42 New Films,” *Washington Post*, July 10, 1975, F1; Quote from Paul Jones, “GWTW Again: This Great Panorama Comes Finally to the Small Screen Where It Will Play, Chopped Up, to 110 Million People,” *Atlanta Constitution*, November 6, 1976, 30T.

³⁵⁰ Paul Jones, “Revisiting ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *Atlanta Constitution*, February 20, 1976, 9B.

³⁵¹ “‘Gone with the Wind’—Finally on TV,” *Washington Post*, November 7, 1976, 5.

Gone with the Wind's premiere by notable Atlantans, actors, and Emory University academics preceded the television debut.³⁵²

On Sunday, November 7, 1976, part one of *Gone with the Wind* premiered on NBC at 8pm to an enormous viewership and astronomical Nielson ratings over 47, meaning that more than 33 million American televisions were tuned in to the 1939 film. Part two, on Monday, was just as successful and *Gone with the Wind* easily took first place in the week's television ratings. To be exact, sixty-four percent of all Americans watching television at the time tuned in to *Gone with the Wind*. In America's two largest cities, Los Angeles and New York, *Gone with the Wind* commanded sixty-five and seventy percent of audience share respectively. *Gone with the Wind*'s ratings were hurt marginally by a shrewd scheduling move by ABC to air the hit film about Palestinian terrorists' attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics, *21 Hours at Munich*, opposite *Gone with the Wind*, but Selznick's film won the network ratings battle handily and remains to this day to be the highest-rated theatrical movie to ever appear on television.³⁵³

Lacking a direct admission, whether or not NBC executives intentionally planned in 1976 to premiere *Gone with the Wind* on television during the ongoing busing crises remains a matter of their own conscious. However, as was also the case during urban rebellions of 1967, the busing crisis proved to be lucrative timing for the reemergence of *Gone with the Wind* on the medium. The year *Gone with the Wind* premiered on network

³⁵² Paul Jones, "GWTW Again," 30T; Bob Goodman, "'Gone with the Wind' Aims for Record Audience," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 7, 1976, 15F.

³⁵³ Krämer, *The New Hollywood*, 46; Kevin Thomas, "Movies of the Week," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1976, N2; John Carmody, "'Gone with the Wind': Ratings Success: Broadcast Notes," *Washington Post*, November 10, 1976, B8; John Carmody, "Top of the Nielson for GWTW: Broadcast Notes," *Washington Post*, November 11, 1976, D13; "GWTW Sweeps Weekly Ratings," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1976, F18;

television to enormously positive ratings, 1976, was also a notable year in African American history. For example, in February black historian Carter Woodson's Association for the Study of African American Life and History founded Black History Month and, on September 7, Joseph Woodrow Hatchett was elected to a seat on the Florida Supreme Court, and became the first African American elected to state office in the South since Reconstruction. Most memorable, however, was the publication of Alex Haley's novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* in August. Haley's novel tells the story of Kunta Kinte, an African captured and enslaved in the United States in the eighteenth century and is scathing representation of American slavery and the Old South based on the author's own family genealogy. The novel is an examination of the meaning of slavery and the African American spirit as it also follows subsequent generations and the historical impact that slavery and white supremacy has on their lives. The novel, to be sure, is an important counter-narrative to Lost Causism and meets the criteria called for by Neal and Abramson as an antidote to *Gone with the Wind*. Haley, himself, often admitted that his book dispelled a myriad of myths "that blacks were less than" and hoped that it would inspire black pride and knowledge of the past, which he understood was lost amid white national mythologies.³⁵⁴ *Roots: The Saga of An American Family* sat atop non-fiction bestseller lists for more than thirty weeks.³⁵⁵

Haley's novel was a cultural sensation—though it does not rank in the top ten of bestsellers for 1976—generating interest in African American history and genealogy.

³⁵⁴ Joseph D. Whitaker, "Alex Haley Says 'Roots' Helped Dispel Myths," *Washington Post*, February 24, 1977, B1; Peter Magnani, "'Roots' Author Alex Haley: 'Touching a Pulse Among All My People,'" *Sun Reporter*, January 27, 1977, 3.

³⁵⁵ R. Kent Rasmussen, "'Roots'—a Growing Thicket of Controversy: Tangled Roots," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1977, F1.

Almost immediately following its publication, *Roots: The Saga of An American Family*, as an antidote to *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism, was tested when it was transformed into an eight-part television miniseries that premiered in the following year on ABC. The miniseries dramatization of *Roots* was a runaway hit that hooked millions of Americans. By the final installment of the miniseries, *Roots* topped *Gone with the Wind*'s television ratings records set the previous November. The significance was not lost on the *Atlanta Constitution*—which declared “Alex Haley’s great novel about slavery, has become the black ‘Gone with the Wind’”—and it noted that even among Atlantans, white and black, the miniseries was a hit.³⁵⁶ Commercial retailers also called, offering to endorse Kunta Kinte dolls, reproductions of scenes from the miniseries, and *Roots* African artifacts. Haley, unlike the makers of *Gone with the Wind*, turned down each and every offer—including a \$250,000 dollar payment from a liquor company and travel agencies advertising flights to African to find one’s “roots”—and refused to attempts to commercialize, and thus dilute, the message of his story.

Though enormously popular, *Roots* was still met with controversy among white Americans. Some, as was reported in the *Constitution*, blamed the miniseries for inciting racial violence against whites. The main controversy, however, was among white commenters, including academics and politicians, who questioned Haley’s genealogical methodologies and claimed that his families historical lineage from Gambia to slavery in the South was fabricated or, at least, incorrect.³⁵⁷ By contrast, Margaret Mitchell’s

³⁵⁶ Paul Jones, “Nation is Hooked on ‘Roots,’ Ratings Show,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 29, 1977, 1A; John Carmody, “TV Ratings Set Records: All-Time Ratings Records Set by TV Dramatization of ‘Roots,’” *Washington Post*, February 2, 1977, A1.

³⁵⁷ Stewart Dill McBride, “Haley Defends ‘Roots’: Haley Defends Accuracy of His ‘Roots,’” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 11, 1977, 1; Rasmussen, “‘Roots’—a Growing Thicket of Controversy,” F1; Robert D. McFadden, “Some Points of ‘Roots’ Questioned; Haley Stands by Book as a Symbol,” *New York Times*,

methodology was recalling stories told to her as a child by her former-Confederate family members. Mitchell was also forthright about her novel being a work of fiction, the places and characters made up, but *Gone with the Wind* was heralded as an amazing work of history and white Americans set out to find Tara regardless.

Despite attempts to undermine *Roots*' legitimacy, it remained a popular culture sensation that presented a very legitimate challenge to Lost Causism that laid the groundwork for future popular counter-narratives, namely the blockbuster film *Glory* (1989). Even in 1986, historian Jack Temple Kirby predicted that *Roots* would end the cultural force of *Gone with the Wind*. The cultural importance of *Roots* should thus not go understated, but Kirby has so far proven incorrect. *Gone with the Wind*, as historian Gary Gallagher notes, has likely been seen more over the past twenty-five years than *Roots* and, undoubtedly, is a more potent cultural force in white America.³⁵⁸ Even if *Gone with the Wind* was slated to premiere on television in 1974, before the publication of Haley's novel, the proximity of its television debut in 1976—during the busing crisis and opposite the most potent challenge to its Lost Causist mythology—is significant, entirely because thirty-seven year old film still garnered comparable ratings to *Roots* via what one should deduce was a mostly white audience. *Gone with the Wind*, in 1976, remained a refuge for white Americans to commune with their national founding mythology during periods of racial violence as African Americans continued to push for basic human equality in the United States. And as *Gone with the Wind*, building on its commercialization from earlier

April 10, 1977, 1; Paul Jones, "Nation Is Hooked on 'Roots,' Ratings Show," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 29, 1977, 1A.

³⁵⁸ Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, & Forgotten*, 227, n6; Quote from Jack Temple Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie: The South and the American Imagination*, rev. ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 165; Campbell, *The Celluloid South*, 175.

in the century, was transformed into a popular musical and wildly popular anniversary box set editions, the first of which is released in 1989, the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon remained a large and important cultural force in white America beyond the 1970s, buttressed by all of its appendages—from collectibles to musicals.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ “‘Gone with the Wind’ to Be a Musical,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1971, B7; Barbara Thomas, “Musical ‘Gone with the Wind’ to Open,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 11, 1976, 8F; “‘Gone with the Wind’ Musical Slated Here,” *Atlanta Daily World*, July 13, 1976, 3.

Chapter 3: The *Gone with the Wind* Phenomenon and the Lost Cause Tourism

Throughout the twentieth century, the Lost Cause asserted itself as the hegemonic national memory of America's central conflict: the Civil War which, above all else, ushered in a revolutionary period that destroyed the slave institution and pursued the creation of an interracial democracy. I have demonstrated the power with which *Gone with the Wind*—via print cultures and cinema—became the *de facto* imagining of the southern past as it homogenized collective national memory around its complete version of the Lost Cause experienced in theaters. However, as I argue in this chapter, *Gone with the Wind*, as a distinct memory phenomenon, was much more than an influential novel and film. *Gone with the Wind* instead ignited a tourism boom to the South, impacting how white Americans, traveling by the thousands, experienced already-existing sites of national memory (e.g. Natchez, Mississippi's plantation tourism) and new memory spaces built in the image of *Gone with the Wind*'s cinematic Lost Cause. *Gone with the Wind*, in other words, reified its Lost Causism on the southern landscape, both creating new spaces where the white national history of Civil War era was formulated and experienced, while also influencing, or overpowering, older sites that already had legitimacy in light of its own Lost Cause national memory.

Important work already exists on *Gone with the Wind* and Lost Cause tourism, and how the phenomenon influenced the development of the southern landscape. However, I build upon this research to demonstrate that these historical sites—experienced through the lens of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism, increasingly engrained in the white national consciousness throughout the twentieth century via film--

contributed above all else to transforming *Gone with the Wind*'s imagining of the war era into a form of what theorist Michael Billig calls "banal nationalism." According to Billig, nationalism remains a foundational structure of the contemporary order of things, which, echoing Anderson, takes shape through the "dialectics of remembering and forgetting."³⁶⁰ However, Billig argues that contemporary, existing nationalism can reach a point where they no longer need to be constructed, or reinforced, by print cultures, celebrations, or national crises. Instead, according to Billig, the contemporary banality of nationalism allows modern subjects to forget that the nation—and its symbols—are omnipresent. He writes,

"nationhood provides a continual background...[and] in so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place...However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building."³⁶¹

As I argue, *Gone with the Wind* continued to be celebrated throughout the entirety of the twentieth century, and even inspired an emergent and dedicated fan group called the Windies that became one of the most important curators *Gone with the Wind* memory. However, most importantly, *Gone with the Wind* sites—from museum exhibits, to Atlanta buildings styled after fictional plantations, to the plantation tourism industry that boomed in the wake of *Gone with the Wind*'s release—represent its Lost Causism without explicit statement, as it became further embedded and homogenized into the white national

³⁶⁰ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism (Theory, Culture, and Society)* (New York: Sage, 1995), 37.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

consciousness via Selznick's film. *Gone with the Wind's* Lost Causist national memory, in other words, transcended both the screen and the images conjured by the white national consciousness and was erected on the southern landscape and experienced at historical sites as a representation of an authentic national past. Increasingly following Mitchell's publication and Selznick's premiere, *Gone with the Wind* became intertwined with real southern historical sites.

The importance of *Gone with the Wind's* becoming the *de facto* memory of the Civil War era in both the white national consciousness and on the landscape cannot go understated. As memory theorists contend, sites such as plantation or Civil War museums serve nationalistic needs of "origin and stability" that foster "a sense of continuity or allegiance to the past" within the community.³⁶² At these sites, where Americans go to learn about and experience the common national past, *Gone with the Wind's* harmful Lost Causism provide spaces, perceived as authentic, and reinforced by the novel and film, that distort the historical realities of slavery and the war, thereby silencing more honest narratives of racial oppression. At these sites only one lenticular of the white South is presented: the victimized white South and the "heritage" of plantation wealth, southern belles, and all that was lost during the tragedy of the Civil War.

In effect, *Gone with the Wind's* Lost Causism has allowed white Americans throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century to side step any meaningful confrontation with the historical crimes of the Old South and slavery. The power and influence of *Gone with the Wind* has been buttressed a great amount by this

³⁶² Andreas Huyssen, "Monumental Seduction," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, Mieke Bal, Jonathon Crewe, and Leo Spitzer, eds. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999), 199; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), quote on 12.

physical extension of the memory phenomenon, which in turn has helped justify white Americans' return to the theaters, and Lost Cause historical sites, to experience *Gone with the Wind*, and a national past that never existed, even as racial tensions have continued to challenge the legitimacy of white supremacy and the white conception of the nation that undergirds continued white resistance to black equality.

“Tara—this is it”: Natchez, Mississippi, and the Intertextual Lost Cause of *Gone with the Wind*, 1927-1939

David Selznick found the inspiration for Tara in Natchez, Mississippi. During the antebellum period, Natchez was a small but thriving city located along the Mississippi River. The city's elite generated tremendous wealth from the slave trade and slave-produced cotton. In 1860, Adams County, the country in which Natchez is located, boasted a slave population of nearly seventy-two percent of its total human population, while the city itself was home to more millionaires per capita than any other American city. High-columned “southern colonial” mansions dotted its landscape. Spared from destruction during the Civil War, the preservation of the city's historical homes became tantamount to the city's embrace of the Lost Cause memorialization movement. White Natchezians drew inspiration from the establishment of other historical homes as tourist sites, such as George Washington's Mount Vernon, which was established as a public history museum in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁶³

³⁶³ For a study of Natchez's Lost Cause movement see Melody Kubassek, “Ask Us Not to Forget: The Lost Cause in Natchez, Mississippi,” *Southern Studies* 3 (1992): 155-170. For coverage of Mt. Vernon's establishment as a public history museum in mid-nineteenth century see Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 1-38.

At the turn of the twentieth century, homes in the southern colonial architectural style, like the Natchez mansions, were popular status symbols for white middle- and upper-class southerners. The popularity of the architectural style was part of the broader trend in city beautification projects of the era that sought to maintain the social order by elevating symbols associated with white moral and civic virtue. In the South, however, mansion and plantation preservation also reflected the romantic idealization of the southern plantation, as a site of white wealth and racial harmony, which was common in the Lost Causist themes of southern color fiction writers like Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris. Like other city beautification projects in Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, Natchez's preservation of its antebellum homes was a deliberate attempt to delineate desirable white modes of status from those of lower classes often associated with other races.³⁶⁴ In a southern city during Jim Crow, the popularity of the style among white elites was also a New South glorification of the Old South's so-called "golden age" of prosperity. Such a glorification both demarcated racial boundaries within the segregated city and helped define southern whiteness in light of both the Lost Cause romance and the South's real racial apartheid against African Americans.³⁶⁵

In 1927, some of Natchez's white female elite founded the Natchez Garden Club (NGC) to aid the Lost Causist beautification project. In their own words, the NGC was

³⁶⁴ See Stephanie E. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

³⁶⁵ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 44-45; Catherine Bishir, "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past, 1855-1915," *Southern Cultures* 1 (1993): 29; Derek H. Alderman and E. Arnold Modlin, Jr., "(In)Visibility of the Enslaved Within Online Plantation Tourism Marketing: a Textual Analysis of North Carolina Websites," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 25 (2008): 269; Steven Hoelscher, "The White-Pillared Past: Landscapes of Memory and race in the American South," in *Landscape and Race in the United States*, Richard H. Schein, ed. (New York: Taylor & Francis Group: 2006), 46.

created “[t]o promote and foster the beautification of the City...to perpetuate the history of the Natchez Territory and to keep alive the memory of the lives, traditions, and accomplishments of the people who made that history,” echoing early generations of white southern women who curated Lost Cause memory in the wake of the Civil War.³⁶⁶ For the next five years, the women of the NGC were at the forefront of numerous renovation projects when, in 1932, they planned Natchez’s first “Spring Pilgrimage,” a tourist event that consisted of tours of the city’s antebellum homes, plantation-themed festival events (complete with African-American actors portraying slaves), and the “Confederate Pageant” dance recital. The event was a smashing success. More than 1,500 visitors from thirty-seven different states made the pilgrimage during the early years of the Great Depression. In 1932, Natchez, Mississippi became a national memory site and the nation’s first marketplace for Lost Cause tourism.³⁶⁷

After its success in 1932, the NGC planned the Spring Pilgrimage as an annual event, growing its popularity. Tens of thousands of visitors flocked to the city throughout the mid-twentieth century to experience the city’s supposed antebellum glory. Following the success of Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone with the Wind*, David Selznick himself traveled to Natchez with a research crew to conceptualize the landscape for his film of *Gone with the Wind*. The ladies of the NGC—who, one would imagine, were fans of Mitchell’s novel—were happy to open their homes for his research. Once there, Selznick and his team found the city’s numerous white-columned, sprawling estates to be perfect models

³⁶⁶ Natchez Garden Club, “Eighth Annual Natchez Pilgrimage,” tourist brochure, 1939, HMSCS, as cited and quoted in Steven Hoelscher, “Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93 (2003): 665-666; Hoelscher, “The White-Pillared Past,” 51.

³⁶⁷ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 44-45; Hoelscher, “The White-Pillared Past,” 46.

for *Gone with the Wind*'s antebellum aesthetic. The columns of "The Burn," for instance, served as one source of inspiration while Selznick ordered a reproduction of the Linden mansion's doorway to serve as the now-iconic entrance to Tara in the film. After observing one of his team's photographs of Natchez's Rosalie mansion, Selznick wrote on the back of the image, "Tara—this is the mansion."³⁶⁸

Selznick visited antebellum homes across the South in search of inspiration for Tara and Twelve Oaks, including the modest houses that more accurately resembled average plantation homes during the antebellum era.³⁶⁹ But Selznick left Natchez with Tara, the most iconic and potent symbol of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism. When Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* premiered in 1939, audiences marveled at the majesty of the cinematic Tara, the Loew's Grand Theater was transformed into a model, and white Americans embraced Mitchell's and Selznick's Lost Causist mythology. As *Gone with the Wind* rocketed to previously unprecedented popularity, the floodgates opened on Natchez's tourism industry. As Hoelscher writes, "*Gone with the Wind* enhanced [Natchez's] national reputation enormously," the Pilgrimage benefitting greatly from the free publicity and intrigue that the film generated.³⁷⁰ Natchez's Lost Cause memory

³⁶⁸ Harry Ransom Center, David O. Selznick Papers, Box 3866, folders 1-13; Hoelscher, "The White-Pillared Past," 50-52, 68 n.43.

³⁶⁹ Plantation architecture differed by region and by staple crop, and most plantations were more modest than the high-pillared, sprawling mansions like depicted in *Gone with the Wind*, though the wealthy of the Mississippi Valley did build large white-pillared mansions. The percentage of the population that owned such mansions was also very small. Only 0.03 percent of the population of eight million southerners owned large numbers of slaves while only twelve percent of all slave owners were considered planters. Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 44, 265 n.6; E. Arnold Modlin, "Representing Slavery at Plantation-House Museums in the U.S. South: A Dynamic Spatial Process," *Historical Geography* 39 (2011): 147; Quote from John B. Boles, *The South Through Time: A History of an American Region* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1995), 185.

³⁷⁰ Hoelscher, "Making Place, Making Race," 667.

marketplace—the twentieth century’s premiere site for antebellum heritage tourism—was therefore bolstered by *Gone with the Wind*, a film that homogenized white memory of the Old South around the Lost Cause aesthetic of the city itself.

Hoelscher is correct that “[t]he interaction between Natchez and *Gone with the Wind* was far from one-way...and [is] suggestive of an intertextual relationship between the Mississippi town and Hollywood’s blockbuster film.”³⁷¹ Indeed, both Natchez and *Gone with the Wind* were built on the potent Lost Cause memories already engrained in the white South and, increasingly, among white non-Southerners. Furthermore, both *Gone with the Wind* and Natchez, as sites of national memory, worked together to create a Moonlight and Magnolia memory aesthetic that represented the Old South as a region of aristocratic wealth and population by tranquil nobility. Both forces worked in conjunction with each other, supported the legends, and lent credibility to the mythology they defined on screen in *Gone with the Wind*. A 1939 issue of the magazine *House & Garden* that featured two successive articles titled “Natchez on the River” and “First Pictures of ‘Gone with the Wind’” is emblematic of the intertextual relationship shared between *Gone with the Wind* and Natchez tourism before most Americans had seen Selznick’s much anticipated film. As Hoelscher contends, the two articles, in a continuous eight pages, blurred the line between Natchez’s actually existing Lost Cause landscape and the fictional Old South of Tara and *Gone with the Wind*. Using *Gone with the Wind*, the articles were a powerful advertisement for Lost Cause heritage tourism that compelled its national readers, many which were fans anticipating the release of the film,

³⁷¹ Hoelscher, “The White-Pillared Past,” 51.

to take the pilgrimage to Natchez, a city that it crowned “‘The Mecca of Charm’ for the nation.”³⁷²

“More lovely old houses than could be found in Natchez”: Raising a Land of Taras in Georgia, 1920-1969

The 1920s marked a change in Atlanta’s attitude about its history, which culminated in an abounding national interest in the area’s history and historical tourism immediately following the release of *Gone with the Wind*. In the three decades preceding Mitchell’s publication in 1936, Atlanta had already established itself as the capital of the modernizing New South and, like other southern cities, increasingly segregated itself along racial lines. Most notably, Jim Crow segregation in Atlanta exacerbated following the horrific 1906 Atlanta Race Riot that was sparked by a rapid succession of unfounded accusations in city newspapers that African American men assaulted four white women. By official counts, the violence left twelve blacks and two whites dead. The deeper causes of the riot, however, were the result of white anxiety caused by the rise of a black elite in a city that’s black population rapidly increased from 90,000 in 1900 to 150,000 in 1910. In response, two rival candidates for the Democratic nomination in the 1906 Governor’s race, Hoke Smith and Clark Howell, used their connections to two of the city’s most prominent newspapers—the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution*—to inflame racial tensions by publically debating how best to disenfranchise black voters.

³⁷² “Natchez on the River,” *House & Garden* (1939): 30-35; “First Pictures of ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *House & Garden* (1939): 36-38; Hoelscher, “The White-Pillared Past,” 51; Aljean Harmetz, *On the Road to Tara: The Making of Gone with the Wind* (New York: Harry N. Adams, 1996), 55; Hoelscher, “Making Place, Making Race,” 667.

The newspapers also stoked white racist fears by printing stories about local lynchings and calling for a new Ku Klux Klan (KKK) to control black neighborhoods.

Following the violence of the 1906 race riot, African Americans sought safety in majority-black neighborhoods as the city's black and white elite worked out unofficial race-based zoning practices in the Atlanta Plan for Inter-racial Peace agreement. Increasingly, Atlanta officials then codified racial divisions into law—segregating restaurants and streetcars officially in 1910—and white denizens founded a new KKK and the “Imperial City” out of which to operate. Black-owned businesses, churches, and newspapers moved out of previously integrated business districts and conglomerated in majority black neighborhoods. But despite the expansion of Jim Crow's grip on Atlanta, those black areas of the city continued to develop successful African Americans middle- and upper-class neighborhoods and give rise to some of the South's most vibrant black commercial and cultural centers. By 1929, neither Jim Crow nor Klan stopped large numbers of African Americans from migrating to the Sweet Auburn area of the city and turning Decatur Street into what was colloquially known at the time as “the richest Negro street in the world.” As a result, white Atlantans—who throughout the 1910s and 1920s mostly considered themselves as forward-thinking New South capitalists—took a noticeable interest in commemorating the city's Confederate past.³⁷³

³⁷³ Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (New York: Verso, 1996), 33-34, quote on 36; Jennifer W. Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and the Politics of Memory* (Fayetteville, A.R.: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 41-42; David F. Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 85-114, 216; Dana F. White, “The Black Sides of Atlanta: A Geography of Expansion and Containment, 1870-1970,” *Atlanta Historical Journal* 26 (1982): 210-213; Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events*, vol. II (Athens, G.A.: University of Georgia Press, 1954), 500-504.

As white anti-black violence and Jim Crow segregation failed to keep black neighborhoods from growing to rival the wealth of many of Atlanta's white sectors, white city elites turned to the Lost Cause. Historical anthropologist Charles Rutheiser notes that white Atlantans at first had an increased interest in reading highbrow southern plantation local color fiction that lamented urbanization and imagined the Old South as populated by aristocratic white masters and docile slaves subordinated by institutional slavery. White Atlanta-based organizations too signaled a growing interest in the city's local history, the most notable of which was a conglomeration of white businessmen—many of whom were associated with the resurgent Klan—who formed the Stone Mountain Confederate Monumental Association (SMCMA). The purpose of the association was the completion the United Daughters of the Confederacy's (UDC) colossal monument to Confederate leaders Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson on Stone Mountain's rock face, about fifteen miles east of downtown Atlanta. The monument was green-lit in 1916, but the UDC and the SMCMA struggled to secure funding and the project floundered. However, the SMCMA long thought the site significant—for local Klan members, Stone Mountain was the site where the resurgent KKK formed for the first time in 1915—and revitalized the project multiple times in the 1920s. In 1926, white Atlanta elites founded the Atlanta Historical Society (AHS) as an organization whose mission, like that of the SMCMA's, was to both restore and preserve the city's Civil War-era history amid the city's urbanization.³⁷⁴ Atlanta in the late 1920s and early 1930s was a city whose white population feared the threat that black wealth and mobility presented to the white supremacist social order, and they increasingly created a

³⁷⁴ Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, 36-40.

southern city that would be a beacon of modernization that imagined itself in light of a Lost Causist respect for its past. It was in these conditions that Margaret Mitchell penned *Gone with the Wind*, a book that, according to historical anthropologist Charles Rutheiser, “marked the culmination, rather than the beginning, of Atlanta’s revised, if still highly attenuated, attention toward its past and its Southern identity.”³⁷⁵

Mitchell began writing her novel in 1926, the same year that white Atlantans founded the AHS. *Gone with the Wind* was published ten years later in 1936. The impact of the novel on the interest in Civil War and antebellum history, however, was not only experienced by Atlanta natives. Instead, the novel sparked a national interest in Civil War history among white Americans at large that immediately rivaled the mansion tours and pilgrimages of Natchez. According to historian Jennifer W. Dickey, the publication of Mitchell’s book “spurred Atlanta’s first tourist boom of the twentieth century...when tens of thousands of visitors came to Atlanta looking for Tara.”³⁷⁶ Tremendous pressure was put on the city, which was ill-equipped for a sudden increase in historical tourism. The AHS itself averaged more than 100 requests per day for directions to both the real and fictional locations mentioned in *Gone with the Wind*. The Atlanta Convention Bureau rapidly distributed newly printed maps and brochures across the city and installed temporary markers to aid tourists searching for *Gone with the Wind* and Civil War sites. Police officers were also trained to help the tourists. Also tellingly, in 1937 Atlanta’s Cyclorama and Civil War Museum—constructed in the 1880s to house a panoramic oil

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Quote from Jennifer W. Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History: Gone with the Wind and the Politics of Memory* (Fayetteville, A.R.: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 5; Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (New York: Verso, 1996), 42.

painting of the Battle of Atlanta—doubled its annual attendance as a result of the popularity of Mitchell’s book. In 1939, following a visit by the stars of Selznick’s on-screen version of *Gone with the Wind*, one of the soldiers in the five-decade old painting was rendered to look like Clark Gable’s Rhett Butler from the film. The tourist boom ignited by the publication of *Gone with the Wind* later pushed the city to install bronze tablets as permanent historical markers for the city and its visitors.³⁷⁷ Historical tourism quickly became yet another facet of the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon.

The tourism boom wasn’t just confined to Atlanta, as the increase in interest in Natchez’s Spring Pilgrimage following the release of *Gone with the Wind* is also testament. But in Georgia, other locales also experienced and fed the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon. Clayton County (located about fifteen miles south of Atlanta), for instance, advertised itself as the home to the fictional Tara and Twelve Oaks plantations. In one telling encounter, Mitchell herself was disparaged by an oblivious service station attendant when she corrected his claims about the location of the real Tara. As Mitchell discovered by polling attendants, *Gone with the Wind* tourism created the common practice in Clayton County of service stations’ advertising themselves as guides to the sites from her book.³⁷⁸ Even the county’s roads adopted names from Mitchell’s fictional universe.

More closely related to the burgeoning plantation tourism industry, however, was the town of Covington—located about thirty miles from Atlanta in Newton County—that

³⁷⁷ Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, 42-43.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 42; Edwin Granberry, “The Private Life of Margaret Mitchell,” in *Gone with the Wind as Book and Film*, Richard Harwell, ed. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1983), 52-53; Art Harris, “Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara,” *Washington Post*, June 24, 1986, C1.

formed its first garden club in 1940 following the release of Selznick's film. The Covington Garden Club's main selling point was the Judge John Harris plantation house, a large white-columned mansion that Mitchell recommended to Selznick's historical consultants as a model for Twelve Oaks. The Harris house's connection to Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind* became its most popular tourist draw and, by 1948, the same year that members of the garden club officially opened their homes to tours, Covington had developed a reputation as a premiere spot for plantation tourism that was reported to have "more lovely old houses than could be found in Natchez."³⁷⁹

Similarly, back at Stone Mountain, the success of *Gone with the Wind* tourism prompted the SMCMA to open an entire plantation park at the site before the completed Confederate Mt. Rushmore was unveiled in 1970. Stone Mountain's plantation consisted of three antebellum houses, including the Allen House, the main house from Georgia's Kingston Plantation, authentic slave cabins, an 1830s country store, and several other plantation buildings that, according to historian J. Vincent Lowery, were placed in close proximity to the mountain to emphasize both "the natural quality of the exhibit" and "to confer...a greater sense of authenticity" to the buildings themselves.³⁸⁰ Lowery further notes that the Stone Mountain plantation park was deliberately constructed, in the words of the SMCMA, "to re-create and to exhibit certain aspects of Southern life as they existed in the past" and to emphasize American democratic ideals and qualities that they believed were vanishing in the mid-twentieth century. The park, in other words, was a

³⁷⁹ The visitor review of the Harris mansion in 1948 is featured on the Twelve Oaks Bed & Breakfast website along with the mansion's film and television credits, <http://www.thetwelveoaks.com/>; Ronald Haver, *David O. Selznick's Hollywood* (Los Angeles: Bonanza Books, 1980).

³⁸⁰ J. Vincent Lowery, "A Monument to Many Souths: Tourists Experience Southern Distinctiveness at Stone Mountain," in *Destination Dixie: Tourism and Southern History*, ed. Karen L. Cox (Gainesville, F.L.: University Press of Florida, 2012), 231-232, quote on 232.

site of national memory, and an intentional project to cultivate white national memory in light and because of *Gone with the Wind*.

The park was to be, the SMCMA hoped, an Old South version of Colonial Williamsburg that capitalized on the hold that *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism had on the American imagination and the heritage tourism the phenomenon inspired.³⁸¹ The state of Georgia even went so far as to hire African American actress Butterfly McQueen, who played the slave Prissy in Selznick's film, to promote the park and to occasionally lead its plantations tours, which park promoters were eager to exploit, claiming that the plantation and McQueen brought "to life the fictional Tara that Margaret Mitchell made a national treasure."³⁸² Stone Mountain's current online guide still mentions the park's indebtedness to *Gone with the Wind*, citing the abounding interest in the phenomenon that sparked the project.³⁸³

In the late 1960s, unsurprisingly, the SMCMA's plantation park and its attractions did not address the reality of slavery, despite its claims that visitors could experience an authentic period of history. The site instead created the mythological heritage of *Gone with the Wind*'s old South and told visitors that—as per a souvenir book sold at the site—“Georgia plantation owners as a rule were good to their slaves.”³⁸⁴ One can imagine the perverse gratification felt by white tourists to Stone Mountain as Prissy herself, the only slave subject to a beating from Scarlett in the movie, told them falsities about slavery or

³⁸¹ Ibid., 232.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ “Stone Mountain Guide: Antebellum Plantation,” http://www.stonemountainguide.com/Plantation.html#allen_house (accessed September 19, 2017).

³⁸⁴ J. Vincent Lowery, “A Monument to Many Souths,” 231.

that, as was found in the book itself, that “it was not only a humanitarian blunder but an economic one to mistreat a piece of ‘property’ valued as high as several thousand dollars.”³⁸⁵ Like the immense popularity of *Gone with the Wind* on the Hollywood Roadshow of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Stone Mountain’s plantation park and its sanitation of the slave institution provided an escape for white visitors into *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism—an imagined world of white wealth and racial harmony—as the black civil rights movement radicalized around “black power” and as racial violence in places like Watts, Detroit, and Newark dominated the national news. As perceptions of black violence spiked in the white national mind, stoking white fear, the *Decatur-Dekalb News* saw in the Stone Mountain plantation park a place where “[v]isitors can wander among the tulip beds and dream of days long gone.”³⁸⁶

Despite the popularity of Tara hunting and plantation tourism outside of Atlanta, the city remained the center of the *Gone with the Wind* universe throughout the following decades. Beginning in 1940, in the wake of Selznick’s film, numerous segregated businesses opened to capitalize on *Gone with the Wind* tourism and adopted monikers straight from the story. Some of the most notable were southern themed restaurants called Mammy’s Shanty and Aunt Pittypat’s Porch (so named for Scarlett’s loving aunt in Mitchell’s novel) that blended Confederate and *Gone with the Wind* decorum inside plantation-themed lounges. The latter is still open today, and selling *Gone with the Wind* merchandise in souvenir shops adorned with *Gone with the Wind* memorabilia has since been a regular feature of city marketplaces. Even numerous non-commercial buildings

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 234.

³⁸⁶ “Hoopskirts and Lye Soap,” *Decatur-Dekalb News*, May 9, 1970, 10C, as quoted and cited in Lowery, “A Monument to Many Souths,” 233.

such as “White Columns,” the WSB radio and television headquarters, and the new Georgia Governor’s mansion were built during the 1950s and 1960s to look like large-columned Taras and Twelve Oaks.³⁸⁷ Following the lead of the Covington Garden Club and the SMC MC’s plantation park, the AHS also purchased, renovated, and relocated the Tullie Smith House—an 1840’s “plantation plain” farmhouse—to the grounds of its new headquarters in the Buckhead area of Atlanta in 1969. The House was relocated to serve *Gone with the Wind* tourists as a reasonable approximation for what Mitchell’s Tara might have looked like. The Tullie Smith House is, in fact, a reasonable representation of north Georgia plantation houses during the antebellum period, but, as Dickey notes, many tourists were disappointed to find out that real Georgia plantations were not as magnificent as the Taras and Twelve Oaks that they imagined. The Tullie Smith House, however, also functioned as a folk history museum that, like the SMC MC’s plantation park, was devoid of the harsh realities of slavery and slave life.³⁸⁸

In Georgia, *Gone with the Wind* not only inspired a wave of heritage tourism, itself another appendage of the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon, but created a land of Taras—an entire landscape of white national Civil War memory—that was found in the white geographies of suburban small towns, at Stone Mountain, and even in the modest confines of the Tullie Smith farmhouse in Buckhead. White patrons to these places could not only experience *Gone with the Wind* as a representation of their national past, they could also forget that *Gone with the Wind* was a work of fiction, a novel and film.

Instead, *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism functioned like a flag hanging on a building

³⁸⁷ Butler, “Whitewashing Plantations,” 172; Lee Walburn, “The Restaurant that Time Forgot,” *Atlanta Magazine*, February, 2008, 103, 106-107; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 75.

³⁸⁸ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 43-44.

in the background. However, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Cause functioned as both the flag and the building, reified out of the white American national consciousness as historical memory sites onto the landscape of the Jim Crow South. This was banal nationalism at its most explicit. To borrow language from Billig, the Lost Cause, itself grafted onto the landscape of southern nation, was “made both present and unnoticeable by being presented as *the* context.”³⁸⁹

“Frankly, My Dear, We Do Give a Damn”: The Atlanta History Society, 1972-1986, and the Birth of the Windies, 1980

Despite white Atlantans flight from the city in the mid twentieth century, *Gone with the Wind* tourism continued to draw millions of visitors to Atlanta throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In accordance with the national interest in heritage and historical tourism, the AHS expanded its operations considerably from its new Buckhead location—an exclusive upper-class white section of Atlanta not subject to white flight—and increasingly relied on *Gone with the Wind* as its primary tourist draw. According to Dickey, the AHS staged eight *Gone with the Wind* events between 1972 and 1996 and “became the unofficial repository of *Gone with the Wind* memory and memorabilia in Atlanta in the second half of the twentieth century.” The events, Dickey notes, ranged from *Gone with the Wind* art shows to historical expositions that explored the basis for Mitchell’s novel, at least one of which attempted to explore myths about the South. Each of the AHS’s events, Dickey importantly argues, “were almost always the subject of

³⁸⁹ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism (Theory, Culture, and Society)* (New York: Sage, 1995), 109.

positive reviews and a generator of throngs of faithful fans of the book and the film.”³⁹⁰

The AHS and its *Gone with the Wind* events, importantly, were also stationed in Buckhead, the one section of Atlanta that remained a bastion of urban white wealth. *Gone with the Wind*'s mythology of Old South whiteness found an incubator in the area devoid of blackness that remained in the now majority-minority city.

The AHS became an important part of *Gone with the Wind* tourism, which, by the late nineteenth century, was a vital appendage of the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon. *Gone with the Wind* tourism not only attracted an existing market of fans and tourists still hungry for celebrations of *Gone with the Wind* and Lost Causist heritage tourism, but also created new fans through which decades-old phenomenon's popularity was perpetuated. The AHS, an organization ostensibly devoted to accurate public history, was consumed by the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon and functioned as a service for bolstering its reputation by celebrating the film and novel as positive historical artifacts. The first of such events was entitled “*Gone with the Wind*” *Revisited: The First Forty Years*, which ran from November 1979 to January 1980 in Buckhead's McElreath Hall. The exhibit was the brainchild of Daniel Selznick, David O. Selznick's son, for the fortieth anniversary of the release of his father's film and was planned to coincide with popular anniversary celebrations at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the American Film Institute in Washington D.C., and at the Los Angeles Museum of Art. Fortieth-anniversary screenings also ran for months. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “the packed audience[s]” could not “get over the shock of not being disappointed.” On its

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 40.

fortieth anniversary—a nationwide celebration—the film still clearly resonated with white audiences.³⁹¹

At the heart of the anniversary celebration “*Gone with the Wind*” *Revisited* did not ostensibly explore antebellum or Civil War history, but instead showcased displays that highlighted the making of the film, the spectacular premiere at Lowes, and super-collector Herb Bridges’ film memorabilia. The impact of the phenomenon’s Lost Causism, however, was still undeniable. The AHS, for instance, prepared a teacher’s guide for distribution to local schools. Among the suggestions for teachers was to have students read *Gone with the Wind* in class and have them compare what they learn to the memorabilia at the exhibit. Dickey correctly states that “[s]uch attempts...reinforced the notion that the book presented a factual history of Atlanta and its environs during and after the Civil War.”³⁹² Similarly, following the success of the exhibit the AHS quickly planned and opened a special-feature exhibit in April featuring the gowns worn on screen by Vivien Leigh. The AHS was quick to link the gowns to the real war era by advertising that they “symbolize[d] the spirit of survival of Atlanta Women during the early days of Reconstruction” and were “representative of a whole generation of Atlanta women who...gallantly faced a new era.”³⁹³ The exhibit, AHS director Judson Ward, Jr. claimed, “provided an unusual opportunity to learn about the past in order to understand the

³⁹¹ Ibid., 46-48; “Two-month Selznick Film Retrospective Screening at County Museum of Art,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 10, 1930, WS13; Quote from Sondra Lowell, “GWTW Breezes In On 40th Birthday,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1979, C15.

³⁹² Michelle Green, “Guarding the Gates of Tara,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 1, 1979, 1B; Midge Yearley, “Exhibit Recalls ‘Gone with the Wind’ Hoopla,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 9, 1979, 3E; Quote from Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 48.

³⁹³ Ibid., 49.

present for a clearer perception of the role of women in the future.”³⁹⁴ Visitors and school children to the exhibits thus celebrated *Gone with the Wind* and learned the history of southern white women through the lens of the phenomenon’s Lost Causism.

Following the fortieth-anniversary celebration of Selznick’s film, the AHS had to wait six years for another significant *Gone with the Wind* milestone: a smaller, yet successful, celebration for the golden fiftieth anniversary of Mitchell’s publication. During the intervening years, however, interest in the phenomenon remained high. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported, the film still inspired thousands of Tara hunters to descend on the Atlanta area throughout the early 1980s, undoubtedly bringing visitors into the mansions of the Covington Garden Club and to Stone Mountain and the AHS’s Tullie Smith House.³⁹⁵ But the early 1980s also marked the solidification of the *Gone with the Wind* super-fandom that call themselves the “Windies”: a group of *Gone with the Wind* loyalists who avidly attend *Gone with the Wind* functions, watch and read the story, and obsessively collect *Gone with the Wind* memorabilia and merchandise. To be sure, *Gone with the Wind* fanatics predate the 1980s, just as *Gone with the Wind* tourism and merchandising date back to Mitchell’s publication. But in the wake of the fortieth anniversary, the “Windy” identifier entered common fan parlance when the first nationwide *Gone with the Wind* convention was held in Memphis in 1980. The Memphis event was a success, and subsequent Windy conventions were planned annually for the following years in Atlanta (which did not come to fruition due to an air traffic controller’s strike), St. Louis, and Chattanooga. Hundreds of Windies attended the

³⁹⁴ Ruth Scott Simmons, “Myth to Modern Times,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 24, 1980, 3.

³⁹⁵ David Treadwell, “Search for Tara Draws ‘Windies’ to the Old South,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1986, 6; Harris, “Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara,” C1.

conventions, and hundreds more were turned away because organizers underestimated the level of interest when booking venues. The burgeoning super-fandom also coalesced around the newly founded “*Gone with the Wind* Collector’s Newsletter,” a quarterly publication co-edited by collector Herb Bridges, that also advertised the celebrations. The Windy conventions of the early 1980s were thus the first large-scale *Gone with the Wind* celebrations organized by a group not associated with local theaters, historical societies, the Civil War Centennial Commission, and MGM and Macmillan, and were indicative of the continuing popularity of the phenomenon that was approaching its fiftieth year. For the Windies themselves, according to Windy Travis Wolfe, a co-chairman of the Chattanooga convention’s “Frankly, My Dear, We Do Give a Damn Committee,” the fandom had grown into something, in his own words, “like a cult.”³⁹⁶ Wolfe continued, “There’s the ‘Star Trekkies’ and then there’s the ‘Gone with the Windies.’ We’re the Windies.”³⁹⁷

Travis Wolfe’s and the Frankly, My Dear, We Do Give a Damn Committee’s Chattanooga convention was held on October 5 and 6, 1984, and is a good representation of both the Windies and Windy events. The two-day celebration included an extensive *Gone with the Wind* symposium, a tour of a local antebellum plantation, a screening of Selznick’s film, and showcases of memorabilia that included a fifteen-foot scale model of Tara that was for sale for \$15,000. Such ostentatious displays were not unusual for the Windies, who consist mostly of well-to-do white women from across the United States, though most do hail from the South. Each individual Windy’s *Gone with the Wind*

³⁹⁶ “‘Windies’ Gather to Honor Favorite Film,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 7, 1984, 48A.; “Dan George, ‘Festival Lures ‘Wind’ Fanatics,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1984, 13; Quote from “Frankly, My Dear, It Will Be a Gathering of ‘Windies,’” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 4, 1984, 7C.

³⁹⁷ “‘Windies’ Gather to Honor Favorite Film,” 48A.

collection was a measure of devotion at the convention, as was the number of times that they had read the novel and watched the film. For Ann Rossi, a forty-seven year old Windy from Pennsylvania, her individual number of film viewings was reportedly 126, for which she achieved instant status among fans. For two others in attendance, their viewings of the nearly four-hour film numbered at a measly twenty-three and twenty-eight times. The *Atlanta Constitution* further reported that the conference was “mobbed with eager buyers” who spent their money on collectibles that ranged from Scarlett dolls, to commemorative plates and programs, to license plates.³⁹⁸

To many of the Windies, *Gone with the Wind* wasn't a simple fantasy, but resonated individually on a deep somatic level. Being a Windy in the 1980s was thus both a performance and glorification of *Gone with the Wind*'s white nationalist Lost Causism that spoke to a specific part of their white American identity. As one *Atlanta Constitution* staff wrote about the Chattanooga convention, the “Windies made testimonials to the appeal of ‘Gone with the Wind’ ... [l]ike born-again Christians.” One Windy from Tennessee described her devotion to *Gone with the Wind* in stark terms as an “obsession.”³⁹⁹ Ann Rossi, despite being from Pennsylvania, declared “I know southerners think of it as a story of the South, which it is...[but] I love ‘Gone with the Wind.’”⁴⁰⁰ Others, older fans, also recalled being at the Loews premiere and being overwhelmed by the majesty of Tara and swept away during moments of jubilation and sorrow as the film depicted the tragic Confederate war. A boy as young as fifteen, a new

³⁹⁸ “‘Windies’ Gather to Honor Favorite Film,” 48A; “Frankly, My Dear, It Will Be a Gathering of ‘Windies,’” 7C. Quote in Martha Woodham, “‘Wind’ Isn’t Gone in Their Minds,” *Atlanta Constitution*, October 8, 1984, 5C.

³⁹⁹ Woodham, “‘Wind’ Isn’t Gone in Their Minds,” 5C.

⁴⁰⁰ “‘Windies’ Gather to Honor Favorite Film,” 48A.

Windy convert from Atlanta, further stated, “I just feel like I’m related to it, like it’s me. It’s a fantasy but that could have really happened.”⁴⁰¹ *Gone with the Wind* resonated in the 1980s, and it still won new fans. But out of America’s geographies of whiteness, many that organized around white resistance to the black civil rights movement, emerged the Windies.

“Wouldn’t It Be Wonderful If We Could Return to this Era?”: The Golden Jubilee in Georgia, 1986

By the time of the fiftieth anniversary of Mitchell’s publication in 1986, the AHS was under new leadership and, in an effort to professionalize the organization, had achieved accreditation by the American Association of Museums (AAM). The new director, a native Canadian named John Ott, had also opened a downtown branch of the AHS—the Atlanta History Center Downtown—that incorporated many exhibits on African American history to serve the downtown community in the now post-white flight, resegregated city. Atlanta, too, was also under new leadership that had a new vision for the city in light of its past. Black city officials, including former executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and current Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, for instance, refused to sponsor an official fiftieth-anniversary festival for *Gone with the Wind*, citing issues that celebrating Mitchell’s novel might cause in a city that was two-thirds black. However, following the city’s refusal, the AHS’s Buckhead location—that Dickey describes as “stodgy, old, and white”—remained true to its roots and planned its own one-month long celebratory exhibit entitled “*The Big*

⁴⁰¹ Woodham, “‘Wind’ Isn’t Gone in Their Minds,” 5C.

Book: Fifty Years of 'Gone with the Wind.'” The AHS’s exhibit, however, was not showcased in Buckhead and instead was held at the Madison Morgan Cultural Center in the white suburbs. The exhibit featured 500 pieces from the memorabilia collection of former University of Georgia archivist and avid *Gone with the Wind* collector Richard Harwell—items from Herb Bridges collection were displayed elsewhere—and coincided with other events planned by private groups and organizations throughout the Atlanta area. “*The Big Book*” exhibit, according to AHS curator Kathy Dixon, was a hit among fans, despite being short lived, and was one of the primary draws among the numerous celebrations.⁴⁰² The AHS, in combination with the other celebrations, added fuel to the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon in the late 1980s.

After the 1986 festivities, the AHS still fancied itself the biggest draw in *Gone with the Wind* tourism, and, to be sure, it still did play an important role. And, perhaps, “*The Big Book*” exhibit was Atlanta’s biggest draw during the Atlanta celebration and, at the time, the AHS remained the central repository of *Gone with the Wind* memory. Windies, of course, were eager to visit fellow collector and aficionado Harwell’s memorabilia. But elsewhere, other organizations capitalized on the Windies’ interest and planned a region-wide event that comprised an entire golden jubilee and catered directly to them. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, reporting on the jubilee’s festivities, “Windies”—who the writer acknowledges “are not much for scholarly papers or literary pontifications on the subject of their favorite novel”—flocked to the “shindig” put together by the greater Atlanta area, that included an assortment of “fancy-dress balls,

⁴⁰² Harris, “Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara,” C1; Ozeil Fryer Woolcock, “Social Swirl,” *Atlanta Daily World*, March 16, 1986, 3; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 49-51; quote on Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 51, quote on 50.

barbecues and fired-chicken dinners, showings of the 1939 film, a Scarlett O’Hara-Rhett Butler look-alike contest, a ‘Going, Going, Gone with the Wind’ auction, [and] exhibitions of ‘Gone with the Wind’ memorabilia.” Among the other sites displaying memorabilia were department stores, the Omni International complex, the Atlanta Public Library, and, further away, the University of Georgia in Athens. Bus and walking tours to sites associated with Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind* were also popular activities—which included a stop at the boarded-up apartment complex where Mitchell wrote the majority of the novel—as were antebellum-themed vintage train excursions to the Jonesboro train depot, the terminal used by Scarlett in *Gone with the Wind*. Stately Oaks, a newly restored plantation in Jonesboro was also open for historical tours and featured a “living history” Confederate Army encampment. In Clayton County—the county that had the most rapid resegregation rate across the United States, boasting a ninety percent white population by 1980—officials organized an official celebration that included the train ride.⁴⁰³ In 1986, the line between Civil War history and *Gone with the Wind* remained blurred at the events of the golden jubilee. And, other than tours and a few exhibits downtown, those were held in the white suburban counties of Atlanta, for white audiences that reveled in the mythology.

The golden jubilee stoked even more interest into the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon that remained highly popular and widely consumed in 1986. At fifty years old, for instance, Mitchell’s novel still sold around 250,000 copies annually in the United States (it added another 100,000 copies a year internationally). But amid the jubilee,

⁴⁰³ Treadwell, “Search for Tara Draws ‘Windies’ to the Old South,” 6; Harris, “Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara,” C1; Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 264; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 106-108.

Gone with the Wind returned to *New York Times* bestseller list while the new fiftieth anniversary edition sold out at bookstores across the country.⁴⁰⁴ According to estimates from event planners, the phenomenon's tourism attracted between 20,000 and 30,000 tourists and Windies from across the United States during the jubilee. Michael Kopczynski, a Windy from New York, was emblematic of the excitement when asked about his family's participation in the events by the *Los Angeles Times*: "This is a fantasy and dream fulfilled...My wife and daughter have their gingham gowns and I brought along a Confederate officer's uniform."⁴⁰⁵ Southern Belle and Confederate cosplay was a common sight during the jubilee, among Windies especially.

In 1986, *Gone with the Wind* and Civil War tourism was booming again in Georgia, although mostly in the white suburban counties of Atlanta. With the Windies at its back, official Atlanta sponsorship was no longer required to celebrate a *Gone with the Wind* anniversary that tens of thousands of white Americans attended, and of which the AHS and Clayton County were only significant parts within the whole. For the Windies and white American tourists, *Gone with the Wind* therefore remained a powerful Lost Causist symbol that melded into its real Civil War history and white national heritage. Memorial work, in other words, was still being performed by *Gone with the Wind*. For J.D. Coleman, an organizer of the jubilee events in Clayton County, the victimization of the white South during the Civil War and its subsequent triumph during Reconstruction were the *Gone with the Wind* and Lost Causist themes valuable enough to celebrate, not, like fans in earlier decades, the relationship between Scarlett and Rhett. "This is the New,

⁴⁰⁴ Tom Wicker, "Why, Miss Scarlett, How Well You've Aged," *New York Times*, May 25, 1986, BR1; Edwin McDowell, "'Gone with the Wind' Best Seller Again at 50," *New York Times*, June 24, 1986.

⁴⁰⁵ Treadwell, "Search for Tara Draws 'Windies' to the Old South," 6.

New, New South,” asserted Coleman, as he cited the “survival against incredible odds” and “bouncing back from hard times [is] the story of ‘Gone with the Wind.’” That the white South’s victory over Reconstruction was only won by the organized political suppression of interracial political coalitions and the execution of mass violence and white terrorism against African Americans went unspoken, which, in fact, is the historical reality that the Lost Cause was created distort.⁴⁰⁶

Along with the Lost Causist narrative of white victimization, *Gone with the Wind*’s mythologies of antebellum white wealth and racial harmony were also important experiences at the jubilee, itself a site, or celebration, of white national memory. Most tellingly, Mayor Young and his wife, Jean—themselves the very antithesis of the Lost Cause—braved Clayton County’s Tara Ball in order to make a political appearance. “There are a lot of things that I’d rather spend my time promoting,” said the former leader of the SCLC to the *Washington Post* after the ball, but “‘Gone with the Wind’ is part of Atlanta’s history, just like Martin Luther King Jr.” The equation of King Jr. and *Gone with the Wind* is preposterous, which Young surely understood. His appearance and the statement was instead a show of good faith between a black politician and the area’s white leaders. But standing amidst the Tara Ball’s VIPs and the 700 would-be Scarletts and Rhettts, many of whom wore Confederate greys, the Youngs, the very embodiment of successful black political leadership, stood isolated from the mythology being celebrated at the ball. They were, in fact, the only two black faces in attendance. And during one of their many conversations that night, as Mayor Young later recounted, a young white woman dressed in an expensive taffeta gown addressed the couple, gushing with all

⁴⁰⁶ Harris, “Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara,” C1.

sincerity, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could return to this era?” “Let’s not return to quite all of it,” Jean quizzically laughed.⁴⁰⁷

“Georgia’s ‘War between the Counties’”: Laying the Road to Tara, 1985-1989

In the mid-1980s, the greater Atlanta area was devoid of an official *Gone with the Wind* museum, though the approximations at the AHS and Stone Mountain remained popular tourist attractions. Even before *Gone with the Wind*’s golden jubilee, leaders in Clayton and Coweta counties understood that not only was an event such as the jubilee possible, but so might the establishment of an official *Gone with the Wind* museum, if not an entire *Gone with the Wind* complex. The counties certainly had the evidence to support the idea, as *Gone with the Wind* heritage tourism had long brought visitors into their neighborhoods and businesses. According to Diane Kimball of the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, in 1985, visitors to the area still regularly inquired about locations from *Gone with the Wind*. “They don’t think it is fictional,” she said, “they think its [a] real thing.”⁴⁰⁸ But the emergence of the Windies and the increase in *Gone with the Wind* tourism in the mid-1980s made two competing plans to build replicas of Selznick’s cinematic Tara more appealing. The Taras, according to officials, would operate as plantation museums and as official *Gone with the Wind* historical sites. The projects ignited a feud between the two suburban counties that the *New York Times* called “Georgia’s ‘War between the counties.’”⁴⁰⁹ Only one would successfully establish an

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ David Treadwell, “Two Georgia Counties Feuding Over a Tara Theme Park: ‘Gone with the Wind’ Stirs New Battles,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1985, A1.

⁴⁰⁹ “Georgians Vie for Theme Park,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1986, C13.

official *Gone with the Wind* tourist district, a site that continues to glorify *Gone with the Wind* and its national memory of the Civil War era.

Plans to build replica versions of Tara had been under varying degrees of consideration for about a decade by 1985, as had plans for *Gone with the Wind* and Margaret Mitchell memorials. But once a private study conducted by the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce found that the projects would be a boon to the county's struggling economy, the projects became more viable, and officials in both counties feared that the existence of the other would damage their bottom lines. Clayton County loyalists demanded authenticity, fiercely defending their county as the home of Tara in Mitchell's novel. They further cited the Chamber of Commerce's study in support of their Tara, because it also found that historical and geographical authenticity was important among respondents.⁴¹⁰ Ironically, however, neither Clayton County loyalists nor respondents cared too much about historical accuracy, as the cinematic version of Tara that Clayton officials planned to build was modeled on mansions in Natchez, Mississippi.

In Coweta County, officials were not swayed by the claims that their project was inauthentic, understanding that *Gone with the Wind* tourism had long been successful at Stone Mountain, which itself wasn't located in Clayton County. Coweta officials instead planned to provide authenticity in other ways: first, they planned to construct a Tara replica out of the actual plywood façade of the mansion used during the production of Selznick's film. According to planners, their Tara replica would be the centerpiece of a sixty-four acre plantation park owned by Dunaway Gardens, Inc. Second, planners sought to renovate and relocate to their site the Fitzgerald House, the former home of Mitchell's grandparents which was said to be the inspiration for Tara in the novel and the site where

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.; Treadwell, "Two Georgia Counties Feuding Over a Tara Theme Park," A1.

Mitchell listened to her former-Confederate family members tell tales about the Civil War. Together, Coweta's Tara and the Fitzgerald House would attract an estimated 1.2 million visitors in its first year of operation and would earn \$20 million a year. Much like the SMCMC two decades earlier, Coweta County officials envisioned a theme park that would be, in their own words, "a kind of Old South version of Colonial Williamsburg" that allowed visitors to "finally touch the columns that Rhett and Scarlett touched."⁴¹¹

One year after the start of the county feud, Richard Chatham, president of Clayton County's Chamber of Commerce, formally announced his county's development project from the stage of the golden jubilee's Tara Ball. The plan, according to Chatham, was to construct an entire *Gone with the Wind* theme park that made Coweta County's plantation park look modest by comparison. It was Clayton County, according to Chatham, that had an "inherent right to have Tara...because Margaret Mitchell placed it here [in her novel]."⁴¹² The *Gone with the Wind* Historical Center would cost approximately \$15 million to build and would be located right off of Tara Boulevard in the city of Jonesboro, the county seat. It was scheduled to open in December 1989 and would be funded by a one-percent, multipurpose sales tax that county officials lobbied out of the Georgia legislature. On stage, Chatham bellowed, "People around the world who read the book and see the movie know where Tara is located—near Jonesboro, Georgia, in Clayton County."⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ "Georgians Vie for Theme Park," C13; Quote in Treadwell, "Two Georgia Counties Feuding Over a Tara Theme Park, A1.

⁴¹² Julie Miller, "Clayton Will Seek Tax to Give Tara a Novel Home," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 17, 1987, as quoted and cited in Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 88.

⁴¹³ Treadwell, "Two Georgia Counties Feuding Over a Tara Theme Park, A1; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 88; Quote in Harris, "Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara," C1.

While network cameras were trained on Chatham at the Tara Ball, Mayor Young, his wife, and the crowd of faux Scarletts and Rhett's applauded as he detailed the *Gone with the Wind* historical center. The complex, Chatham noted, would not be a "Six Flags Over Tara," but a museum. It would include a working plantation, a replica of MGM's Tara, a Margaret Mitchell monument, and a Twelve Oaks exhibit hall. For the next few years, the white residents of Clayton County were awash in a great level of excitement and debate about the prospect of a *Gone with the Wind* Historical Center and the \$55 million in revenue and the thousands of jobs that they projected it would generate annually. The debates about how best to use the tax were dubbed the "*Gone with the Wind* Referendum" by local papers.⁴¹⁴ The complex, many county officials hoped, would be a tourism gold mine.

Despite the hopes of county officials, the Tara Tax was a contentious issue among the population of Clayton County. As Dickey details, at least one detractor was concerned about the glorification of slavery in *Gone with the Wind*, but, for the vast majority of opponents, the higher sales tax was unappealing, mostly because it would be implemented on the heels of another recent hike on property taxes that was imposed on the county. Over the course of the month-long debate, others feared that the project, funded by taxpayers, would line the pockets of a few wealthy investors. Even after the Mitchell family intervened, forbidding the commercialization of Margaret's name, and the tourism park became a not-for-profit venture, new criticisms poured in from so-called free-enterprise, limited-government conservatives who favored private development and opposed any special-interest tax. The criticisms of the Tara tax, in other words, were

⁴¹⁴ Treadwell, "Two Georgia Counties Feuding Over a Tara Theme Park, A1; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 88-90; Quote in Harris, "Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara," C1.

myriad. But, as Dickey notes, opponents almost never targeted Mitchell or *Gone with the Wind*, often making sure to express a positive affinity with the phenomenon and Clayton County's connection to it. The phenomenon's racial representations and Lost Causism largely similarly remained a non-issue for Clayton County's majority-white population. Despite the positive view of Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind*, the Tara tax failed to pass the *Gone with the Wind* Referendum after a month of debate.⁴¹⁵

Thirty miles away in Coweta County, in 1988, the Dunaway Gardens project failed soon after Clayton County's referendum after a group of Japanese investors pulled their support. The plywood Tara façade was packed away for a year in storage before being restored for display during the AHS fiftieth-anniversary celebration of the film in 1989.⁴¹⁶ Despite the failure of either Clayton County or Coweta County to emerge victorious in the "War between the Counties," the competing projects are indicative of the remarkable continuity of the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon's popularity. As Dickey notes, according to the residents themselves, the failure of the Tara tax was the result of the recent increase in property taxes in Clayton County, and not a negative opinion of Mitchell or *Gone with the Wind*. Had the previous tax increase not been implemented, then, perhaps, the Tara tax would have won the referendum.

Taxes and viability speculation aside, Dickey importantly reveals that Clayton County residents valued *Gone with the Wind* despite voting down the Tara tax at a two-to-one margin. Most in the county viewed the phenomenon as not only a moneymaker, but also as a resource through which American culture and values could be explored. For

⁴¹⁵ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 90-95.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

managing editor of the *Clayton New Daily*, Jim Grimes, for instance, Clayton County “needed a focus for its identity, and Tara can be that focus,” adding,

“I’ve come to realize that there’s more to this Tara thing than historical preservation or nostalgia. The image resonates deeply among people who have no knowledge or interest in history and no Southern roots to be nostalgic about. *Gone with the Wind* has gone beyond its origins and seated itself deep in America’s...cultural dreamscape.”⁴¹⁷

Grimes was correct: *Gone with the Wind* was embedded in the national consciousness and resonated because of it. But more telling were the words of Jonesboro resident Randy Legrand, a supporter of the tax, who felt, like most in the county, a deep, emotional, southern connection to the phenomenon that Grimes wanted tourists to experience. As Dickey writes,

“LeGrand...pondered just what exactly was gone from Clayton County that Margaret Mitchell had depicted in her book, noting that although states’ rights were surely ‘gone with the Wind,’ the values in faith and God, family, and country that undergirded Mitchell’s ‘lost world’ were very much intact. In fact, Legrand noted, ‘There are no finer God-loving patriots anywhere in the world’...Scarlett’s marriage and ‘her beloved Tara’ were surely gone...but the planned memorial to Mitchell...would serve as a ‘reminder that this region is deeply rooted in ideals and beliefs

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 93-94.

that help make America strong and that the rights of individuals (and states) are paramount.”⁴¹⁸

By 1989, Clayton County residents certainly understood that Mitchell’s Tara was a fiction and that *Gone with the Wind* was a Moonlight and Magnolia myth. It didn’t matter. For the majority in the county, as Reagan-era conservatism increasingly solidified around ideals of states’ rights, free markets, and dog-whistle racism—of which claims to the sanctity of the former were used to justify the latter—*Gone with the Wind* came to represent a set of American values, ideas, and a national identity that were, if also wholly imagined, very real. For LeGrand, *Gone with the Wind* was, in his own words, the “zest for simpler times and conservative values.”⁴¹⁹ For Grimes, it was a representation of a national identity, a connection to America’s imagined past, for which tourists yearned to feel and be connected. The phenomenon, in other words, was thought to be a positive good, despite the recognition that some of it was myth. Its message resonated with those who experienced it. But as Dickey notes, one reality—and more critical lenticular—remained silenced by *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism, and was only rarely mentioned among the concerns of Clayton County residents: that the Old South was built on the backs of slaves.⁴²⁰

“*Gone with the Wind* Country”: The Atlanta Historical Society, a Failed Theme Park, and “The Road to Tara Museum,” 1989-2006

⁴¹⁸ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 90.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 90-91.

Gone with the Wind was a prominent part of the AHS's *Atlanta Resurgens* exhibit for the city's 150th birthday in 1987, but the next significant celebration of the phenomenon was not held until the fiftieth anniversary of the film's release in 1989. The celebration had all of the hallmarks of past *Gone with the Wind* celebrations: rereleases to theaters across the country, cast reunions, the release of commemorative books, look-a-like contests and an antebellum-themed ball at McElreath Hall, tours of the Atlanta's historic homes, a recreation of the film's world premiere at Lowes Theater, and an exhibit at the AHS that featured the memorabilia collections of notable Windies, including Herb Bridges. Local Atlanta businesses and organizations also held events, created window displays, and Atlantans hung Confederate flags from their homes across the city. Outside of the city, a weeklong celebration took place at Stone Mountain while Clayton County advertised tours at the restored Stately Oaks mansion, a Confederate cemetery, and a newly opened Civil War museum in the Old Jail building as part of the celebration. The Old Jail contained exhibits on the Battle of Jonesboro, part of General Sherman's campaign on Atlanta, and, according to Barbara Emert, a chapter president of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, would educate tourists on real Civil War facts if *Gone with the Wind* could draw them in.⁴²¹ Emert misunderstood that the historical accuracy of *Gone with the Wind* was not why it resonated so much with white Americans, especially when placed in conjunction with real historical sites and artifacts, which it continued to distort.

⁴²¹ Jay Sharbutt, "Another Day Arrives for 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1989, F1; "AHS to Host Exhibit Commentary 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Atlanta Daily World*, December 7, 1989, 7; "'Gone with the Wind' Fans Mark 50th Anniversary," *Atlanta Daily World*, December 17, 1989, 1; "Gala Atlanta's 50th Anniversary Fete of 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Atlanta Daily World*, December 17, 1989, 3; Carol Woodford, "Gala Anniversary in Atlanta for 'Gone with the Wind,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 1989, P8B; David Finkle, "Tara! Tara! Tara!," *New York Times*, December 10, 1989, BR7; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 96.

The AHS exhibit was slightly different from previous celebrations. Under the new guidance of Ott, the AHS entitled the exhibit “*Gone with the Wind: The Facts About the Fiction*,” and sought to address some of the public’s misperceptions about the film. The exhibit, though, was still mostly sterile from the historical reality of slavery and examined only four themes: Margaret Mitchell, the film’s production in Hollywood, its premiere at Loews, and the worldwide impact of the phenomenon. For Paula Thrasher of the *Atlanta Journal*, it was the “sorting of truth from legend that makes the exhibit so absorbing,” but she cited the transformation of Tara from the farmhouse in the novel to the brick columned mansion in the film as the important illusion.⁴²² For the Windies, the celebration’s importance was centered on the memorabilia collections, as was advertised in the “*Gone with the Wind Collector’s Newsletter*.” But for many more, the film and its Lost Causeism remained the most important feature. According to one perceptive Augusta woman interviewed by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Gone with the Wind*’s popularity surged following the success of *Roots*. “I think students are curious about history,” she continued. “They really want to see how things started,” speaking of *Gone with the Wind* as if it offered legitimate insight into an accurate reading of Civil War history. In another case, twenty-four year old Lisa Ellers from New York, a young convert to the fandom, a similar explanation was given. But, as she said of *Gone with the Wind*, “It’s my all-time favorite movie.”⁴²³

The events of the “War between the Counties,” the fiftieth-anniversary celebration, and AHS’s “The Facts About the Fiction” exhibit, laid the groundwork for

⁴²² Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 52-53, quote on 58.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 55; Quotes from Sharbutt, “Another Day Arrives for ‘Gone with the Wind,’” F1.

the establishment of what Dickey calls Georgia's "marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* memory." In the following years, Clayton County's Chamber of Commerce created the Clayton County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CCCVB) to handle tourism projects, new *Gone with the Wind* exhibits were planned by the AHS, especially to coincide with the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, and the plan to open a *Gone with the Wind* theme park in one of the city's suburban counties was revitalized and subsequently abandoned. According to planners, *Gone with the Wind* Country, as the park was called, would "offer a historically accurate reflection of the times depicted in Margaret Mitchell's novel" and would "portray the elegance of the antebellum South without ducking the fact that slavery formed the basis of that lost culture." *Gone with the Wind* Country would also feature museums, slave cabins, a Tara replica made out of the façade, Scarlett and Rhett character actors, and Disney-esque rides, one of the darker of which was supposed to allow visitors to experience the Fall of Atlanta during the Civil War.⁴²⁴ Such an irresponsible park could have never existed as an accurate representation of the Old South and Civil War and, thankfully, failed by 1994.

However, in 1993, Patsy Wiggins, a former employee of the AHS, opened the first permanent, stand-alone *Gone with the Wind* museum in the basement of the Georgian Terrace Hotel located in Midtown Atlanta. Wiggins used her own inheritance to open the Road to Tara Museum—an establishment that she believed was long overdue—and stocked the six-thousand-square-foot space with *Gone with the Wind* artifacts, some of which was donated by Windies. Artifacts included foreign editions of the novel, costumes, dolls, movie memorabilia, and letters written by Margaret Mitchell. The

⁴²⁴ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 98-100.

arrangement at the hotel, however, only lasted three years, and Wiggins was forced to relocate to a new location at Stone Mountain Park when she lost her lease after the Georgian Terrace was sold. The location at Stone Mountain proved even less short-lived because Wiggins was evicted when Stone Mountain Park was privatized. But, the Road to Tara Museum was granted new life by the CCCVB in 1997 and was moved into downtown Jonesboro's newly restored railroad depot. The exhibit was much smaller than the space she enjoyed at the museum's original location, but Wiggins was pleased to move into her new spot in what she called "*Gone with the Wind* country."⁴²⁵

A few years later, the city of Jonesboro bought the Road to Tara Museum from Wiggins and renovated to include exhibits that showcased Herb Bridges fabled memorabilia collection. The museum also showcased real Civil War artifacts and, according to Dickey, "became a place where fact and fiction commingled to the point where casual visitors were hard-pressed to distinguish one from the other."⁴²⁶ Despite its problematic historical representations, the Road to Tara museum was an impressive technical exhibit that by the mid-2000s attracted twenty thousand visitors a year and had become the focal point of Clayton County tourism. A *Gone with the Wind* driving tour was even based out of the museum, during which tourists learned about historic Jonesboro and the sites that allegedly served as the basis for Mitchell's novel. According to Peter Bonner, owner of the tour, Jonesboro had become, in his own words, akin to "Graceland," a "true site for pilgrims."⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 62-63, 101, quote on 101.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 101-102.

By 2006, institutions like the Road to Tara Museum had finally made Jonesboro and Clayton County official fixtures in the marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* memory. As Dickey notes, the racial demographics of the county were dramatically different from the white flight era, and only maintained a white population of less than forty percent. But the museum and Bonner's driving tour—along with the debates surrounding county tourism in general—remained devoid of any meaningful commentary on slavery, Jim Crow, or racial issues at the time, but still attracted tens of thousands of tourists.⁴²⁸ Bonner's tour went so far as to present most of the *Gone with the Wind* narrative, and the lore that supposedly inspired it, as historical fact to tourists.⁴²⁹ At the same time the Road to Tara Museum was instituted, another important component of the marketplace—of *Gone with the Wind* national memory sites—was developing in Atlanta.

“The Margaret Mitchell House...one of Atlanta's cultural icons”: Commemoration and Resistance in the 1990s

Back in Atlanta, planners such as Ted Sprague had long noticed the potential of *Gone with the Wind* country in the suburbs, and criticized the city for “[n]ot capitalizing on ‘Gone with the Wind’” which, as he argued to the *Washington Post* in 1986, “has been a huge mistake.”⁴³⁰ But generating excitement for the phenomenon in the metropolitan area proved more difficult, especially as black communities remained skeptical of its merit. For instance, in 1989, Tyrone Brooks—a civil rights leader and Georgia state

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 105-106.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 103.

⁴³⁰ Harris, “Frankly, Scarlett, We Can Still Franchise Tara,” C1.

representative—told the Gannet News Service that organizers of the fiftieth anniversary celebration “won’t find much interest in the African American community here. We don’t have anything to celebrate. We have more important things to do. We’d rather be out clothing the homeless and feeding the hungry.” Similarly, Reverend Joseph Roberts, Jr., pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, an African American church with ties to Martin Luther King, Jr., refused to allow the Ebenezer choir to participate in the festivities, saying that *Gone with the Wind* “is an affront to us, and...with what has happened in the civil rights movement and especially what has emanated from this church under Martin Luther King, Jr., [we] have a different status now.” Roberts cited the choir’s performance at the 1939 premiere ball—during which performers wore slave garb—as his justification.⁴³¹ Black protest to *Gone with the Wind* then reignited in Atlanta in the 1990s as plans were made to open the Margaret Mitchell House (MMH) and to capitalize on the Summer Olympic Games held in the city in 1996.

Plans to open MMH, a museum on the same grounds and around the apartment in which she wrote the novel, began in earnest in the 1990s while Atlanta experienced explosive population and territorial growth. Earlier efforts to preserve Mitchell’s old home were made in the 1980s, as the apartment remained an important landmark by *Gone with the Wind* enthusiasts, but ultimately failed due to the building’s dilapidation and as a new generation city leaders were concerned about Atlanta’s *Gone with the Wind* identity. According to historian Jennifer W. Dickey, by the late-twentieth century, the novel continued to sell more than thirty-five thousand copies per year but “the image of ‘Atlanta and the historic South’ that Mitchell’s work portrayed was no longer something

⁴³¹ Ibid., 98.

celebrated in Atlanta,” at least on its previous scale, and certainly not to international audiences as Atlanta vied to host the 1996 Summer Olympics. Atlanta’s identity as the home of *Gone with the Wind*, in other words, now “proved to be both a boon and a burden for the city that seemed to be...struggling to reinvent itself.”⁴³²

The battle to open the Margaret Mitchell House as a museum that celebrated the author and *Gone with the Wind* went on for more than decade before the Margaret Mitchell House & Museum officially opened its doors in 1997. Throughout that time, the house hosted controversial *Gone with the Wind*- themed exhibitions but fell victim to arson considered by the MMH’s administrators to be connected to black protest to the museum. Tellingly, however, during the controversy surrounding the MMH in the mid-1990s, the Atlanta History Center, Atlanta’s premiere history museum, was able to host a wide range of *Gone with the Wind* events that have been both exploratory and celebratory with much less scrutiny in the wealthy Atlanta neighborhood of Buckhead.⁴³³ With regard to one exploratory exhibition, it must be noted that the AHC received much positive press from across the country and internationally because it explicitly set out to challenge *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism in a production entitled “Disputed Territories: ‘Gone with the Wind’ and Southern Myth” (1994). The exhibition, to its credit, drew from recent scholarship and presented more complicated representations of planter life and the slave experience that challenged the benign slavery and “happy darky” myths. The AHC thus did successfully open up a space for critical dialogue about *Gone with the Wind*’s popularity and the southern past, but *Gone with the Wind* remained

⁴³² Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, 276-277; Quotes from Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 6, 4.

⁴³³ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 6, 8.

the necessary tool to draw in large crowds to the exhibit. As is evident with plantation tourism and its reliance on *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causist representation, the AHC relied on the phenomenon's popularity to attract crowds first before presenting more accurate histories to visitors already steeped in and hoping to experience the *Gone with the Wind* national mythology. Tellingly, the AHC did conduct a survey of 1,337 visitors before opening the Disputed Territories exhibit to gauge their perception of *Gone with the Wind* by asking questions such as if they agreed that it accurately portrays the South and Atlanta. Among the respondents, more than half agreed that *Gone with the Wind* accurately portrayed both the South and Atlanta. Furthermore, the average respondent had read the novel more than two times and watched the movie more than four times. Despite the AHC's attempt to draw in crowds with *Gone with the Wind* (which they did successfully) before educating them in more complex histories, the average visitor instead showed up to experience the phenomenon and the mythology that they already knew to be true. Even with the AHC's effort to challenge longstanding historical myths and racial stereotypes, they still relied on attracting fans of *Gone with the Wind* in an attempt to challenge their beliefs that were already reinforced not just by *Gone with the Wind*'s continued popularity, but also through shrines built on the Atlanta cityscape, in museums, and on plantations tours in general.⁴³⁴

In addition to struggling to confront Lost Causism by using *Gone with the Wind* as a tool, the main difference between the controversy ignited by the MMH and the successful celebratory exhibitions in Buckhead was that the latter was also held in the traditional home of Atlanta's white elites and funded by private donations. According to

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 62-68.

historian Kevin M. Kruse, in the decades following the black civil rights movement and white flight to the suburbs, Buckhead remained a “white-city-within-a-city” and “the most prized residential area for whites inside Atlanta.” By the late-twentieth century Buckhead had achieved “a degree of racial homogeneity that surpassed even the whitest of Atlanta’s northern suburbs.”⁴³⁵ Once again, as was also evident when white suburbanites flocked to view the film in theaters during the Hollywood roadshow era of the early 1970s, making it one of the highest grossing films of the era, *Gone with the Wind* continued to be popularly celebrated by whites in Atlanta during 1990s. By holding the celebrations in Buckhead, whites continued to convene with the phenomenon and experience the South’s foundational mythology with private funds in one of the whitest and most elite neighborhoods in the United States, reproducing their white identities in the process. Unlike the MMH, the AHC was able to avoid the public scrutiny and black protest that Lost Causist celebrations generated in downtown Atlanta and that threatened to paint the city as racist in the press. The success of the *Gone with the Wind* historic district in Clayton County is also emblematic of this ability, and similarly has avoided the same degree of negative publicity as the MMH.

Despite being the center of far more controversy than the AHC exhibitions of the nineties and Clayton County’s *Gone with the Wind* historic district, the MMH has remained open since 1997. Today, the museum has underwent numerous repairs and renovations, has merged with and is operated by the AHC, and houses the Literary Center at the Margaret Mitchell House, originally called the Center for Southern Literature that serves as the MMH’s programming division and hosts literary programs for aspiring writers of all ages. Throughout it all, the MMH has remained profitable, welcoming tens

⁴³⁵ Kruse, *White Flight*, 237.

of thousands of visitors per year, and has made concessions to black protest by including themes of historical racial tension in its exhibits and writing center, despite its often celebratory “[devotion] to interpreting the life of Margaret Mitchell and her most famous work.” In a few notable attempts, the MMH has addressed the racial myths of the novel and incorporated exhibits on Jim Crow Atlanta to better help visitors understand the context in which Margaret Mitchell penned *Gone with the Wind*. As for the literary center, it remains a highly celebrated function of the MMH as it seeks to help writers broach and understand complex subjects such as race.⁴³⁶ Additionally, the center has also become an important site that hosts southern authors on book tours, including African American writers Alice Randall in 2001 and Pearl Cleage in 2006. Randall’s appearance at the MMH was to promote her novel, *The Wind Done Gone*, which parodies *Gone with the Wind*’s racism by centering the slave characters as the protagonists. Accordingly, Randall’s appearance was by far the more controversial of the two, especially as her promotion took place following the legal actions filed against her by the Mitchell estate for plagiarism. According to Dickey, the estate denounced Randall’s scheduled visit and the MMH received hate calls for allowing her to promote her parody on what is considered “sacred ground” to *Gone with the Wind* fans. On the day of the event, from the very spot in which Mitchell wrote *Gone with the Wind* more than seven decades earlier, Randall spoke to a crowd of 300 flanked by protestors outside the MMH’s fence who carried signs that read “The Wind Will Always Blow In Atlanta” and “Alice—Write Your Own Book.” One protestor, writes Dickey, wore a Confederate uniform and declared, “This is not a Southern event. This is a typical big city, New York-type event, a

⁴³⁶ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 176-177, 171, quote on 8.

thing that happens in a place where standards don't exist." Others derided Randall as a liar and plagiarist and claimed that Margaret Mitchell was "spinning in her grave" while Randall confronted audience members who defended Mitchell's novel, including an MMH employee. Randall responded by suggesting that the employee, as many other white Americans, had internalized *Gone with the Wind's* mythology as a child, a truth that black protestors long understood.⁴³⁷ For Cleage, on the other hand, who at one-time was the most outspoken opponent of the MMH and praised the arson of the building, her appearance was well received by an attentive, if nervous, audience. Cleage did not back down from earlier remarks and explained that *Gone with the Wind* remained problematic in its representation of the southern past. However, during her appearance, Cleage expressed that she valued the effort put forth by the Center for Southern Literature to address race through writing, which was a symbolic appearance to the MMH who saw it as a resounding victory following decades of protest.⁴³⁸

The appearances of Randall and Cleage at the MMH's literary center are different, not just in their audience's responses, but also in what they demonstrate about *Gone with the Wind*, its popularity, and legacy. With regard to Randall, her confrontations with audience members and the presence of protestors are indicative of the continuing divide between defenders of *Gone with the Wind* and those who denounce the novel as a tool of white supremacy, as Randall does with her parody. Additionally, Randall's appearance demonstrates the nationalistic passion that *Gone with the Wind* still instills in the twenty-first century, prompting fans to come to its defense by declaring Randall's beliefs about the novel to be anti-southern and actively resisting, and ridiculing,

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 162-163.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 166-169.

Randall for the anti-white supremacist message that she tried to convey. In other words, Randall's appearance generated such fervor that Atlantans felt a strong need to not only come to the defense of Margaret Mitchell and her novel, but, given how embedded *Gone with the Wind's* mythology is into the white southern identity, to the defense of the South itself. Indeed, as Randall experienced first hand, the wind was still blowing for her audience at the MMH.

Like Randall, Cleage remained steadfast in her beliefs about the racial issues inherent in Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and was truthful about her past protest to the establishment of the MMH. Cleage's audience, however, remained respectful and appeared to indicate that the MMH could be a venue for hosting difficult and honest discussions about racial issues and was not, as Dickey writes, "a shrine to the Old South and white supremacy."⁴³⁹ The MMH, in fact, had been named as national literary landmark by the Association of American Librarians and included in the International Association of Literary House Museums, allowing the MMH's administration to claim that the museum had received both national and international acclaim as a tourist venue since the inclusion of the writing center.⁴⁴⁰ In the eyes of the MMH's administration, however, the hosting of a successful book promotion of a black author who had been critical of the MMH added to the museum enhanced credibility as a historical and educational site, despite the museum, through its supposedly objective coverage of a popular cultural phenomenon, being largely experienced by visitors as a memorial to Mitchell and *Gone with the Wind*, which presupposes the supposed merits of both.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 164-165.

That *Gone with the Wind* perpetuated a national mythology that continues to sanction racism and white supremacy is a reality rendered invisible in the MMH. The racial issues that the museum does address are articulated as only things relevant to understanding the past and Mitchell's writing, not as the most important feature influencing the growth of the phenomenon. Similarly, and much like the museum's value to contemporary Atlanta's Lost Causism, Cleage's appearance also served as one mechanism that sanctioned the legitimacy of the museum following years of legitimate protest, allowing it to become the center of the marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* memory where visitors can still experience the phenomenon. As the MMH founder Mary Rose Taylor claimed in an address to the Atlanta Rotary Club, "the Margaret Mitchell House, like the Martin Luther King National Historic Site, has become one of Atlanta's cultural icons," which is stated as if there is an equal need to memorialize each of Atlanta's two most famous figures, and as if both are deserving of the same type of positive historical recognition. They are not.⁴⁴¹

"The heart of the true South...Where heritage comes alive": *Gone with the Windism* in Contemporary America

According to Richard Harwell, *Gone with the Wind*

"made Atlanta and Georgia familiar place-names to the rest of the world.

By informing readers about the American Civil War, it convinced

Europeans that the United States had a history of its own. If Margaret

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 165.

Mitchell's novel perpetuated a myth, it made lasting a region's belief in its vision of itself."⁴⁴²

Harwell is correct. However, the success of *Gone with the Wind* and the resonance that it had among white Americans also reshaped the market and landscape of southern historical tourism in the image of the phenomenon's Lost Causism. Today, the MMH, Atlanta's *Gone with the Wind*-themed businesses, and Clayton County's *Gone with the Wind* historic district remain the most important sites in the marketplace for *Gone with the Wind* memory where visitors can directly experience, learn about, and celebrate the phenomenon. In Clayton County, for instance, the Road to Tara Museum markets the county and Atlanta as "the heart of the true South...where heritage comes alive." The museum, as it always has, features *Gone with the Wind* alongside exhibits of real Civil War history, including Sherman's Atlanta Campaign and the March to the Sea, blurring the line between historical events and *Gone with the Wind*'s fictional heritage. County officials have scaled back marketing for the Road to Tara Museum in recent years, but the museum still boasts that it attracts 20,000 visitors per year, many of which purchase day-long group tour packages that include Atlanta's and Clayton County's many *Gone with the Wind* and Civil War sites, including the Stately Oaks plantation and the MMH. *Gone with the Wind* is also prominently featured on the Clayton County Convention & Visitors Bureau website in order to attract visitors.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴² Richard Harwell, exhibition brochure, "*The Big Book: Fifty Years of 'Gone with the Wind,'*" Madison Morgan County Cultural Center, as quoted and cited in Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 51

⁴⁴³ Information about the Road to Tara Museum can be found at <http://www.atlantatruesouth.com/gone-with-wind/road-to-tara-museum/>, accessed January 10, 2017; For information about packaged group *Gone with the Wind* and Civil War group tours, visit <http://www.atlanta.net/travel-tours/itineraries/gone-with-the-wind/>, accessed January 10, 2017; Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 72, 75, 175.

The Windies continue to provide an important driving role in curating the mythology. Windies, for example, currently operate *Gone with the Wind* museums across the United States—in places as diverse as Georgia, Texas, California, Pennsylvania, and Ohio—and continue to organize through the memorabilia market’s collector’s newsletter. Contemporary Windy museums are organized very similarly to the early Road to Tara Museum and often feature exhibits that include real Civil War artifacts alongside *Gone with the Wind* related pieces.

Direct celebrations of *Gone with the Wind* remain common, as the Windies exemplify. However, *Gone with the Wind* has had a lasting impact on the white imagining of the South and its history, despite the fact that many white Americans have come to understand that it represents a flawed, racist narrative. It remains an idea, and a national mythology, that can be communed with by white Americans, despite acknowledgement of its problems. One need only reference the South, and for many white Americans lenticular imaginings of *Gone with the Wind*-esque landscapes, white victimization narratives, and images of southern aristocrats like the O’Haras are conjured. Emblematic of this phenomenon is plantation tourism, which is an industry that scholars argue serve as important sites where Americans go to obtain information about their national past, and where they believe that they can have authentic experiences that resonate with their national identity, especially when in the presence of a historic home and real artifacts.⁴⁴⁴ The old Harris House and Clayton County’s Stately Oaks plantation museum—which is advertised along with the Road to Tara Museum—are emblematic. Stately Oaks, for instance, still utilizes *Gone with the Wind* as a promotional tool to

⁴⁴⁴ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 16; Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 105-106.

attract visitors to its overly romantic Old South representations, explicitly marketing itself as a close representation of Tara, despite the counterintuitive recognition in its advertising that Tara is fictional. As the website reads,

“[Stately Oaks] is located in Jonesboro, GA, the very city where Scarlett had to pay the taxes on Tara. Even though Tara only existed in Margaret Mitchell’s imagination, she placed Tara in Clayton County where she had visited relatives who lived on a large plantation south of Jonesboro. Many of the stories she heard as a child are in the movie. Clayton County is truly home of *Gone with the Wind*.”⁴⁴⁵

As for the Harris House, it is still open to tourists as an upscale bed and breakfast and boasts a long list of television and Hollywood film credits as a quintessential antebellum mansion. However, its popularity among film and television producers to capture the antebellum aura ingrained into the popular imagination by *Gone with the Wind* is not its only contemporary connection to the phenomenon, as *Gone with the Wind* tourism remains an important tourist draw for the bed and breakfast. Today, the bed and breakfast’s official moniker is simply, Twelve Oaks.

So common has been the tendency to reference *Gone with the Wind* in Georgia plantation museums and heritage sites that historical geographer Arnold Modlin categorized *Gone with the Wind* as a state meta-myth in his study of the historical narratives encountered on plantation tours. Similarly, Modlin argues that plantation museums often fail to adequately cover the enslaved, with many museums often removing references to the slaves or engaging in a form of narrative minimization and

⁴⁴⁵ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 7-8; Block quote from “About Stately Oaks,” <http://www.historicaljonesboro.org/About.htm>, Accessed January 10, 2017.

segregation that obscures the centrality of slavery to life on an antebellum plantation. In one analysis, twenty-five percent of plantation museum study sites in Georgia, Virginia, and Louisiana failed to mention slavery at all, while the institution was mentioned only four times or less at another thirty percent of the sites.⁴⁴⁶ In Natchez, Mississippi, *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism continues to inform the pilgrimage tourism—now a year round industry—and the patrons who travel to experience its antebellum glory. For instance, the door that inspired Tara's iconic entryway remains an important tourist draw for the Linden Antebellum Bed & Breakfast and was advertised by the Elms mansion's bed and breakfast as part of a Scarlett O'Hara Getaway Package. The getaway package included southern standards such as Mint Juleps, southern food, as well as historic tours of the city, antebellum mansions, and, since make-believe is what the white South does best, a complimentary ghost tour.⁴⁴⁷ More poignantly, in a 2003 publication for the leading Civil War historical preservation organization, the Civil War Preservation Trust, sold Natchez's Longwood plantation—a staple of the pilgrimage—as having “all of the tragedy and pathos of *Gone with the Wind*.” The guidebook continued: tour guides recount “the tragic story of the hardships of the family who lived there ‘reared in the lap of luxury and reduced to poverty [sic]... [by] the devastating impact of the Civil War on the cotton economy of the American South.’”⁴⁴⁸ The description—structured uncannily

⁴⁴⁶ E. Arnold Modlin, “Tales Told On Tour,” *Southeastern Geographer* 48 (2008): 268-269, 277, table 5; Butler, “Whitewashing Plantations,” 108.

⁴⁴⁷ The doorway copied for Tara is advertised on the Linden Antebellum Bed & Breakfast and the Natchez Pilgrimage websites, <http://www.lindenbandb.com/at-linden>, <http://www.natchezpilgrimage.com/dailylinden.php>; “The Scarlett O’Hara Girlfriend Getaway Package” is advertised on the Elm’s website, <http://www.theelms-natchez.com/events.html>.

⁴⁴⁸ Sarah Richards, ed., *Civil War Sites: The Official Guide to Battlefields, Monuments, and More* (Guilford, C.T.: Globe Pequot Press, 2003), 180. The Civil War Preservation Trust is a leading historical preservation organization based in Washington, D.C., and the resulting organization from the merger of

like the fictional plot of the O'Hara family—appeared in the trust's official guidebook *Civil War Sites: The Official Guide to Battlefields, Monuments, and More*. The guidebook—like other professional Civil War guidebooks both before and after—used *Gone with the Wind* to both promote and describe official plantation tourism sites ostensibly geared toward the real history of the Civil War and the Old South, further representing the prominence of the tragic memory of the inevitable loss and destruction of an era of antebellum gentility in the Old South. What's more, numerous guidebooks list sites known for their connection to *Gone with the Wind* as Civil War tourist destinations, demonstrating that *Gone with the Wind* is not only considered by tourism companies to be commercially relevant, reflecting its sustained popularity among consumers, but also its penetration into the very fabric of American Civil-War memory and southern heritage.⁴⁴⁹ Additionally, in May, 2016, Natchez hosted “A Tribute to *Gone with the Wind*” as a signature event that attracted tourists to the Natchez Festival of Music.⁴⁵⁰

The Civil War Trust and the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites in 1999. The trust is primarily devoted to Civil War Battlefield preservation and has been influential in preservation at Gettysburg, P.A.; Fredericksburg, V.A.; Shiloh, T.N.; and many more. The trust also promotes educational initiatives and heritage tourism.

⁴⁴⁹ *Gone with the Wind* has been used in popular Civil War guidebooks to promote, attract visitors to, and to describe Civil War destinations. See Michael Weeks, *The Complete Civil War Road Trip Guide: More than 500 Sites from Gettysburg to Vicksburg*, second edition (Woodstock, V.T.: Countryman Press, 2016) 171; Michael Weeks, *The Complete Civil War Road Trip Guide: Ten Weekend Tours and More than 400 Civil War Sites, from to Zagonyi's Charge* (Woodstock, V.T.: Countryman Press, 2009)146; The Civil War Trust, et al., *The Civil War Trust's Official Guide to the Civil War Discovery Trail* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 117; The Civil War Trust, ed., *The Civil War Trust's Official Guidebook to the Civil War Discovery Trail* (Civil War Trust, 1995), 51.

⁴⁵⁰ The press release for “A Tribute to *Gone with the Wind*” was listed on the Natchez Festival of Music's website, <http://www.natchezfestivalofmusic.com/news.html>. It was also listed on the Natchez tourist organization website, <http://visitnatchez.org/event/natchez-festival-of-music-a-tribute-to-gone-with-the-wind/>.

Tourists to Natchez also testify to the city's *Gone with the Wind* atmosphere. According to one Florida reviewer, visiting Natchez's Stanton Hall on the pilgrimage was "like reading *Gone with the Wind*" and "[m]ade you wonder how life really was when the house was live with the owners, children and servants."⁴⁵¹ The "servants," of course, were the enslaved, and the reviewer's choice of words is indicative of the southern myth's sanitization of the real history of slavery. Another reviewer from Chicago wrote that "Monmouth Plantation in Natchez must be what Tara was in the classic movie of the Old South, *Gone with the Wind*." The review is titled "Natchez' Version of Tara."⁴⁵² Similarly, more than one reviewer titled their reviews of Natchez mansions and the pilgrimage tour as simply "Gone with the Wind," while others confessed that driving up to the city's plantations was reminiscent of Tara and was indicative of "southern hospitality with 'Gone with the Wind' style."⁴⁵³

Journalists, too, refer to Natchez in relation to *Gone with the Wind*. The *Natchez Democrat*, the city's local newspaper, for example, recognizes that the pilgrimage has been recently attracting a younger crowd, citing at least one child who stated that her interest stemmed from watching *Gone with the Wind* with her mother. Similarly, a featured guestbook entry on Natchez's Bisland House's website expresses a similar interest in the antebellum mansion that originated with *Gone with the Wind*: "Bisland

⁴⁵¹ Raylene H., "Like Reading *Gone with the Wind*," review of Stanton Hall Plantation, Tripadvisor, August 26, 2015.

⁴⁵² Taylor B., "Natchez' Version of Tara," review of Monmouth Historic Inn, Tripadvisor, June 25, 2013.

⁴⁵³ Bilol1954, "Gone with the Wind" review of Natchez Pilgrimage Tours, Tripadvisor, April 23, 2012; "Gone with the Wind!," review of The Burn Bed & Breakfast, Tripadvisor, January 29, 2010; "Reminiscent of 'Gone with the Wind,'" review of Elgin Plantation Bed & Breakfast, Tripadvisor, June 26, 2014; Quote from Belinda S., "Wonderful B and B on the Natchez Trace Parkway—Fantastic Southern Hospitality with 'Gone with the Wind' Style," Tripadvisor, review of Brandon Hall Plantation, May 14, 2015.

House was the perfect base to explore the antebellum mansions and plantations I've longed to see ever since reading *Gone with the Wind*," wrote the reviewer.⁴⁵⁴ Even the *Los Angeles Times* refers to Natchez in relation to *Gone with the Wind*, not *vice versa*. "Natchez not *Gone with the Wind*" one journalist titled her article. The author continues by stating that each mansion on the pilgrimage has "become like Scarlett's Tara, not merely a house but a mansion with its own identity, a member of the family." And, finally, not realizing that the Natchez pilgrimage predates *Gone with the Wind* and was a large influence on Selznick's imagery, she concludes that the city is only "another chapter in the romantic notion of 'Gone with the Wind.'"⁴⁵⁵

As professor of Economic Development and Planning David L. Butler writes in "Whitewashing Plantations: The Commodification of a Slave-Free Antebellum South":

"Probably most visitors to plantations have seen *Gone with the Wind* and/or dozens of movies [influenced by *Gone with the Wind*] that adopt a similar formula. By the same token, when someone visits a plantation, a common conscious or unconscious comparison may be made to other plantations represented in the media. The plantation thus comes to signify wealth and opulence, and a life that few, if any, of tourists who patronize them could ever come close to attaining. Nevertheless, they love to bask in the glow of the fantasy."⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Rod Guajardo, "Different Faces: Pilgrimage Officials See Younger, More Diverse Crowd," *Natchez Democrat*, April 19, 2014; The guestbook entry for the Bisland House is featured on the mansion's webpage and was authored by a twelve year old, <http://www.bislandhouse.com/guest-reviews/reviews1.htm>.

⁴⁵⁵ Quotes from M.J. Harden, "Natchez Not *Gone with the Wind*," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1986; Christopher Reynolds, "Plantation Revelation," *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1999.

⁴⁵⁶ Butler, "Whitewashing Plantations," 172.

In plantation museums, patrons desire the truth, but too often only the Lost Causist lenticular of Old South white wealth is predominant. The national founding myth still resonates, as it is experienced by white Americans seeking the fantasy, and despite many of their acknowledgements that the history of slavery is whitewashed. “[White] gentility,” as Tara McPherson writes, “gets transferred to the nation, imbuing it with both tragedy and romance.”⁴⁵⁷ The myth resonates, and *Gone with the Wind*’s mythology persists through these national memory sites as both an explicit statement of the value of *Gone with the Wind* and as a banal nationalism. *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism, in other words, precedes the experience at these memory sites, whether the visitors believe it is accurate history or not, and visitors to plantation museums thus continue to revel in the experience of pretending to be a momentary Scarlett and Rhett.

⁴⁵⁷ McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 103.

Chapter 4: *Gone with the Wind's* Twenty-first Century Legacy: Box Sets, Online Reviews, and Ongoing Efforts at Reinterpretation

Since its premiere in 1939, after adjusting for inflation, *Gone with the Wind* remains the domestic box-office champion.⁴⁵⁸ The film that many still consider to be the quintessential epic of Hollywood filmmaking has amassed more than \$1.6 billion in ticket sales and, due to its frequent rereleases in theaters, has sold more tickets than any other film in cinema history, despite consistent resistance from African Americans critical of its racism and significant efforts by Hollywood and black cultural icons to counter its Lost Causist mythology (e.g. *Glory*). Perhaps the most direct counter to *Gone with the Wind's* Lost Causism was African American writer Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone*, a so-called parody of its source material, published in 2001.⁴⁵⁹ Randall's novel follows the events of Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* from the perspective of one of the O'Hara's mulatto slaves, Cynara (or Cinnamon or Cindy, as she is often called), in an effort to invert Mitchell's powerful mythology by creating a what memory theorist George Lipsitz calls a "counter-memory" that undermines hegemonic national narratives. Upon its publication *The Wind Done Gone* tellingly set off a firestorm of controversy that involved the Mitchell Estate and fans of *Gone with the Wind*, most of which took issue with the Randall's subversion.

⁴⁵⁸ All Time Box Office: Domestic Grosses Adjusted for Ticket Price Inflation, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/adjusted.htm>. Box Office Mojo is an algorithmic site that traces movie revenue and ticket sales. It is widely used within the film industry and is regularly cited and used in Peter Krämer's analysis in *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2005).

⁴⁵⁹ The title *The Wind Done Gone* is a play on African American vernacular—a fitting title for a critical parody of *Gone with the Wind*.

Despite such challenges to *Gone with the Wind*'s value as Randall's, pushback from fans has remained consistent and *Gone with the Wind* remains the more popular and influential. The influence of *Gone with the Wind*, however, is not confined to its persistent popularity and recurrent presence in movie houses. For instance, the film's source novel by Margaret Mitchell ignited a tourism boom to both *Gone with the Wind* and Civil War sites in the mid-twentieth century South. The 1939 release of David Selznick's film version created a consumer craze for *Gone with the Wind* and Old South themed products, as well as a collectors and memorabilia market for *Gone with the Wind* artifacts that persists today. In this chapter I will argue that *Gone with the Wind* remains an important cultural phenomenon in the twenty-first century.

In addition to the recent *Gone with the Wind* celebrations, I demonstrate that the novel and film have both been regularly reissued as collectible anniversary editions roughly every five years, meaning that *Gone with the Wind* does not exist today as merely a banal nationalism, but as a Lost Cause artifact that is still celebrated. The film most recently was released on both DVD and Blu-ray formats in 2009 for its seventieth anniversary and in 2014 for its seventy-fifth anniversary. The popularity of these collectible reissues remains high, despite the existence of a clear generational divide between older generations who have read or watched *Gone with the Wind* and younger generations who have done neither. Nonetheless, many in the millennial generation have still watched *Gone with the Wind* and many still consider it among the first things they think about when discussing plantations or the Old South, which is emblematic of its effect as a banal nationalism, and has entered a phase in which much of the cultural work necessary to define, and to homogenize, such a memory was completed during the

twentieth century. Yet, despite its the Lost Cause's banality, *Gone with the Wind* remains an important component of the ongoing work to create and recreate white national memory of the Old South and Civil War.

As evidenced by recent user reviews of the *Gone with the Wind* anniversary editions, reception of the phenomenon remains as overwhelmingly positive as it was in 1936 and 1939. As of this writing, ninety-two percent of the 3,796 customer reviews for the film on Amazon.com are either four- or five-star reviews, five stars being the highest value the website offers. The novel's ratings are even higher, with ninety-four percent of 2,474 respondents giving it either four or five stars. Even among those who reviewed the anniversary editions unfavorably, most of their displeasure was aimed at the quality of the packaging, the discs, or the bonus features not meeting expectations. In fact, among those who negatively reviewed the editions, many were quick to express a positive affinity for the movie.⁴⁶⁰ It is also notable that contemporary reviewers, just as reviewers in the early- and mid-twentieth century, comment less on the narrative plot of the love story, if they comment on the narrative at all, and more so on *Gone with the Wind's* supposed Civil-War era history. After more than eight decades of popularity, *Gone with the Wind's* historical representation of the Civil War era South remains the key fascination of modern consumers, new and old, and among defenders of its racism and those who acknowledge its racism.

⁴⁶⁰ Kat S., "No extra content to mark the 'anniversary,'" review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, October 19, 2016; Arin, "Had issues viewing the movie—AMAZING movie," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 12, 2016; Corley Stone, "Disappointing Delivery," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, April 6, 2015; CJS, "5 Stars for the Film, 1 Star for this Edition," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, October 5, 2014; Gypsy89, "because it's a favorite of mine," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, October 2, 2014; Houtchens, "Five Stars"; Melanie Watson, "Best movie ever!!," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, January 1, 2015; Nick Zegarac, "A pointless reissue of one of the greatest movies of all time," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, May 14, 2016.

Online user reviews provide the opportunity to analyze how lay-readers and lay-viewers interpret and relate to popular culture media like *Gone with the Wind*. By relying on the opinions of the average consumer, the marketing paradigms and profit motives that often affect professional critics and academic experts is removed from the analysis. Similarly, the cultural and political contexts in which the reviewers operate are also revealed as they seek to explain their own pleasure or displeasure with the media and its experience. With regard to *Gone with the Wind*, fans reviewers of the novel and film often position themselves as experts of the media and explain why the experiences they receive are worthwhile for others. For most fans, their positive relationship with *Gone with the Wind* is not expressed in outright Lost Causism, as was the case in 1940. Most reviewers who comment on the reasons for their positive review do acknowledge that it is racist, and pointedly Lost Cause reviews are rare, though a few have been written. *Gone with the Wind*, according to most reviews, is instead an object for which reviewers struggle to describe the reasons for their adulation. Despite recognizing its glaring racism, reviewers still express their love for it so long as they pay lip service to recognizing anti-black stereotypes. Regardless of their words, their positive affinity to the phenomenon is clear and it still in some ways resonates with them on an emotional level, and their lip service falls silent under the weight of the inherency of the Lost Cause to white supremacy and white American national identity.

Despite the recognition of racism, positive reception of *Gone with the Wind* anniversary editions is not harmless. Such reception is instead indicative of how popular *Gone with the Wind* has remained—and by extension its Lost Causism—while American white supremacy remains the status quo. The most important Lost Cause artifact of the

twentieth century remains popular due to its romantic white nationalist founding mythology. The box set of the seventy- and seventy-fifth anniversary reissues are, as I argue, monuments to Lost Causism that are frequently updated for new consumers, complete with new (and often old) bonus features that celebrate both *Gone with the Wind* and the Lost Cause mythology it defined. Even a new documentary in the most recent seventy-fifth anniversary edition of the novel reflects larger reception trends by framing its racism as merely something to be acknowledged, while its underlying white supremacist structures, and its ability to justify white supremacist violence, go unmentioned.

Accordingly, as was evidenced following the 2015 Charleston Church Massacre, I also argue that these updated monuments to the Lost Cause follow similar patterns as popular Confederate iconography by being ardently defended when the white supremacist origin mythology, and white national identity, was called into question following another terroristic expression of the Lost Cause's violent legacies. Like the Confederate battle flag, *Gone with the Wind* received a spike in sales following the Charleston Church Massacre as its defenders took to online Internet forums to express their discontent. This response was an example of what Eric Hobsbawm calls "identity politics," which itself, he argues, is an expression of national subjects trying to find certainty and a sense of place in a world that they perceived unsettled, or even hostile to their nation, its imagined past, and the white supremacist order.

Through horrific violence and by subsequently calling national symbols like the battle flag and *Gone with the Wind* into question, the Charleston Church Massacre exposed the horrific realities of both America's white supremacist past and its present.

Many white Americans responded by denying the racist nature of those symbols, the power they wield, and refused, again, to confront historical and continuing racial injustice. Instead, those Lost Cause sympathizers turned to the myth and blind defenses of the nation that continue to obscure historical reality and the history of white supremacy in America. Refusing to confront the realities of America's troubled racial history is, after all, the type of selective remembering and forgetting that their nation—their imagined community—requires.

“The Wind Will Always Blow in Atlanta”: Alice Randall’s *The Wind Done Gone* as Counter-narrative and Its Racist Backlash

Published almost twenty-six years to the day after Jamaica Kincaid’s “If Mammies Ruled the World,” Alice Randall’s 2001 novel *The Wind Done Gone* is a direct and intentional attempt to invert the dangerous mythology of the Lost Cause’s most important cultural artifact. According to Randall in a 2001 interview, her subject in *The Wind Done Gone* “isn’t a plantation or slavery...my subject is the novel ‘Gone with the Wind.’ It’s not American slavery, it’s slavery as it was depicted in ‘Gone with the Wind.’” Randall then stated, “Cynara is the main character, and she’s highly intelligent, refined, yet a passionate woman.”⁴⁶¹ Mammy, and the other slaves as well, are also complex characters with complex motivations in the novel. In this way, *The Wind Done Gone* is an important counter-narrative to the Lost Cause’s most powerful purveyor.

Furthermore, Randall engages in what memory theorist George Lipsitz calls “counter-memory”: a memory that embodies aspects of both myth—by taking *Gone with*

⁴⁶¹ “Interview with Alice Randall, Author of ‘The Wind Done Gone,’” *CNN*, June 22, 2001, accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2001/SHOWBIZ/books/06/22/randall.cnn/>

the Wind as its main subjects and setting itself within its universe—and history by focusing, according to Lipsitz, on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal truth.”⁴⁶² Counter-memories, in other words, are intentional efforts to create tension between historical reality and oppressive mythologies by illuminating the harsh conditions suffered in the past. For Randall, this is accomplished through inverting Lost Causist racial stereotypes and mythologies about a racially harmonious Old South, a tactic long used by black activists from Frederick Douglas, to Ida B. Wells, to Toni Morrison. To be sure, illuminating narratives silenced under the long-hegemonic Lost Cause narrative is exactly what Randall seeks to do in her novel. As she says in the interview, “I’ve tried to create...an antidote to the poisonous portrayal of blacks in the first novel as one-dimensional childlike or animal-like stereotypes.”⁴⁶³

Cynara’s story unfolds in the form of a diary and explores themes of blackness, motherhood, and Civil War era history in ways similar to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), Sherley Anne Williams’ *Dessa Rose* (1986), and Margaret Walker’s *Jubilee* (1966).⁴⁶⁴ For instance, in an effort to challenge the binary constructs of whiteness and blackness at the center of the Lost Cause, Randall centers miscegenation in the story. In fact, most of Randall’s characters appear as mixed race or have a mixed race ancestry—even her versions of Rhett Butler (R) and the O’Hara family are mixed race, which the

⁴⁶² George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 213.

⁴⁶³ “Interview with Alice Randall.”

⁴⁶⁴ For an in-depth discussion on *The Wind Done Gone*’s literary and historical themes, see M. Carmen Gomez-Galisteo, *The Wind is Never Gone: Sequel, Parodies and Rewritings of Gone with the Wind* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Company, 2011), 80-101.

O'Hara matriarch deeply laments. As for Cynara, she is the illegitimate daughter of Planter (Gerald O'Hara) and Mammy, making her "Other's" (Scarlett's) half sister who was sold away from the plantation as an adolescent. Cynara's parentage, in addition to the O'Hara's mixed-race ancestries, is a nod to interracial slave rape on antebellum plantations, a common reality that Lost Cause sympathizers would both denounce and abhor. Similarly, R also abandons Other to enter a sexual arrangement with Cynara as his mulatto concubine until Cynara loses all respect for R when she discovers that he enlisted in the Confederate army. Thus, Randall's Cynara is a far-cry from Mitchell's "shining black" slaves and is the inversion of Scarlett who was prideful about male Confederate and Ku Klux Klan participation.⁴⁶⁵

There are no passive, loyal slaves in *The Wind Done Gone*. Instead, Randall develops slave characters with complex personalities and motivations who never accept their enslavement within an inherently violent institution. In perhaps the most memorable of alterations, Mammy does not love the master's children unconditionally, as Mitchell's Mammy does Scarlett, and is instead revealed to have covertly killed each of Planter's sons at birth to maintain authority over the household and to protect against any heir that might one day be crueler than Planter. In Randall's Old South, though covertly, Mammy does rule the plantation.

Each of Randall's slave characters regularly engage in similar acts of resistance to the slave institution—and in manipulation of their masters—in order to protect their own welfare, the welfare of their families and fellow slaves from the violence and cruelties of slavery. It is these lessons about survival and self-preservation that Cynara takes from the

⁴⁶⁵ Gomez-Galisteo, *The Wind is Never Gone*, 91.

slaves at Tata (Tara) in order to protect the welfare of her own children as the oppressive and violent Jim Crow era looms at the end of the novel. Conversely, by this time in *The Wind Done Gone*, the “petulant,” as Kincaid branded her decades earlier, Scarlett is dead.

Critical and professional reception of *The Wind Done Gone* was mixed. Toni Morrison, herself, applauded Randal’s work while reviewers at major publications such as the *New York Times* and *Publisher’s Weekly* were quick to criticize, if not on top of some, often limited, praise.⁴⁶⁶ However, it must be noted that the critic reviews of the novel were overwhelmed by and preoccupied with the highly-publicized lawsuit that the Trusts of the Margaret Mitchell Estate promptly pursued against Randall for plagiarism. According to the Mitchell Estate, *The Wind Done Gone* was an unauthorized sequel that violated their copyright and sought to profit off of *Gone with the Wind*’s popularity, damaging *Gone with the Wind*’s reputation and the estate’s ability to profit financially off of it. The estate demanded that publication of the *Wind Done Gone* cease, all published copies be recalled and destroyed, and, erroneously, that the Mitchell Trust be awarded \$10 million in damages, all of Randall’s profits, and compensation for legal costs.⁴⁶⁷ The Mitchell Estate was quick to deny any allegations that the lawsuit had anything to do with the representation of black people, asserting that it was only about the theft of their property and to maintain claim over all derivative works of *Gone with the Wind*. The logic of their case against Randall, however, was in reality inseparable from such representations, as the estate itself was concerned that *The Wind Done Gone* would hurt

⁴⁶⁶ Gomez-Galisteo, *The Wind is Never Gone*, 92-93, 100; Megan Harlan, “The Wind Done Gone,” *New York Times*, July 1, 2001; “The Wind Done Gone,” *Publisher’s Weekly*; Claire Davis, “Review: ‘The Wind Done Gone’ a Mild Breeze,” *CNN Entertainment*, June 29, 2001.

⁴⁶⁷ Shawan M. Worsley, *Audience, Agency and Identity in Black Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 30.

the representation and “good will” of *Gone with the Wind*.⁴⁶⁸ According to literary scholar Shawan M. Worsley, “Underlying the Mitchell Estate’s defense is the suggestion that *Gone with the Wind* is essentially harmless... With the Civil Rights Movement, black people gained the legal right to full social and political equality,” a belief that many critics of the novel agreed with.⁴⁶⁹

Eight weeks before the scheduled release of *The Wind Done Gone*, in April 2001, an Atlanta District Court placed a preliminary injunction on Randall that prohibited the publication and sell of her novel. One month later the United States Court of Appeals in Atlanta overturned the preliminary injunction and ruled that it violated Randall’s first amendment rights.⁴⁷⁰ According to the *New York Times*, the legal defense of the Mitchell Estate immediately appealed the ruling, stating that the legal copyright issues were obscured because “the judges had yielded to ‘political correctness’ and pressure from the media. ‘The racial issues—namely that Margaret Mitchell’s book is being attacked as racist and the fact that it is Randall, who is black, writing this.’”⁴⁷¹

During the lengthy appeal, controversy continued to surround Randall, especially when the Margaret Mitchell House museum (MMH) in Atlanta invited her to promote her parody on site in July 2001. The Mitchell Estate, which had no connection to the MMH, quickly voiced an opinion and denounced Randall’s scheduled visit, one male trustee declaring, “What they [the Margaret Mitchell House] are doing does not please us, and it would not please Margaret. This woman [Randall] loves to trash Margaret in public. She

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ David D. Kirkpatrick, “‘Wind’ Book Wins Ruling in U.S.,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2001.

does not understand the niceties of that culture.”⁴⁷² Similarly, the MMH received hate calls for allowing her to promote her parody on what is considered “sacred ground” to *Gone with the Wind* fans. On the day of the event, Randall spoke to a crowd of 300 from the very property on which Mitchell penned *Gone with the Wind* more than sixty years earlier. Anti-Randall protestors, flanking the site of the event from outside its fences, and carried signs that read “The Wind Will Always Blow In Atlanta” and “Alice—Write Your Own Book.” One protestor, writes Dickey, wore a Confederate uniform and declared, “This is not a Southern event. This is a typical big city, New York-type event, a thing that happens in a place where standards don’t exist.” Others derided Randall as a liar and plagiarist and claimed that Margaret Mitchell was “spinning in her grave.” Randall confronted numerous audience members who defended Mitchell’s novel, including an MMH employee. Randall responded by suggesting that the employee, as many other white Americans, had internalized *Gone with the Wind*’s mythology as a child, a truth that black protestors have long understood.⁴⁷³

Throughout the case, the legal team of Randall and her publisher, Houghton Mifflin, argued that that *The Wind Done Gone* was not a sequel, as the Mitchell Estate claimed, but was instead a parody of *Gone with the Wind*’s racist depictions of African Americans. Randall and the Mitchell Trust compromised: Randall could publish *The Wind Done Gone*, but only with a label that marked it as an unauthorized parody.⁴⁷⁴ The \$10 million lawsuit against Randall was over. Since the ruling, *The Wind Done Gone* has

⁴⁷² Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 162-163; “‘Wind Done Gone’ Author Visits Margaret Mitchell House,” *Associated Press*, July 14, 2001.

⁴⁷³ Dickey, *A Tough Little Patch of History*, 162-163.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; Worsley, *Audience, Agency and Identity in Black Popular Culture*, 31.

paled in comparison to the continued influence and popularity of *Gone with the Wind*. Among lay readers, Randall's parody is not largely liked. On Amazon.com, for instance, only 49% of all 304 reviewers reviewed her novel favorably with four or five stars. Conversely, 37% of all 304 reviewers gave the novel a one-star rating while another 12% awarded it a mere two stars. Overwhelmingly, negative lay reviewers commented that *The Wind Done Gone* was boring, derivative, and forgettable. Through their negative reviews, it was also clear that most negative reviewers failed to understand what Randall hoped to accomplish by inverting *Gone with the Wind*'s racist stereotypes and giving her black characters agency and complexity. Additionally, others responded to the anti-racist challenge that *The Wind Done Gone* presents by claiming that fans can be a fan of *Gone with the Wind* and not take part in racism. For example, as one forceful reviewer who was looking for a romanticized interpretation of slavery writes, "Yes, I've loved GWTW since I was a young girl. No that does not make me a racist. I hated this book. Can someone other than this author write a book about the slaves point of view, without making them appear as ruthless, opportunistic, baby murderers."⁴⁷⁵

Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* is a significant piece of literature for a few reasons. First, Randall's direct inversion of *Gone with the Wind*'s racist stereotypes makes it a smart and effective counter-memory to hegemonic Lost Causism by attacking the myth's most important white nationalist narrative. *The Wind Done Gone* caused tension, so much so that the Mitchell Estate not only tried to silence Randall, but also attempted to ruin her life. Whatever historical errors Randall's novel may have, they can be sorted out later. The vital importance of *The Wind Done Gone* lay in its effort to

⁴⁷⁵ mdw, "Not worth a lengthy review," review of *The Wind Done Gone*, Amazon, July 28, 2013.

counter and undermine the harmful dominant narrative of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism. According to Lipsitz, it is through this process of myth and truth sorting, counter-memories reveal “whose foot has been on whose neck”—a realization that is long overdue and that white Americans are still largely unwilling to admit.⁴⁷⁶

Second, Randall's novel also serves as litmus test for the state of Lost Causism and the popularity of *Gone with the Wind* at the dawn of the twenty-first century, and the anger with which white southerners respond to her challenging a beloved artifact of their national memory. By poking the bear, so to speak, Randall generated significant controversy and backlash, to which she did not shy away, confronting antagonistic fans of *Gone with the Wind* and pro-Mitchell protestors. The backlash to *The Wind Done Gone* is indicative of the continuing divide between defenders of *Gone with the Wind* (as well as other Lost Causist artifacts) and those willing to denounce such historical interpretations as tools of white supremacy, as Randall does effectively with her parody. Additionally, Randall's appearance demonstrates the nationalistic passion that *Gone with the Wind* still instills in the twenty-first century, at the beginning of the so-called millennium of “post racism,” prompting fans to come to its defense by declaring Randall's beliefs about the novel to be anti-southern and actively resisting, and ridiculing, and seeking legal action against Randall for the anti-white supremacist message that she tried to convey. Lost Causism remains deeply embedded into the white national memory of the nation's most critical event, and thus into the white identity that built upon that myth. Accordingly, white Americans rallied to the defense Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Indeed, as Randall experienced first hand, the wind was still blowing.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 214.

“we will see another new and improved edition”: Twenty-first Century Collectors Editions and Their Fans

Reissues of *Gone with the Wind*, as both novel and film, have enjoyed considerable market success in the twenty-first century. Most recently the seventy-fifth anniversary of *Gone with the Wind*'s theatrical release was celebrated with the release of a new collectible box edition on both DVD and Blu-ray formats. Only five years before, the seventieth anniversary was celebrated in the same way and a new anniversary reissue of the novel was published in 2011 to mark seventy-five years of the novel in publication. Importantly, these reissues serve not only as carriers of *Gone with the Wind*'s narrative Lost Causism, but also include numerous bonus features that celebrate the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon itself.

The 2011 reissues of the novel included a new forward written by the great southern writer Pat Conroy who credited Mitchell's novel as the reason he became a novelist. Conroy's forward, importantly, expressed the intimate relationship he had with the novel and the impact it had on his life, detailing his mother's own intimate connection to *Gone with the Wind* and recollecting his childhood spent reading and watching the novel and film in Atlanta, hating William Tecumseh Sherman, visiting historical landmarks in the South, and standing outside of Loew's Grand Theater in 1961 to glimpse surviving cast members reunited for the Civil War Centennial's rerelease of the film. Conroy, as he writes about himself, was raised by his *Gone-with-the-Wind*-loving mother “to be a ‘Southern’ novelist, with a strong emphasis on the word ‘Southern.’”⁴⁷⁷ He, in other words, learned how to be southern—to identify with the southern nation—and learned what the “South” was, through *Gone with the Wind* and its intertextual

⁴⁷⁷ Pat Conroy, “Forward,” in Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*, vi.

relationship with southern historical sites, his home city of Atlanta, and southern heritage. Many of the white American readers who looked forward to and enjoyed Conroy's forward undoubtedly sympathized with his deep connection to *Gone with the Wind*—the novel that made him who he was.

Despite the continued popularity of the novel, the anniversary reissues of the film are the most anticipated collectibles within the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon and allow for the original film—remastered with each reissue for better clarity and increasingly stunning visuals—to be experienced by twentieth-century fans at their own leisure. Each new anniversary collection also have grown increasingly lavish and, like the seventy-fifth anniversary edition of the novel, come packed with additional content to meet the demand of fans and collectors eager for an updated version. The 2009 DVD and Blu-ray collector's editions released for the film's seventieth anniversary, for instance, is packaged in velvet cloth with gold letters emblazoned over an image of Rhett Butler holding Scarlett O'Hara in his arms. The seventieth anniversary collectible set contains much additional content, including a photo and production art book, archival correspondence from David Selznick, a reproduction of the original program at the 1939 premiere at Loew's, and an assortment of reproduced art prints of Scarlett, Rhett, and landscape shots of Tara. The DVD and Blu-ray discs contain hours of additional bonus features such as the full-length documentaries *Making of a Legend: Gone with the Wind*, *MGM: When the Lion Roars*, and Home Entertainment's *1939: Hollywood's Greatest Year*. The anniversary edition also contains numerous featurettes (including one titled "Dixie Hails *Gone with the Wind*" that celebrates the 1939 premiere in Atlanta and the rerelease for the Atlanta Civil War centennial celebration), a version of the film with

commentary by film historian Rudy Behlmer; and a series of trailers spanning fifty years of rereleases.

Even in the rare instances that the seventieth anniversary edition's bonus features raise questions regarding the film's historicism and its mythology, they are overpowered by the celebration of the phenomenon amid numerous bonus extras that relegate slavery and the actors who played the slaves in the film, including Hattie McDaniel, to the background of a story about the supposed tragic loss of white wealth and the romance of the Old South. Among the featurettes are four short documentaries titled "Gable: the King Remembered," "Vivien Leigh: Scarlett and Beyond," "The Supporting Players," and an eleven-minute historical short titled "The Old South" that was conceptualized by historian Wilbur G. Kurtz, considered a foremost authority on the Old South during his time, and produced in 1940. It is telling about the persistence of the Lost Cause mythology and that persistence's indebtedness to *Gone with the Wind* that a 1940 Lost Cause documentary about King Cotton made it into a collectible anniversary edition of *Gone with the Wind* in 2009. Despite its short length, the mini-documentary "The Old South" is packed information designed to provide viewers with context. It forwards a Lost Cause history that proclaims cotton, not slavery, as the economic backbone of the Old South and present South (a ludicrous claim even for 1940), blames the Civil War on northern disdain for a strong southern economy, and propagates the racial stereotypes of happy, passive slaves. The mini-documentary, itself, reinforces the mythology for collectors and fans by providing the veneer of historical authority.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ Selznick, *Gone with the Wind*, DVD.

Scholars of paratexts such as Conroy's introduction or, to extend paratextual analysis to home video bonus features, have long understood that the paratexts themselves are tools that guide interpretation and reception of a cultural product. In this way, as Philippe Lejeune argues, paratexts exist on the fringes of the product proper—in this case Mitchell's story and Selznick's film—yet can control the reading and viewing of the product. Paratexts and bonus features, however, are rarely the products of the original creators, but products put in place by the publisher or the film studio that reflects what they believe consumers want in order to bolster sales.⁴⁷⁹ The paratexts on *Gone with the Wind* media are thus reflections of its fans attitudes toward the film and an effort to guide reception in a direction by those who would profit from it. From the gold lettering on the velvet cover to Conroy's introduction to "The Old South" documentary, *Gone with the Wind*'s bonus features are intentional additions that serve to imbue authority to a type of Lost Causist memorial that has reflected white mythology and supported the needs to white identity since its creation. These bonus features are thus reflections of fans continued desire to purchase and experience the Lost Causism of *Gone with the Wind* and the effort to direct positive reception. As one Windy reviewing the seventieth anniversary edition box set wrote of the seventy-fifth edition, "no doubt we will see another new and improved edition. How many editions will we buy?; It was the landmark in filmmaking in 1939 and remains a landmark in restoration today."⁴⁸⁰ The reviewer was already looking forward to the next edition of *Gone with the Wind*, and its bringing to life

⁴⁷⁹ Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 45; Gerard Genette and Marie Maclean, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 261-272.

⁴⁸⁰ W. Patch, "As many times as they show it," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, June 28, 2010.

of the textures of the South, well before it hit store shelves. The highly-anticipated seventy-fifth “diamond” anniversary collector’s edition released in 2014 contained most of the same documentaries and featurettes as the seventieth, including the celebrator “Dixie Hails *Gone with the Wind*.” The deeply flawed 1940 “The Old South” mini-documentary is also included, ostensibly for historical context.

Gone with the Wind’s reputation, accolades, each of which is expressed in the paratexts to bolster sales and guide consumer experiences, lend it a veneer of credibility that influences fans and new viewers and readers. To be sure, the reissues are mostly purchased by previous fans and Windies, but *Gone with the Wind*, as both novel and film, continues to win new fans. For instance, one positive reviewer describes his new affinity for the novel after writing that “I’d never really considered reading the book before and I’d never seen the movie,” while two others write that *Gone with the Wind* is a “[g]reat book just as I knew it would be...I can’t believe I never read it until now” and “[i]t’s no wonder this is the second most sold book in history.”⁴⁸¹ Preconceived notions about *Gone with the Wind*’s merits as both a cultural artifact and educational tool undoubtedly influence new consumers’ opinions about it, lending the phenomenon a large amount of power, and it is common to see new fans commenting on not being surprised that it has achieved such success and longevity. Many other report becoming fans of the novel after watching the film for the first time, and become fans of the phenomenon at large.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ Michael Beverly, “One of the best novels I’ve read, what took so long?,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, November 18, 2012; Job77, “Untitled,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, November 14, 2012; Carla, “Gone with the Wind,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, November 5, 2012.

⁴⁸² B. Gatlin, “Gone with the Wind, 75th anniversary edition,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, January 17, 2012; Alice M. Orr, “Must Read,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, March 4, 2012; Liz, “Knew the movie by heart but never had read the book,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, November 13, 2012.

Given the level of celebration that *Gone with the Wind* has received throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries—references to which are plastered all over the reissues and inherent in its additional content—it would be more surprising if new consumers hated *Gone with the Wind*.

The seventy-fifth anniversary box set did differ from the seventieth anniversary set. It contained new footage that Windies were excited to see, including rarely seen footage of the film's stars attending the Loew's premiere in Atlanta and a featurette of additional silent footage from the theatrical rerelease of the film for Atlanta's Civil War Centennial celebration. More significantly in the ongoing saga of the Lost Cause, the box set also contained a new special feature added to provide historical context: a half-hour documentary titled "Old South, New South."

"Old South, New South" is an important addition to the seventy-fifth *Gone with the Wind* anniversary edition. Commissioned by Warner Bros. to create a special feature for the new Blu-ray, documentarian Gary Leva pitched his thirty-minute documentary as

"a journey of discovery through today's South, revisiting the real-life locations depicted in "Gone with the Wind," from Gettysburg to Atlanta to New Orleans, to see how the world of the Old South—and the themes depicted in the film—continue to inform life in the cosmopolitan world of the New South."⁴⁸³

According to Leva, the plan he pitched "would assure a film that was at least visually arresting—magnolia's dripping Spanish Moss, old plantation houses long abandoned, Civil War cannons standing in weedy fields, the clouds scudding above them in time-

⁴⁸³ Gary Leva, "Gone with the Wind & My Southern Education," *The Bitter Southerner*, Accessed March 8, 2017, <http://bittersoutherner.com/gone-with-the-wind-my-southern-education/#.WMBt-WQrJ0s>.

lapse.”⁴⁸⁴ Leva’s pitch conjured the very magnolia myth that *Gone with the Wind* defined in white collective memory before he knew what the documentary was going to be about. Warner Bros. approved his proposal.⁴⁸⁵

Despite its reliance on longtime tropes, Leva’s final product included on the seventy-fifth anniversary Blu-ray box set is a perceptive and, in many ways, admirable effort that contains some of the best documentary coverage of *Gone with the Wind* and the Lost Cause to date. Featuring several notable historians of the Civil War era and southern cultural icons, “Old South, New South” successfully frames *Gone with the Wind* as an extension of the Lost Cause mythology that originated in popular literature, history textbooks, and memorialization campaigns in order to provide the ideological justification for reinstating a white supremacist order in a post-bellum South without slavery. Leva’s documentary discusses Lost Cause vital tenets such as the veneration of the Confederate cause and the effort to remove slavery from the center of the war’s story. “*Gone with the Wind*,” says historian Randy J. Sparks in his interview for the documentary, “is a great example of how the white South’s view of the antebellum period, the war, the South’s view of Reconstruction became the prevailing national myth... There aren’t many cases in history where the losers write the history, not the victors.”⁴⁸⁶ Leva’s “Old South, New South” contains powerful imagery that juxtaposes pristine southern land- and city-scape shots against images of anti-black violence from the black civil rights movement.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Gary Leva, “Old South, New South,” bonus extra in Selznick, *Gone with the Wind*, DVD.

The documentary's discussion of the centrality of white southern identity to the anti-black violence in the wake of the Civil Rights Acts is laudable. Sadly, however, the important work the film accomplishes is overshadowed in the last third of the documentary—a view of the contemporary South via post-Katrina New Orleans. Leva posits a notion of southern resiliency, especially among southern blacks; and a supposedly growing “colorblindness.” Leva curiously sings the praises of southern hospitality (a direct contrast is drawn with the North) and the region's well-mannered residents. If white southerners are so hospitable, then why a need for colorblindness?

The road ahead for the “New South,” as Leva would have his viewers believe, is one of hope and determination, which can result in real progress if the white South and the black South are determined to learn from each other, and to grow and build a future together, honoring what makes them exceptional. Leva's message is further emphasized by a clip from Barack Obama's 2013 commencement address to Morehouse College, one of Atlanta's most prominent HBCUs, in which the then-President thunders at the college's black graduates that

“Nobody cares how tough your upbringing was. Nobody cares if you suffered some discrimination. You have to remember that whatever you've gone through, it pales in comparison to the hardships previous generations endured. And they overcame them. And if they overcame them, you can overcome them too.”⁴⁸⁷

President Obama is correct that the contemporary South is not the slave society of 1850, nor is it the Jim Crow racial apartheid. Generations of African Americans fought for and toppled those unjust regimes, and, certainly, current generations are better off for

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

it. But the words in Obama's commencement speech, like the final message in Leva's documentary about the contemporary South and its future, fail to understand the nature of American whiteness and its own resiliency to protect the privileges it is illegitimately afforded.

Leva's "Old South, New South" forwards the liberal sensibility that American whiteness and blackness can be reconciled as they are, so long as the representatives of the two identities work together to build a better future for the nation out of the national identities that already exist, and, by extension, upon the existing social structures that were created by the people who have historically held those identities. Leva's documentary, in other words, ascribes to a historical philosophy of linear progress and views white and black identities as sharing some balance of power in defining what the South is, and can be, culturally and politically, and not as a great imbalance that heavily favors whiteness and that has been used historically to protect and expand white supremacy.

The white South thus cannot remain as it exists if racial justice is to be achieved. Its very identity is built upon the white nationalism that first took shape during the antebellum era and that was nurtured and refined throughout the long era of Lost Causism, which still well might be the contemporary era. The white South of the present is still very much ensconced within a white nationalist identity and remains diametrically opposed and hostile to a black identity built upon an ideology of liberation, a white nationalist identity that actively decenters and marginalizes legitimate black calls for social and political reform. Along with the marginalization of black voices calling for social change, whiteness also marginalizes black historical narratives that would

undermine the mythologies that white national identity is built and justified upon. The white South, its nationalism, must therefore be dismantled and restructured; its foundational myths of benign slavery and racial superiority uprooted and upended. American whiteness remains the impediment to black and white reconciliation and true racial liberation. “Color-blindness” will accomplish neither; white nationalism and its mythological foundation, white “heritage,” must be directly confronted.

To Leva’s credit, two-thirds of “Old South, New South” is a smart historical overview of the Lost Cause and *Gone with the Wind*, complete with powerful imagery of anti-black racism. The inclusion of such a documentary in the seventy-fifth anniversary edition of the film that has defined Lost Causism for every generation since its release is a remarkable accomplishment, despite its being relegated to the third disc of the Blu-ray edition, and perhaps speaks to white Americans’ growing awareness of, or an increasing desire to understand, the real historical horrors of slavery and Reconstruction. However, the conclusion of “Old South, New South” that heralds the virtues of colorblindness, and that fails to call for liberation through dismantling structures and identities of oppression, creates a message that fans of *Gone with the Wind*, Windies, and liberal American whites at large can support without making too much effort to change their beliefs and deeply held virtues. In fact, it supports a justification for fans of *Gone with the Wind*, and white Americans at large, to continue partaking in the mythology of the white South by failing to establish and proclaim the inherent role that white nationalism has played in creating the South as it actually exists. Such a message, in other words, places responsibility for dismantling white supremacy on whites’ merely learning that historical narratives like *Gone with the Wind*—as well as ubiquitous southern symbols like the Confederate flag

and Confederate monuments—are problematic and that black cultural contributions to the nation should be valued. This creates no sense of urgency to restructure white southern identity around the historical reality that white Americans, especially those who have historically identified as southern, have systematically subjugated African Americans, which maintains the marginalization of black voices, and, at the same time, creates a justification that allows for monuments to slavers to persist unchanged in town centers, and for *Gone with the Wind* to be continuously celebrated, reissued, and released to theaters, so long as whites have some mild conception of racism. This, in other words, is just another instance where even well-meaning white Americans fail to understand the past as something that must be directly and actively confronted, its crimes reconciled, and not merely as some abstraction about which to learn in passing. Reviews of *Gone with the Wind* anniversary editions bares out this fact, as ardent defenders of Lost Causism and well-meaning whites continue to purchased, expereince, and praise *Gone with the Wind* and its Lost Causism.

“A great novel that deserves to be protected”: Lost Causism in the Twenty-first Century

Unlike reviewers in the mid-twentieth century, pointedly Lost Causist reviews of *Gone with the Wind* media are actually rare in a sea of positive reviews. However, there are enough of them to be significant, especially as many are provoked when defenders of white supremacy take offense at calls to remove Confederate iconography and carriers of Lost Causism. Contemporary Lost Causist reviews are also often found by other visitors to Amazon to be among the most useful. For instance, one Lost Causist reviewer is an

open slavery apologist. “Brace thyself to be swept away by the Old South,” he writes with the same gusto as if he’s preparing to deliver his own “cornerstone speech.” “If you heard this is a novel which glorifies racism and the age of slavery, you are misinformed.”

Almost every sentence of the review is worth reading:

“GWTW is a Pre-Civil War novel which portrays the monstrous adversities Southerners were manhandled to weather upon the slaughter of their civilization and way of life. For those attempting to prevail over a disheartening tragedy, GWTW shall inspire thee to walk the path of Rhett Butler or Scarlett O’Hara...

People believe Southerners were fighting to defend slavery and the Confederacy, and I am sure a number of the arrogant wealthy landowners were, but the majority of Southerners were simply defending their homes and those they love. What would you do if an army was en route to your town and will pillage, burn, and commit unspeakable horrors unto your town’s women, welcome ‘em with open arms? Unlikely, unless you are gutless or a damn fool. You would, like I, commit monstrous acts to all extents, even if it were to leave you a corpse. I can go into historical debunking many fallacies people have about those who fought for the Confederacy...GWTW is a Pulitzer Prize winner, it is doubtful that it would have been awarded such an honor if it were based on a horde of slack-jawed yokels praising slavery.”⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ Marius, “Until you’ve lost your reputation, you never realize what a burden it was or what freedom really is.”—(p. 268-9) Rhett Butler,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, October 31, 2012.

Lost Causist reviewers such as this continue to espouse, along with much arrogance, the mythology of white southern victimization and a belief that most Confederates did not fight to defend slavery because most common southerners did not own slaves. This review also comes complete with an appeal to the protection of white womanhood. It is true that most Confederates did not own slaves before the Civil War (though levels of slave ownership varied from place to place), but all Confederates knew at the time they joined the Confederate cause that the cause was undeniably the protection of the South's slave society and the institution of human bondage that it was built upon. The protection of their families, their homelands, and the "southern way of life" were concerns, but were inextricably intertwined with the slave system. Many Confederates at the time of war could not imagine a world without slavery and thought the institution provided their families, and their nation, with the best possible future. The reviewer ends his diatribe against those who call *Gone with the Wind* racist with a quote from the 1993 film *Gettysburg*, that itself is a product of *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causist mythology in Hollywood: "Virginians! Virginians! For your lands! For your homes! For your sweethearts! For your wives! For... Virginia! Forward... march."⁴⁸⁹

Contemporary Lost Cause reviewers also continue to praise Mitchell's and Selznick's portrayals of slaves and slavery is a key theme in the reviews. "Some people review this book based on its 'racist' overtones. But that is being shortsighted and too 'politically correct,'" writes one reviewer. He continues,

"The book is written about the Civil War era. People owned slaves. It's a fact. Slaves...were uneducated. It's a fact. Slaves were indebted to their

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

masters...[A]ll these people shouting and screaming about how racist this book is are just trying to ignore a real part of American history.”⁴⁹⁰

Another reviewer speaks about the antebellum era depicted in *Gone with the Wind* as if it is an accurate portrayal when he writes that *Gone with the Wind* is “[p]art soap opera / part chronicle of an Antebellum way of life soon to disappear forever, that of genteel Southerners made rich from plantation slave labor.”⁴⁹¹

Other Lost Causist reviewer were more to the point. “Mitchell is gifted as a reporter on the Old South,” writes a recent reviewer commenting on the novel as an accurate glimpse into the antebellum era. “[W]ith its grace and comfort, explaining slavery and class struggle among the slaves themselves, she brings the South and the Civil War to life.”⁴⁹² Another reviewer of the novel comments, “Margaret Mitchell does a fantastic job with how she portrays the slaves...very authentic.”⁴⁹³ Yet another calls *Gone with the Wind* a “historical masterpiece” and writes, “[t]his story is one of the greatest pieces of historical fiction ever written. To read GWTW is to get a Southern view of the Civil War and the effects on all concerned from the plantation owners to the slaves. Everyone should read this book.”⁴⁹⁴ Another similar reviewer downplays the role of slavery in the Civil War and mentions the Lost Cause’s states’ rights interpretation of the war: “the war came about because of unfair taxes, a federal government that took

⁴⁹⁰ Erich Kaiser, “One of the greatest!,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, August 8, 2014.

⁴⁹¹ Annie Van Auken, “Scarlett: ‘Tara! Home. I’ll go home. And I’ll think of some way to get hum back. After all...tomorrow is another day!’,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 10, 2015.

⁴⁹² Stephen Milott, “Great Historical Yarn,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, August 20, 2016.

⁴⁹³ Ellen C., “It’s a nice read, but not one I would re-read again,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, July 30, 2015.

⁴⁹⁴ J.C.D., “Historical Masterpiece,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, December 26, 2015.

away states' rights, and slavery. In some ways, GWTW provides a more comprehensive look at the reasons for secession than some of the history books."⁴⁹⁵

Similarly, a reviewer of the seventieth anniversary DVD set writes that the film is a "psychological portrait of a key historical period" and "evokes a historical period with the beauty of a laser: the old south was about to vanish in an ill-advised war of attrition with the industrial North." The reviewer further credits *Gone with the Wind* as being the film that forty-five years earlier "embedded itself in [his] imagination and nurtured a fascination with history that has survived to this day" and bought the anniversary edition to introduce his children to the time period.⁴⁹⁶ For many, as one reviewer of the film writes, *Gone with the Wind* is still "[a] history lesson we still need to study and learn."⁴⁹⁷ Numerous recent reviews herald *Gone with the Wind* as a historically accurate representation of the Civil War era. Phrases like "great history," "educational," "accurate history," and "a trip through the history books" are common. One reviewer even proclaims, "never forget."⁴⁹⁸

Common among contemporary ardent Lost Causist reviewers was also a tendency to appeal directly to the racial stereotypes of the docile, well-treated slave and the "happy

⁴⁹⁵ M. Hughes, "Not PC—live with it! It's the very home of powerhouse writing," December 5, 2015.

⁴⁹⁶ Robert J. Crawford, "psychological portrait of a key historical period," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, May 30, 2010.

⁴⁹⁷ Wonderland Fan, "Five Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, January 15, 2016.

⁴⁹⁸ Anonymous, "One of my all-time favorite movies!," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 10, 2016; Anonymous, "Five Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, September 16, 2016; Butch, "GREAT, Amazon delivers on time! Love the movie.," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, January 7, 2017; Amanda, "Five Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, December 1, 2015; Bagwell, "Five Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, July 16, 2016; Anonymous, "Four Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, July 30, 2016; Gloria Gunter, "Five Stars," August 13, 2015; Randall Canter "Five Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, October 25, 2015; rearter, "Five Stars," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, June 26, 2015.

darky” myth. “This is a great film and for people who forgot that slave owners did treat their slaves with some level of decency,” writes a reviewer of the film’s seventieth anniversary edition box set.⁴⁹⁹ A recent reviewer of the novel also commented on the ability *Gone with the Wind* to still be an educational tool about the history of the South: “Learned a lot about the war and the Confederates as well as the slaves that didn’t want to be freed.”⁵⁰⁰ Another reviewer of the novel invoked a defense of slavery common among pro-slavery writers before the war and slavery-defenders after and goes full Lost Cause:

“[T]he novel offers some enlightening in terms of reality...[*Gone with the Wind*] dissipated many of the lies the government with northern interests has preached during, before, and after the Civil War to destroy the southern way of living. What did they do for the negro masses once they were freed?...[W]hat real difference was there among slaves and children/adults working in coal/steel/copper mines and/or manufacturing/factories during the Industrial Revolution?”⁵⁰¹

Another vehement Lost Causist review of *Gone with the Wind* further also reveals a contemporary belief in Lost Causist myths by speaking of the war only in terms of southern victimization at the hands of a tyrannical North while also commenting on African American inferiority. The reviewer, who had never seen the film nor read the

⁴⁹⁹ WriterMama92, “Still One of the Best Civil War Movies of All Time,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, March 13, 2015; “Quote from Besoin, “Scarlett’s Double-Edged Sword,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, October 6, 2010.

⁵⁰⁰ Anonymous, “Good character development,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, June 22, 2016.

⁵⁰¹ Raul Felician, “This novel dissipated many of the lies the government with...,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, October 12, 2014.

book and only decided to pick up the seventy-fifth anniversary edition of Mitchell's novel because of his fondness for Pat Conroy, writes as if he is as personally affected by the outcome of the Civil War as a former Confederate living in Georgia in 1866. "I can't believe I'd never had this book recommended to me before, especially since I'm an outspoken hater of Lincoln (may he and Sherman burn in hell forever...I really hate murderous invaders so hating Lincoln is easy."⁵⁰² The reviewer, who demonstrates *Gone with the Wind's* continued ability to win new fans by appealing to Lost Causist ideology, continues at length,

"One of the best novels I've read...Mitchell managed to give a history lesson and wonderful historical flavor without ever actually 'telling' the reader, she just 'showed' us and it was wonderful...

There is so much rewritten history and people really don't understand much of what they believe or even why they believe it, so anyone that things they know about the invasion of the South in the War of '61 and they haven't read this, they are not being honest in what they say they know, they can't be."⁵⁰³

The reviewer continues discussing the representations of the slave characters and praises Mitchell for her insight that he sees as revealing why racial tensions remain high. One can only surmise that the reviewer believes that black freedom resulted in the failures of Reconstruction and the destruction of the Old South. "The South was destroyed by the North, the slaves may have been freed in one quick stroke, but they were

⁵⁰² Beverly, "One of the best novels I've read, what took so long?"

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

free for what?,” he asks rhetorically. “The economy was destroyed, and the seeds of resentment and hatred were watered... [in] everyone that suffered huge loss by the actions of the state in its conquest for power.” The ardent Lost Cause reviewer concludes by echoing sentiments from the mid-twentieth century that *Gone with the Wind* is an accurate history. “I wish I’d read this book sooner, but now that I have I’ll continue to recommend it to anyone interested in a great novel of American and Confederate history.”⁵⁰⁴ A similar recent review of Mitchell’s novel was published in 2015 and reads,

“[i]t’s a wonderful historical novel bringing the social mores of the Southern aristocracy to life in the characters who populate the book, while being a history lesson on the Civil War from the point of view of the slaveowning citizens south of the Mason Dixon line.”⁵⁰⁵

Though rare today, ardent Lost Causist reviewers of *Gone with the Wind* provide much insight into the persistence of Lost Cause mythology in contemporary white America. Many, as the vehement Lost Causers above demonstrate, continue to believe that *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism is representative of the southern nation’s real history. These reviewers thus speak of northern aggression and white southern victimization; the latter of which demonstrates a continued belief in the myth that slaves were better off confined to the slave system. The reviewers may not speak directly of slavery as a noble institution, but they do express that Mitchell’s representation of slavery and the slaves are good ones and by extension argue that the destruction of the institution and black freedom created the racial tensions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Steven A. Chase, “‘Gone with the Wind,’ a book that’s even better than the wonderful movie of the same name,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, January 20, 2015.

They speak, like Mitchell and Lost Causers at large, as if the war had nothing to do with slavery and as if the slaves before the war were perfectly accepting of their bondage. The real tragedy of the Civil War, as can be inferred from those reviews, was the destruction of the Old South and its social order; disturbing that order, according to one reviewer, created the racial problems of the present. This conviction in *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism, is also a conviction in white supremacy, and remains a significant feature of white American identity and what they believe about their collective past.

A disturbing trend emerged in online *Gone with the Wind* reception in 2015 following the white supremacist terrorist attack on the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The shooting was an act of domestic terrorism carried out by a white supremacist who took the lives of nine African American churchgoers in one of the United States oldest black churches. Following the event, calls to remove the Confederate flag from atop the South Carolina statehouse in Columbia generated nation-wide controversy about white supremacist symbols that led to the removal of the flag. Expressing great fear over a potential book ban, censorship, historical revisionists, and America's so-called "P.C." culture, fans of *Gone with the Wind* were quick to come to the defense of the novel and film. One reviewer, writing less than one month after the church shooting, titled her review "Don't ever ban this book!" and writes that "[i]t's good for all of us to hear from the side that lost, the real reasons behind the civil war."⁵⁰⁶ Other reviewers expressed a twisted form of white southern victimization. "[W]ith the anti-Confederate/southern hysteria sweeping the country now,"

⁵⁰⁶ Laura Saint Martin, "Don't ever ban this book!," review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, July 4, 2015.

writes one supposed victim, “get your copy while you still can,” while yet another calls Mitchell’s book “[a] great novel that deserves to be protected from the pc attacks.”⁵⁰⁷

In the wake of the white supremacist terrorist attack, the film was defended more vehemently than the novel, and many reviewers claimed that they purchased a new copy as a result of the attack. “Rushed out to purchase this fantastic film about history,” writes one reviewer, “before they ban it along with the flag!”⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, a Texas librarian proclaims, “[a]ctually bought this because of the hysteria surrounding all things Confederate. I wanted to make sure I had a copy in case the hysterics tried to ban the rest of anything having to do with our Civil War history...GWTW is an all time favorite.”⁵⁰⁹ Still more: “With how crazy the country has gotten with ‘political correctness’...I purchased this movie before the nuts make it go away. “We can’t erase history,” writes one reviewer, while even more fans proclaim their love for the film—and that they had seen it many times before—which led them to purchase a “copy out of fear of censorship [by] those that would rewrite history.”⁵¹⁰ As one of the reviewers writes, “[i]t is our history...I have seen this movie many times and wanted a copy for myself before it is taken off the market because it is ‘politically incorrect.’”⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ Lynda, “Still a great book!,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, August 11, 2015; Herman Cost, “A great novel that deserves to be protected from the pc attacks of those who want to tell people what they can and cannot read,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, February 10, 2016.

⁵⁰⁸ Susan Rivers, “Five Stars,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 15, 2015.

⁵⁰⁹ Texas librarian, “Long time favorite,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 5, 2015.

⁵¹⁰ munchie, “Wonderful movie; get it before it’s banned,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, July 27, 2015; Quote from David A. McElhannon, “Love the movie,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, July 27, 2015.

⁵¹¹ Sylvia Asher, “I have seen this movie many times and wanted a copy,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, August 26, 2015.

To be sure, fans had defended *Gone with the Wind* against so-called political correctness before the Charleston church shooting, including the Mitchell Trust's legal defense in 2001. Among lay readers, two such ardent Lost Causist reviewers in 2013 wrote that *Gone with the Wind* is "[a] superb story placed in the historical context of the Civil War. Not politically correct by today's standards, but accurate historically" and called it "Southern history told from a point of view that you don't get to see too often during these politically correct times."⁵¹² But following the Charleston attack, defending *Gone with the Wind*, not just rating it favorably or professing a positive attitude toward it, grew into a disturbing trend as reviewers began delineating between "our" history (ostensibly the South's) and a vague, often unnamed, "other" history of those who call for the removal white supremacist and Confederate symbols. Michael Billig discusses this very expression as a language of banal nationalism that meets the inherent need to talk about one's nation. That is, this language designates the nation and its subjects (wherever they exist) as *us* versus *them*; real members of the nation versus non members.⁵¹³

In this climate, many fans purchased *Gone with the Wind* media to preserve a white nationalist artifact that they identified closely with when they felt it was under attack, mirroring larger trends regarding white fears of "multiculturalism" and political correctness. This, to be sure, is a form of white identity politics and expression that seeks to defend the nation and the subject's place within it, granting a false sense of legitimacy to the person trying to justify the unjustifiable. As an example, the most clearly

⁵¹² David J. Cahill, "The Classic of classic movies," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, April 27, 2013; Charlie Pace, "Classic movie," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, December 27, 2013.

⁵¹³ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism (Theory, Culture, and Society)* (New York: Sage, 1995), 109.

articulated Lost Causist defense of *Gone with the Wind* following the church massacre was authored by a southern reviewer of the seventy-fifth anniversary Blu-ray, and who was both inspired to purchase the box set and start reading the novel. In defense of the white South's mythology, she writes,

“Our children and grandchildren need to read, understand, appreciate and learn from our history. They need the truth...not a distortion or revisionist history. ‘Gone with the Wind’ is but one resource of many to help understand the era in which the Civil War was fought and the extreme deprivations that were the result.”⁵¹⁴

The reviewer's belief that *Gone with the Wind* represents an authentic Civil War-era national history is apparent in the review, as is her perceived connection to the South and its distant past (elsewhere in the review she documents several family members who fought for the Confederacy). Her mention of “extreme deprivations” that resulted from the war is also telling, and can be inferred to be an expression of what she sees as the greatest tragedy of the war, the destruction of the Old South, its way of life, and the violent political conflicts that resulted from the destruction of the slave institution, a common theme among proponents of the Lost Cause. Furthermore, she not only defends *Gone with the Wind* against “revisionists,” but expresses a desire to preserve southern heritage as she understands it for future generations, perpetuating the imagined nation and its version of the southern, or American, past via *Gone with the Wind*, the Lost Cause's most powerful artifact. Similar sentiments were expressed by multiple *Gone with*

⁵¹⁴ Audrey S, “worn paperback version among my great grandmother's things,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, July 6, 2015.

the Wind fans in the reviews.⁵¹⁵ The rest of the review, also tellingly, remains thoroughly Lost Causist. She writes,

“The Civil War was a terrible war that should never have happened, but politics interfered in issues better resolved by the individual states, and political impatience at the Federal level led to divisions within families and between friends, causing the deaths of many of my ancestors.”⁵¹⁶

The reviewer defends *Gone with the Wind* by way of a states’ rights interpretation of the war, placing blame solely on the federal government. Slavery, as it pertains to the Civil War, goes unmentioned, and is of no concern to the reviewer. As is true of almost all ardent Lost Cause reviewers, the tragedy of the white terrorist attack that claimed the lives of nine black churchgoers is unacknowledged, silenced beneath the expressions of a white nationalist history that cannot account for even the centrality of slavery to America’s past, lest it be exposed for what it really is: a defense of continued white supremacy.

“Old South, New South”: The Continued Popularity of *Gone with the Wind*

Ardent Lost Causist celebratory reviews are a definite feature of twenty-first century *Gone with the Wind* reception, but are outpaced by reviews that recognize *Gone with the Wind*’s racism yet still state that the media merits being enjoyed and celebrated.

These reviewers follow Leva’s lead in celebrating the artifact by explaining away the

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., Green, “One of my Favorites;” Crawford, “psychological portrait of a key historical period;” Jeanne Major, “Another lesson on history for our grandson,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, June 15, 2014.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

racism as being of a bygone era or as being a legitimate perspective for a southerner. As one verified purchaser of the seventy-fifth anniversary edition complains, for instance, *Gone with the Wind* depicts “the Old South in a good light...[T]he real Old South was quite different than this film portrayed....Slavery is a terrible reality of the Old South and Whites and Blacks are still dealing with what happened 150 years later.” The reviewer then issues a warning of caution to contemporary viewers about the film’s racism. Despite this, it is not enough to turn her off from the movie and, in turn, proclaims that “I was raised on *Gone with the Wind*, and I love it still” and praises Hattie McDaniel’s performance as Mammy. She then writes in contrast to the ardent Lost Causist reviewer, and to deflect attention from the problems of the film’s historicism, that viewers should “[r]ealize that the Slavery issue isn’t the focus of the film—it is the love story.”⁵¹⁷

Similarly, the comments of another apologist are indicative of a common theme among *Gone with the Wind* fans who justify their love of and participation in the phenomenon by attributing its racism to Mitchell and the era in which she lived, and failing to see their own complicity with that racism. As the reviewer writes, noting *Gone with the Wind* as one of her favorite movies,

“I appreciate the reviews of the people who did not like the movie...I admit there are things with the book and movie I find fault with...

You have to take into consideration the author herself. She grew-up in the deep south, Atlanta in fact which was decimated in the Civil War...

The stories she heard were from Confederate soldiers who resented the North and what had happened to their way of life. Yes, the blacks are

⁵¹⁷ Rachel Houtchens, “Five Stars,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, February 20, 2015.

shown in a childish manner and are degraded, but we can't discredit a book because of it or we lose sight of the history of our past."⁵¹⁸

Another reviewer takes a more forceful tone, stating that the "elephant in the room is Margaret Mitchell's romanticizing of the South" and mentions the "black caricatures" and "skewed history portraying the South as this wonderful, gentile society wrought asunder by the evil North." Despite recognition of the problematic nature of *Lost Causist*, the review is still positive. The reviewer is furthermore an apologist for *Gone with the Wind*'s racism, claiming that, "[a]s a film... [*Gone with the Wind*] is one of the greats" and that Margaret Mitchell can be forgiven "to a point, for she was a product of her own times, having been raised in Atlanta, an ancestor of slave-owners who grew up listening to romantic tales of the South." The reviewer continues: "To her credit, [Mitchell] gave a lot of money later in her life toward educational funds for blacks."⁵¹⁹ Margaret Mitchell's great contributions to American white nationalism, intentional or not, can apparently be ameliorated by enough personal philanthropy.

Reviewers of the seventy-fifth anniversary edition of the novel engaged in similar apologetics. One reviewer proclaims that the novel is "a must read" and "one of the best books ever written," despite the fact that "some" consider "it a racist and sexist book."⁵²⁰ Another, like those reviewing the film above, also claims that *Gone with the Wind* "is a book written about a racist group of people during a racist period of history in an area

⁵¹⁸ Dorothy J. Green, "One of my favorites," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, February 19, 2016.

⁵¹⁹ panhandle, "the acting and direction are all great. The elephant in the room is Margaret Mitchell's ...," review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), Amazon, May 2, 2015.

⁵²⁰ Fireball35, "The greatest movie of the Old South, that was every produced. Everyone should watch it.," review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), May 8, 2015; Quote from GWTW LUVER, "PASSIONATE AND AMAZING!!! A MUST READ!!!," review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, December 31, 2011.

that was known to be very racist at the time... The book, though,” so far as the reviewer can see, “is not racist in the sense that it supports racism and bigotry.”⁵²¹ A telling contemporary review of the novel that seeks to downplay racism and shift blame away from her own complicity reads,

“[*Gone with the Wind*] is a serious and wonderful piece of literature that doesn’t even focus that much on the disdain for the freed and enslaved men and women. It’s definitely not the focus of the story, and I believe that in those moments where it’s biased against slaves, Mitchell managed to do it in a way that was as tasteful as possible and, in my opinion, probably deemed it a necessary evil to a story about the Old South.”⁵²²

It is revealing that a reviewer who understands the novel as containing racism can understand Mitchell’s anti-black stereotypes as acceptable and somewhat tasteful. African Americans, in 1939 or 2017, do not view those stereotypes as acceptable and understand well that such stereotypes have sanctioned violence against people of color.

A telling apologetic review was also written about the seventieth anniversary edition of the DVD by a fan who, after not initially liking the film, grew “to not only adore the film but appreciate it.” The reviewer, somewhat perceptively, writes,

“slavery is candy coated here to be something that isn’t ‘that bad’...[T]he only slaves depicted in the film are those who are treated kindly and considered ‘family.’ It almost seems like the subject is swept under the rug

⁵²¹ Allison Wonderland, “Scarlett is a pain in the neck,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, September 22, 2012.

⁵²² K. McCain, “Superb and Sublime,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, Superb and Sublime, June 29, 2013.

in order to build more sympathy for the South as a whole...[T]he fact still remains that slavery was wrong and, while I don't agree with war at all, I will say that the right side did win."⁵²³

Another apologetic southern reviewer of the seventy-fifth anniversary edition of the novel describes *Gone with the Wind* as “[h]istory wrapped around fiction” and, while acknowledging that slavery was wrong, claims that “there were many things about the old south that seem magical.”⁵²⁴

A common theme in *Gone with the Wind*'s twenty-first century reception is the recognition that the film and novel are, in fact, racist, yet merit being enjoyed and celebrated. The reality that *Gone with the Wind* has played a leading role in defining American white nationalism since its first publication is hardly noticed, and reviewers feel as if their acknowledgement of the racist narrative is enough to combat the insidious effect that *Gone with the Wind* has had on white national memory, which in turn created a white identity that has had very real, very negative effects on communities of color. Like Leva's “Old South, New South,” a significant portion of contemporary reception of *Gone with the Wind* recognizes historical racism, and its representation in the novel and film, but expresses no immediate need to dismantle cultures of racism and the institutions built upon them. It is simply enough for the reviewers to recognize racism as something of the past, and perhaps as something carried out by individuals in the present, which fails to understand how American white identity at large serves to perpetuate the white

⁵²³ Andrew Ellington, “A breathtaking achievement in cinema,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (film), April 5, 2010.

⁵²⁴ Gemms, “Amazing read...History wrapped around fiction,” review of *Gone with the Wind* (novel), Amazon, August 10, 2012.

supremacist order. Leaving the past in the past as something only from which to conjure up lessons that can be used to supposedly steer present circumstances in desired directions, may sometimes be useful, when reasoned correctly, but such an understanding of the past and how it can be used also promotes inaction, leaving oppressive systems and identities, as they exist, in place. Instead, mythological Lost Cause histories must be actively replaced with more honest and accurate histories of the national past that center blackness and black subjugation in order to restructure or build new American national identities that undermine white supremacist systems. Merely understanding that racism exists and can be recognized is not enough.

Contemporary consumer reviews reveal that *Gone with the Wind* remains a popular cultural force. It is also clear that fewer Americans among younger generations have seen or read *Gone with the Wind*, and that the reviewers and purchasers of the anniversary reissues are already fans at the time of the purchase or, at least, familiar with the story. However, *Gone with the Wind* media maintain the ability to produce new fans and has always sold enough copies of the film sets and the novel to warrant being reissued regularly, often with new content that fans look forward to. The reissues, in other words, serve as a type of monument to the Lost Cause that is updated frequently to meet the demand of consumers who identify closely with it, which is evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive reception to them that focuses mainly on the historical narratives of the story rather than the romance or drama.

The fanhood and positive reception of *Gone with the Wind* is not harmless, and white Americans who champion its virtues—whether the ardent Lost Causist defenders or the scores of well-meaning fans who acknowledge its racism—continue to perpetuate

both *Gone with the Wind* and its mythology into the present. Accordingly, most of the reviewers forward the same message as Leva's "Old South, New South" that *Gone with the Wind*, and by extension the white South, can continue to be enjoyed—and the phenomenon experienced and participated in—so long as they pay lip service to and acknowledge its problems with racism. Those reviewers, furthermore, fail to understand that whiteness—as constructed out of white nationalism and its founding myths that are embedded in monuments like *Gone with the Wind*—is itself responsible for the persistence and protection of white supremacy, and thus anti-black racism and violence, both institutional and interpersonal. They, in turn, justify their fondness for, and their participation with *Gone with the Wind*'s Lost Causism through multiple forms of apologetics, making them complicit and implicated within contemporary white nationalism, white supremacy, and systemic and ideological racism. To see the continued presence and resiliency of such white nationalism in American life, and the utilization of whiteness by supposedly well-meaning white Americans, one only need to look to the 2016 presidential election in which Donald J. Trump ran and won the election, including every southern state with the exception of Virginia (itself a close race), on an openly racist and xenophobic platform.

Gone with the Wind has not been reissued on any mass cultural medium since the 2016 presidential election, which means that the inevitable reissues to come may well be released into a more maliciously racist America than the seventy and seventy-fifth anniversary editions. As was the case following the case following the white terrorist attack on Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2015 when reviewers expressed a need to purchase and defend *Gone with the Wind* from the supposed scourge

of “political correctness,” equating it with the Confederate flag, one must suspect that the reception of future reissues will reflect the American racism in its current form, as the cultural object that has ideologically influenced white nationalism to the highest degree via its Lost Causism. It is thus eye-opening to see that a cultural artifact like *Gone with the Wind* can both be understood by contemporary fans as both racist, yet still highly celebrated by the very people who recognize that its historical narrative is problematic, if they don’t outright understand that it is false. In other words, if the incredible national popularity of *Gone with the Wind*’s original release is indicative of the white racism deployed in the face of a galvanizing civil rights movement in the late-1930s and 1940s, and if its popularity among white flight audiences during the Hollywood Roadshow era is indicative of the white racism during the late-sixties and early seventies, then, to be sure, the popularity of the seventy-fifth anniversary box set that includes Leva’s “Old South, New South”—and in combination with the popular exhibitions that celebrated of *Gone with the Wind*’s diamond anniversary—is also indicative of white racism in the supposedly “post-racial” and “color-blind” era of the twenty-first century. Fans, undoubtedly, will be looking forward to the next reissue of *Gone with the Wind*; look for it on Amazon.

Conclusion: *Gone with the Wind* and the Imagined Communities of America

“[W]e cannot escape the ordeal of history. Before its bar we must appear, either as criminals...or as patriots defending our rights and vindicating the true principles of the government founded by our fathers...It is a high and solemn duty which those who were part and parcel of it owe to their comrades, to themselves, and to posterity, to vindicate the...glory of our cause in the history of the struggle made in its defense.”

Jubal A. Early, Address to the Southern Historical Convention, 1873

“To many persons, who seldom read a history book, *Gone with the Wind* will represent the true account in fictionalized form of what actually happened.”

Lawrence D. Reddick, Review of *Gone with the Wind*, 1937

“[*Gone with the Wind*] is written about the Civil War era...Slaves were indebted to their masters...[A]ll these people shouting and screaming about how racist this book is are just trying to ignore a real part of American history.”

Reader review of *Gone with the Wind*, 2014

The above epigraphs highlight the historical trajectory of the Lost Cause national mythology from its inception in the Lost Cause social movement to the *Gone with the Windism* of the present. During the movement’s early spread, when former Confederate general Jubal A. Early spoke those words before the newly founded Southern Historical Society in 1873, he already understood that the movement must grow if the South was to

control the memory of the Civil War. Early similarly understood the importance of such ideological control—which he called “the ordeal of history”—and knew that writing a history in which the Confederacy was not traitorous, but instead “patriots defending [their] rights,” that the ideological point would justify the South’s fight to reinstate Old South white supremacist hierarchies into the post-bellum era, and into the new republic then devoid of slavery.⁵²⁵ Early thus called on his listeners at the Convention, and to the Confederate survivors more broadly, “to furnish the authentic materials for that history” and to write it “faithfully and truthfully,” which he called a duty to their fathers and to their children “who will then know whether to honor or to dishonor the sires that begot them,” and to the honor of “the dead heroes sleeping on the vast battle plains, from the Susquehanna to the Rio Grande.”⁵²⁶

White southerners, men and women, old and young, responded to Early’s clarion call by creating historical societies, veterans groups, and a memorialization movement that persisted well into the twentieth century. White southern writers, too, penned romantic plantation fiction about a tranquil Old South built upon a benign institution of slavery while Lost Cause believers staffed southern universities and authored history books about the Civil War. The Lost Cause expanded into an entire social movement to control the perception of the past. Throughout the late nineteenth century and the early

⁵²⁵ The Proceedings of the Southern Historical Convention, Which Assembled at the Montgomery White Sulphur Springs, VA, on the 14th of August, 1873; and of the Southern Historical Society, as Reorganised with the Address by Gen. Jubal A. Early, Delivered before the Convention on the First Day of its Session (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1873), 27; Gary W. Gallagher, “Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy,” in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 36.

⁵²⁶ The Proceedings of the Southern Historical Convention, Which Assembled at the Montgomery White Sulphur Springs, VA, on the 14th of August, 1873; and of the Southern Historical Society, as Reorganised with the Address by Gen. Jubal A. Early, Delivered before the Convention on the First Day of its Session, 38, 9.

twentieth, the Lost Cause campaign forged a southern national identity based on the belief that all white southerners could trace their lineage to the Old South, a fallen nation that was undeservedly destroyed in an oppressive war of Northern aggression that was fought on the grounds of state sovereignty, not slavery. Following the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the myth became one of not only white victimization, but of triumph, as the South's campaign of white terrorism and racial suppression secured that white elite rule would continue and that Jim Crow would become a reality.

By the twentieth century, the Lost Cause was dogma and was the ideological cornerstone upon which the white South built its national identity and its New South and Jim Crow white supremacist society. In the North, however, many remained resistant to the South's version of the war, especially still-living veterans. A sectional divide remained—as evidenced by the poor performance of the film *The Birth of a Nation* in northern states—though the ideological divide was certainly closing as white Americans pursued reconciliation and as the war-era grew more distant for a generation that didn't experience it. By 1936, most of the war generation had also passed away and racial tensions persisted during the Great Depression. It was in this climate that Margaret Mitchell published *Gone with the Wind*, a novel that she based on the stories told to her by her former Confederate family members, the same class of people that Early called on to control the memory of the war. Mitchell's work, with significant help from Hollywood and sites of southern historical tourism, reconciled the ideological divisions that lingered between the North and the South in the mid-twentieth century. *Gone with the Wind* was a definitive answer to Early's call.

Mitchell assembled an artifact of great power that ballooned into its own memory phenomenon that grounded the Lost Cause into American national memory as the phenomenon developed throughout the twentieth century. As Reddick proclaimed, *Gone with the Wind* became, to white America, “the true account in fictionalized form of what actually happened” during the Civil War. However, *Gone with the Wind* is not solely a relic of the past or a twentieth century phenomenon. It continues to influence the way that Americans understand the antebellum South, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, distorting the horrific realities of slavery and historical white supremacy that continues to affect the present. *Gone with the Wind*’s Lost Causism, so embedded into the lenticular imagining of the South in popular culture and historical sites, continues to provide white Americans with a national memory of America’s central historical event that justifies their continued evasion of any meaningful confrontation with America’s racial past and its legacies. The phenomenon, as the 2014 reviewer suggests, still has the power to inspire a defense of what many white Americans take to be their “true” history.

Charleston, Charlottesville, Trumpism and Lost Cause National Memory

In 2015, pro-Confederate iconography was quickly called into question following the murder of nine innocent African American parishioners of Charleston, South Carolina’s Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Lost Cause defenders immediately swept into action, defending the battle flag, Confederate monuments, and, as I demonstrated in chapter four, *Gone with the Wind*, despite the perpetrator’s avowed white supremacy that he closely associated with those symbols. The perpetrator’s terrorism was an exercise of his commitment to white supremacy, and not merely an act

of an unstable individual. White supremacy has always been upheld by violence, and the murders in Charleston were no exception.

Another flash point in the movement to remove Confederate iconography occurred in August 2017, during the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Unite the Right rally brought together white supremacists of all labels—including white nationalists, neo-Confederates, neo-Nazis, Klansmen, skinheads, and anti-government, anti-Muslim militias—with the stated goal to protest the removal of the Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville’s Lee Park. On the second day of the rally, violence erupted as white supremacists clashed with counter-protestors, killing three and injuring dozens more.⁵²⁷ The violence occurred amidst not only the movement to remove white supremacist monuments, but also during the first year of Donald Trump’s presidency that resulted from his openly racist and xenophobic campaign. Trump’s campaign won him the majority of white middle- and upper-class voters.⁵²⁸

Following the white terrorism in Charlottesville, President Trump failed to directly criticize the white supremacists involved in the rally’s violence or America’s burgeoning white nationalist movement within which, to be sure, he is a significant actor. Skating by the central issue of American racism, Trump instead blamed “many sides” for

⁵²⁷ Sarah Rankin, “3 Dead, Dozens Injured, Amid Violent White Nationalist Rally in Virginia,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-unite-the-right-charlottesville-20170812-story.html>; Matt Pearce, David S. Cloud, and Robert Armengol, “Three Dead, Dozens Hurt After Virginia White Nationalist Rally is Dispersed; Trump Blames ‘Many Sides,’” *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-charlottesville-white-nationalists-rally-20170812-story.html>.

⁵²⁸ Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam, “Behind Trump’s Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education,” Pew Research Center, November 9, 2016, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/>; “Voter Turnout,” Edison Research for the National Election Pool, cited in “7 Charts Show Who Propelled Trump to Victory” by Skye Gould and Rebecca Harrington, *Business Insider*, November 10, 2016, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.businessinsider.com/exit-polls-who-voted-for-trump-clinton-2016-11>.

the violence, including the anti-racist counter-protestors such as the civil rights organization Black Lives Matter. Trump continued, expressing sympathy against the removal of the Lee statue, that there were “some very fine people on both sides” of the rally.⁵²⁹ Trump’s words were not out of character or a blind political blunder, but rather completely characteristic of a president who has built a large portion of his base on avowed white supremacists, and upon ideological white supremacy more broadly. Unsurprisingly, white nationalist organizations and former Klan leader David Duke praised Trump’s comments.⁵³⁰

The events in Charlottesville along with Trump’s subsequent commentary provided a boost to both America’s white nationalist movement and, conversely, to the movement to remove Confederate statues that resulted from the Charleston Church Massacre. Currently, both movements continue unabated, but the latter has resulted in the removal of monuments to white supremacy across the United States, including the Roger B. Taney monument in Baltimore and numerous Confederate monuments in Austin, Texas; New Orleans; Memphis; Nashville; Durham, North Carolina; Lexington, Kentucky; and locales across Florida. Pro-Confederate monuments have also been removed in non-southern states, including New York and, somewhat ironically, in the old abolitionist hubs of Ohio and Massachusetts.⁵³¹ Such northern Confederate monuments

⁵²⁹ Pearce, Cloud, and Armengol, “Three Dead, Dozens Hurt After Virginia White Nationalist Rally is Dispersed;” Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman, “Trump Gives White Supremacists an Unequivocal Boost,” *New York Times*, August 15, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/us/politics/trump-charlottesville-white-nationalists.html>.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Jess Bidgood, Matthew Bloch, Morrigan McCarthy, Liam Stack, and Wilson Andrews, “Confederate Monuments are Coming Down Across the United States. Here’s a List.,” *New York Times*, August 28, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/16/us/confederate-monuments-removed.html>.

were erected during the twentieth century by pro-southern and segregationist organizations. They are further indicative of the Lost Cause being embedded into white national memory.

Plans to remove, relocate, or to amend Confederate monuments are being considered in other cities across the country, including Richmond, Virginia, the former capital of the Confederacy and home to Monument Avenue, a site punctuated by five imposing monoliths dedicated to Confederate heroes. In late 2017, ten days after Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh ordered the removal of four pro-Confederate monuments, the Orpheum Theater in Memphis also cancelled its annual screening of *Gone with the Wind*, proclaiming that the venue “cannot show a film that is insensitive to a large segment of its local population.”⁵³² It is welcome progress that *Gone with the Wind* has not gone entirely unnoticed during the movement to remove Confederate monuments, and has been recognized by some as problematic. A perceptive article by *Washington Post* film critic Ann Hornaday is indicative of a growing awareness of the film’s “toxic properties” which “could be accompanied,” as she suggests, “by conversations with historians, critics, and activists...re-sit[ing] them away from commercial multiplexes and into libraries, museums, cinematheques.”⁵³³ The suggestion to force *Gone with the Wind* to go the way of *The Birth of a Nation*—as a film largely only screened to teach university students about early-twentieth century cinematic innovations and Jim Crow—is an interesting one, and one worth considering. In the age

⁵³² Ann Hornaday, “‘Gone with the Wind’ and the Stewardship of our Cinematic Monuments,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/gone-with-the-wind-and-the-stewardship-of-our-cinematic-monuments/2017/08/31/77f6752a-8e52-11e7-91d5-ab4e4bb76a3a_story.html?utm_term=.7ba8df40d19c.

⁵³³ Ibid.

of home video and video streaming, however, efforts to “re-site” *Gone with the Wind* will be difficult, particularly since *Gone with the Wind* remains widely popular, if not beloved, and established itself in American culture in significant ways that *Birth* never achieved. Regardless, theaters should follow the Orpheum’s lead, unless screening *Gone with the Wind* is part of a broader effort to critically analyze the film or educate the public.

The efforts across America to remove pro-Confederate iconography should be commended and applauded. Given what this dissertation has argued about the relationship between the Lost Cause and white American nationalism, and due to the power of Lost Cause lenticulars to overpower and silence counter-narratives, such monuments must be removed from public spaces, rather than simply amended with a plaque or an adjacent monument. Perhaps the statues, as Hornaday suggested with screenings of *Gone with the Wind*, could be re-sited into a setting in which they can be assessed correctly as tools of white supremacy. On the landscape, however, statues often, by their very nature, appear vague and resonate by venerating ideas rather than an individual or group of individuals. In this way, statues are different from film, and allude to a narrative of the national past, rather than tell it, as one can experience at a museum or watching *Gone with the Wind*. The meanings of Confederate monuments are entirely contingent on the circumstances during which they were erected, which, in this case, was during the spread of Jim Crow at the turn of the twentieth century and as a form of resistance to school integration and the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. If allowed to remain, pro-Confederate monuments will still resonate with many white Americans as a banal nationalist symbol of white supremacy and the Lost Cause as

defined by *Gone with the Wind* in the twentieth century. In fact, the white nationalists who killed and terrorized in Charleston and Charlottesville are correct about what those symbols mean, just as their forebears who used Confederate symbols to oppose the civil rights movement were correct about them as well. The Unite the Right rally thus does not exist in historical isolation, but instead in continuity with the historical use of pro-Confederate symbols that link them historically to the KKK resurgence at the Stone Mountain monument in 1915, and even further to the Lost Cause social movement of the nineteenth century. Institutionalizing white supremacy has always been the primary goal of the ideological Lost Cause and its symbols, and it remains so today. Accordingly, the statues cannot be allowed to stand, as a new sense of urgency must be acted upon while Trumpism festers and an emboldened white nationalist movement continues to grow in the United States. Efforts to remove the symbols of white supremacy must encompass more than removing statues, and must address national memory at its ideological roots.

The Lost Cause is only one mythology that underpins American white supremacy and its white nationalist movements. Other mythologies often resonate in relation to it, such as, for instance, the blind, uncritical veneration of the slave-holding founders or America's overly mythologized gun culture. Yet, the Lost Cause occupies one of the most important spaces in American national memory. It is an explanation of the Civil War, the revolutionary event that emancipated four million slaves from the brutal system of slavery that buttressed the foundation of not only the Confederacy, but of the early United States. Following emancipation, the republic was radically changed as, momentarily, it pursued during Reconstruction the creation of an interracial democracy that sought greater equality for African Americans. In response, white southerners waged

a campaign of terrorism to regain political control of the South in order to reinstate white supremacy. They were successful, and they crafted the Lost Cause to justify their terrorism and the resulting subordination of African Americans under Jim Crow. Unlike the national memory of the founding fathers, the Lost Cause derives its power from its ability to offer a justification, or to grant permission, to white America to leave the history of post-Civil War white supremacy and racism unaddressed, and to ignore its contemporary legacies. Unlike mythic memories of the American Revolution, the Lost Cause offers white America an explanation to the problems of the present that have an attachment to America's history of racism. To be sure, that is most of our contemporary problems, as the white nationalism of Trumpism is indicative. To put it simply, the Lost Cause is not merely an incorrect historical narrative; it is, instead, an unremitting white nationalist origin myth forged in the national consciousness during the process of post-war reconciliation. Upon it, and the oppression it justifies, white American identity has been built to meet the needs of structural white supremacy and its defense.

Changing the Future by Experiencing the Past: The Whitney

Today, the white supremacist terror attacks in Charleston, South Carolina, and Charlottesville, Virginia, have brought white America to a critical moment of introspection, a moment where its white supremacist symbols—most notably the Confederate battle flag and Confederate soldier monuments—are being questioned and, in some laudable cases, brought down. These questions, however, are not solely about the appropriateness of publicly displayed white supremacist and Lost Cause iconography, like that on display in *Gone with the Wind*. Fundamentally, the questions concern who

white Americans imagine to be American, and whether or not white Americans believe true equality should exist. But coinciding with this introspection is an increase in hate crimes and the growth of white-supremacist hate groups under a Presidential administration that has pursued overt white nationalist policies and called Neo-Nazis rallying at a Robert E. Lee statue “very fine people” after one of them murdered a counter-protestor in Charlottesville.⁵³⁴ That the two moments coincide is no accident, and instead are interlinked. To be sure, they are only the most recent iterations of white resistance to struggles for racial equality that have occurred consistently since Reconstruction. As has always been the driving force of white resistance, the moment is also marked by an overflow of white fear at the thought of a less white and less white-controlled society, fueling white victimization and grievance narratives. These moments, of course, are not about Civil War history, but the political issues and fears of the current juncture. The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are thus an important component to white Americans’ beliefs regarding national belonging, and must be reassessed.

As a result, America must nurture counter-memories to the hegemonic Lost Cause, which operates contemporarily as less a direct, spoken or visualized narrative of propaganda, but instead as a banal national mythology that operates from the lenticulars and assumptions engrained about the national past. George Lipsitz describes “counter-memory” as looking

⁵³⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016 Hate Crime Statistics, Accessed January 17, 2018, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2016-hate-crime-statistics>; Southern Poverty Law Center, Report: The Year in Hate and Extremism, Accessed January 17, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/year-hate-and-extremism>; Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman, “Trump Gives White Supremacists an Unequivocal Boost,” *New York Times*, August 15, 2017, Accessed January 17, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/us/politics/trump-charlottesville-white-nationalists.html>.

“to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives...Counter-memory forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past. Counter-memory embodies aspects of myth and aspects of history, but it retains an enduring suspicion of both categories. Counter-memory focuses on localized experiences with oppression using them to reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience.”⁵³⁵

Lipsitz does not share the skepticism that other theorists fear about the inaccuracies and totalizing narratives that counter-narratives often create. Instead, Lipsitz believes that even totalizing narratives about oppression and subjugation are a viable route to tearing down or altering dominant narratives. In effect, he argues that producing counter-narratives against the dominant narrative is the only way in which we can begin to sort out the truth of each narrative, potentially, he writes, revealing “whose foot has been on whose neck.”⁵³⁶ The power of the Lost Cause lenticulars, and their ubiquity, make that task extremely difficult. Fortunately, emancipationist and unionist counter-memories to the white reconciliationist Lost Cause have existed since the end of the Civil War. Throughout the twentieth century, much historical work has been completed that vindicates many of those counter-memories, at least as they pertain to slavery’s and the Confederacy’s being crimes against humanity. Those totalizing narratives are wholly accurate, and must be nurtured, though the Lost Causism of America’s sites of national memory and popular culture must be undone as well.

⁵³⁵ George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, M.N.: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 213.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

Creating counter-narratives to the American white nationalist founding mythologies can never succeed in upending those narratives on their own, but they are vital to destroying white nationalist ideologies embedded within the white American consciousness. The resistance to white supremacy must take many forms, from direct protest and demonstrations against police brutality in minority and poor communities to the removal of Confederate statues. However, like Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone*, direct challenges to hegemonic nationalist memories are powerful rebukes that undermine the power of mythologies that often go unquestioned, especially in times of direct protests to racist institutions. Contemporarily, the Academy Award—winning film *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and the History Channel's remake of *Roots* (2016) are the most accurate representations of the Old South and American slavery yet committed to film or the small screen. Americans' interest in these products, as well as their interest in the historical reality of slavery, is promising; it must be noted, however, that the resonance of Lost Causist narratives is not tied to acceptance of those narrative as true or authentic, as *Gone with the Wind* illustrates so forcefully.

Films are powerful, and more films that represent the reality of Old South should surely be produced with the hope that at some point the prosthetic Lost Cause memory of *Gone with the Wind* will be overturned in the white consciousness. However, plantation tourism remains a key arena where this contestation should take place. According to historical geographers of plantation museums—who have caught on to the resonance of Lost Cause experience much more quickly than historians—have found that out of approximately 375 plantation museums that operate across eighteen U.S. states, only 13% actively make an effort to present a historical narrative that incorporates a decent

representation of slavery or are actively trying to improve slave exhibits. Most disturbingly, however, 84% of those plantation museums trivialize, minimize, or erase the history of slavery in exhibits and tours while another 4% engage in a form of narrative segregation, only speaking of slaves and slavery separate from the “Big House” and its exhibits dedicated to Old South, aristocratic, white, *Gone with the Wind*-style wealth, all while weaving white victimization narratives about that wealth being lost during the Civil War. Many plantation museums only include tours dedicated to slavery and slave life separately from the main tour, reinforcing the Lost Cause myth that slave was only a footnote to the antebellum and Civil War period.⁵³⁷ *Gone with the Wind*, as this dissertation argues, set off a boon to the plantation tourism industry and defined what visitors hoped to experience, and thus what was provided by the museum.

Louisiana’s Whitney Plantation Museum opened in 2014 along the river road in St. John the Baptist Parish as “a site of memory, with the focus on the lives of the slaves and their legacies.”⁵³⁸ The museum is the first full museum dedicated to telling the story American slavery and provides a model for contesting Lost Causism (it speaks volumes about American society that a museum dedicated to slavery only opened in 2014). The Whitney’s mission allows it to confront the Lost Cause romantic lenticular logic of nostalgic white wealth and the tragedy of its loss, which is noticeable from the moment one walks into its bookstore. Rather than *Gone with the Wind* or folksy books about

⁵³⁷ E. Arnold Modlin, Jr., “Tales Told On Tour: Mythic Representations of Slavery by Docents at North Carolina Plantation Museums,” *Southeastern Geographer* 48 (2008): 266-267; Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2002).

⁵³⁸ Marketing for the Whitney plantation museum was found at the websites of Gray Line New Orleans, <http://www.graylineneworleans.com/all/tours/whitney-plantation-tour>; Tours by Isabelle, <http://www.toursbyisabelle.com/whitney-plantation--st-joseph.html>; Quote from New Orleans Plantation Country, <http://neworleansplantationcountry.com/plantations/whitney-plantation>.

plantation cookbooks and artifacts, its shelves are stocked with the works of Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. Dubois, James Baldwin, and recent historical scholarship such as Edward Baptist's *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. Docents also rarely mention the planter family when on tour and focus their stories on the enslaved, weaving a narrative from both the recent historiography of slavery and real slave narratives. When the planter family is mentioned, it is always in reference to their occupation as slavers—as perpetrators of systemic violence—and their wealth and political influence as products of the institution.

The Whitney is a visceral experience that makes use of its spatial context upon which great horrors and crimes against humanity took place. Historical geographers call spaces like the Whitney “wounded places,” or real places where systemic violence, displacement, and the resulting trauma was inflicted upon groups of people, affecting the structure and resonance of how that place is experienced, providing visitors with spaces to confront and take responsibility for the collective violence and failures of, in this case, white supremacist America and its national past.⁵³⁹ As a result, the Whitney's grounds include multiple memorials to the enslaved, including the humbling “Field of Angels” dedicated to the 2,200 Louisiana slave children that died before turning three years of age and two large monuments that include the names of all the known slaves of the plantation and in Louisiana. Docents allow visitors time, in quiet, to reflect on the memorials on the very soil where they toiled, were brutalized, and died. In this way, the Whitney functions

⁵³⁹ Karen E. Till, “Wounded Cities: Memory-word and a Place-based Ethics of Care,” *Political Geography* 31 (2012): 3-14; Joshua F.J. Inwood and Derek Alderman, “Taking Down the Flag is just a Start: Toward the Memory-work of Racial Reconciliation in White Supremacist America,” *Southeastern Geographer* 56 (2016): 9-15.

similar to the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen Holocaust Museums that allow visitors to confront national atrocities.

As a museum, the Whitney does many things well. It has tremendous facilities, including the “Big House” and recreations of slave quarters, as well as a historical African American church that is used to tell the story of the importance of the black church to the black freedom struggle. The museum similarly has the “children of Whitney sculptures” placed across the grounds in order to re-center black bodies on the plantation grounds while the planter family is unrepresented. Thus, the Whitney’s real power comes not simply from telling truthful stories about the enslaved, but from the entire museum’s ability to undercut the Lost Cause lenticular by centering the enslaved and the institution in every inch of the museum and in every word of its tours. In other words, if the planter family, their wealth and power, or their loss of property during the Civil War were told to patrons without discussing the centrality and horror of slavery, or the triumph of emancipation, the Lost Cause lenticular of white victimization and nostalgia would be invoked. The insidiousness of that lenticular, and its Lost Causism that the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon put into the national consciousness, is derived from its banality as a white nationalist founding mythology that is easily invoked and overpowers more honest narratives. The Whitney—as should be a model for films, novels, and museums moving forward—thus does not allow it to be invoked, and replaces it with more dynamic histories of slavery and powerful experiences, moments of reflections, and reckonings upon the soil of the wounded place where the enslaved toiled.

For white visitors who approach the Whitney openly and honestly, the museum is a reckoning, and, according to the staff, is popular. The Whitney, as a young museum,

has much room to grow and improve, and its visitor numbers pale in comparison to established, *Gone with the Wind*-inspired plantation museums like the nearby Oak Alley that attracts more than 100,000 visitors a year. However, in its first full year of operation, the Whitney attracted just shy of 34,000 visitors, exceeding its target by 14,000. As of October 2016, during its second full year of operation, the Whitney had already surpassed that mark and was projected to have 55,000 patrons visit the museum by year's end.⁵⁴⁰ These numbers are promising for a museum that displays the realities of American slavery up front, albeit tourism companies that bundle packages to multiple plantations in one day are its lifeblood. But the Whitney does estimate that sixty to seventy percent of its visitors are white.

The experience of the Whitney Plantation museum is a both a powerful counter-memory and an accurate corrective to the white nationalist, Lost Cause lenticulars at American historical sites so defined by the *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon. The Whitney could never reverse the deep founding mythologies of the Lost Cause on its own, and can only do so in conjunction with popular movements against white supremacy and with removal of pro-Confederate iconography. The Whitney is just one model for countering the lenticular logics of the Lost Cause, just as *Gone with the Wind* is only one piece of the story for the Lost Cause itself—albeit a very significant one. But, in the realm of experiential cultural memory, the Whitney provides a blue print for undermining for one arm of the fight against white nationalism.

The Plantation

⁵⁴⁰ Whitney Plantation Visitation Statistics, 2014-2016.

History is often described as the documentation and analysis of change over time. The history of white racism in America, however, is as much continuity over time as it is change. In other words, white America has consistently failed to confront its national past, and its reckoning with its crimes has been avoided. Racial equality, as a result, has never been made real, despite the promises made, and despite the stories white Americans tell themselves about their nation. Many white Americans continue to actively resist those promises, and lean on comfortable mythologies—chief among them the Lost Cause—to justify ongoing injustices against African Americans, immigrants, Muslims, or anyone who does not benefit from America’s white supremacist order.

Three months before the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, New Orleans mayor Mitch Landrieu delivered an impassioned speech about why the city made the controversial decision to remove several of the city’s Confederate monuments. The decision had provoked armed white supremacists to protest the removal. Landrieu’s words speak clearly to the heart of Lost Causism:

“The historical record is clear: the Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, and P.G.T. Beauregard statues were not erected just to honor these men, but as part of the movement which became known as The Cult of the Lost Cause. This ‘cult’ had one goal—through monuments and through other means—to rewrite history to hide the truth, which is that the Confederacy was on the wrong side of humanity...

These statues are not just stone and metal. They are not just innocent remembrances of a benign history. These monuments purposefully celebrate a fictional, sanitized Confederacy; ignoring the death, ignoring

the enslavement, and the terror that it actually stood for...[T]hey were erected purposefully to send a strong a message to all who walked in their shadows about who was still in charge in this city.”

One of the more astute comments in Landrieu’s speech was delivered just over halfway through, when he proclaimed, “Centuries-old wounds are still raw because they never healed right in the first place.”⁵⁴¹ Landrieu understood that Confederate monuments are symbols that represent and foster the continuity of white America’s commitment to white supremacy.

Landrieu’s speech was a powerful moment that alluded to the hope of a national healing, once the monuments, and substance of their meaning, were removed from the nation. After leaving no room for doubt about the centrality of maintaining white supremacy to the Confederate cause, and to the causes that erected those monuments during the Jim Crow period, Landrieu proclaimed, “we now have a chance to create not only new symbols, but to do it together, as one people.”⁵⁴² Landrieu, however, did not mention who or what was to blame for the failure of white America to live up to the nation’s stated promises of equality. He failed to mention that it is specifically contemporary white America’s commitment to white supremacy that prevents the nation from healing, and from removing its sites of national memory that structure the nation’s meaning. It is, in other words, white America that must change.

2012’s *Django Unchained* provides an illustration of the problem of race for white America. To be sure, *Django* is a grindhouse western film that is problematic in

⁵⁴¹ “Mitch Landrieu’s Speech on the Removal of Confederate Monuments in New Orleans,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/opinion/mitch-landrieus-speech-transcript.html>.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

many ways, most notably due to its director's use of racist stereotypes and gratuitous violence against the black body to achieve shock value. The film is an homage to the slave-revenge fantasies of twentieth-century Blaxploitation films. *Django's* representation of slavery, however, is a rebuke to the Lost Cause, no matter how historically inaccurate its depiction of the institution. Slavery in the film is rendered as wholly negative and utterly horrific—within its proximity nothing exists but corruption and pain. The film's final act is befitting a Greek tragedy.

As *Django* concludes, the titular character, a fugitive slave who escapes with the help of a white German bounty hunter named Dr. King Shultz, completes his journey to reunite with and rescue his wife, Broomhilda von Shaft, from bondage. Django and Shultz locate Broomhilda at Candyland, the plantation of a cruel yet charming master named Calvin J. Candie. Shultz, in a moment of impulsive anger caused by Candie's cruelty, kills Candy with a shot to the chest, leading to his own death at the hands of Candie's henchmen. Systematically, Django then kills the rest of the plantation in a dramatic and bloody shootout, setting the stage for a final scenario during which he kills the overseer who abused him most viciously. During this climax, Django spares no one, except for his wife and two female house slaves whom he directs "to get away from all these white folks." Django thus killed all of those most central to the functioning of the plantation and the perpetuation of its cruelty: the overseers, the mistress, the slave patrollers, and the conniving house slave complicit in decades of Candyland's brutality—the common folk. Before exiting main hall to his Broomhilda waiting on horseback, Django lights a bundle of dynamite and explodes the Big House. Django, through his perilous journey to rescue his wife, achieves catharsis, as does the audience. Candyland is

destroyed and Django can live free of fear and the horrors of the plantation with his wife. Through extreme violence, freedom was won—Django was unchained.⁵⁴³

In reality, it is not the responsibility of African Americans to explode systemic white supremacy and bring about an end to racism, ushering in a national catharsis similar to that experienced by Django. Bringing about that catharsis can only be achieved when white America turns away from its love affair with white supremacy and breaks its continuity. To do so requires, at its root, breaking, or restructuring, white America's ideological nationalism as it exists.

Fittingly, the final shot of *Django Unchained* is a commentary on *Gone with the Wind*. Behind the jubilant Django and Broomhilda, the camera pans out beyond the gates of Candyland as the big house burns in the distance. The shot is a spectacular vista. It evokes both the images of Tara and the burning of Atlanta in Selznick's film—the same images that appear on *Gone with the Wind* movie posters and collectors' edition box sets. At the end of *Django*, however, hope no longer exists for the white planter family. They can no longer resist their demise, as they are not given the opportunity to recover from their loss and rebuild the plantation. There is no Scarlett O'Hara and a hope for a white supremacist future at Candyland. The slavers, instead, are dead, no longer to exist; the plantation and its barbaric system is destroyed. Conversely, Django and Broomhilda are free, their unchained futures ahead of them. Within that final shot, the central problem of modern America is revealed: America has never destroyed the plantation, because white America, like Scarlett, has relentlessly fought to maintain it.

⁵⁴³ Quentin Tarantino, dir., *Django Unchained* (Culver City, C.A.: Columbia Pictures, 2012), DVD.

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