

LECTURE 7:
D.W. GRIFFITH AND THE CINEMA OF NARRATIVE INTEGRATION, PART 2
KEY NAMES/TERMS

D.W. Griffith	Story versus narrative discourse
<i>The Clansman</i>	Last minute rescue
Thomas Dixon	Voice
Pro-filmic	Mood
Enframed image	Tense: order, frequency, duration
Editing	

AN NAACP OFFICIAL CALLS FOR CENSORSHIP OF *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*
April 17, 1915.

Mr. George Packard
1522 First National Bank Bldg.,
Chicago, Ill.

My dear Mr. Packard:

I am utterly disgusted with the situation in regard to "The Birth of a Nation". As you will read in the next number of the Crisis, we have fought it at every possible point. In spite of the promise of the Mayor to cut out the two objectionable scenes in the second part, which show a white girl committing suicide to escape from a Negro pursuer, and a mulatto politician trying to force marriage upon the daughter of his white benefactor, these two scenes still form the motif of the really unimportant incidents, of which I enclose a list. I have seen the thing four times and am positive that nothing more will be done about it. Jane Addams saw it when it was in its worst form in New York. I know of no one else from Chicago who saw it. I enclose Miss Addams' opinion. When we took the thing before the Police Magistrate he told us that he could do nothing about it unless it lead to a breach of the peace. Some kind of demonstration began in the Liberty Theatre Wednesday night but the colored people took absolutely no part in it, and the only man arrested was a white man. This, of course, is exactly what Littleton, counsel for the producer, Griffith, held in the Magistrates' Court when we have our hearing and claimed that it might lead to a breach of the peace. Frankly, I do not think you can do one single thing. It has been to me a most liberal education and I purposely am through. The harm it is doing the colored people cannot be estimated. I hear echoes of it wherever I go and have no doubt that this was in the mind of the people who are producing it. Their profits here are something like \$14,000 a day and their expenses about \$400. I have ceased to worry about it, and if I seem disinterested, kindly remember that we have put six weeks of constant effort of this thing and have gotten nowhere.

Sincerely yours,
Mary Childs Nerney, Secretary.
NAACP Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

**Jane Addams (board member of the NAACP) Condemns Race Prejudice Film
Calls It "Pernicious Caricature of Negro Race."**

Producer seems to have gathered most vicious and grotesque individuals to show them as representatives of entire race, says head of Hull House after seeing "The Birth of a Nation" moving picture drama.

"How far did you observe that this attitude of mind influenced the spectators?"

"It is hard to tell, of course. Certainly I felt that they were made to feel a prejudice against negroes; some showed approval in applause when the hero refuses to shake hands with the mulatto politician, and they were roused to the point of clapping enthusiastically, before the end of the pictures, whenever the Ku Klux Klan appeared. That was the noticeable thing about the play—the success of the glorification of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, contrasted with the base and elemental character of the negroes misrepresented in the ludicrously perverted scenes of plantation life. The production is the most subtle form of untruth—a half-truth."

Source: *New York Evening Post*, March 13, 1915.

EUGENE V. DEBS FLAYS BIG MOVIE

The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966); Jan 15, 1916;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Chicago Defender (1910 - 1975)
pg. 1

EUGENE V. DEBS FLAYS BIG MOVIE

Speaks Out as to Conditions Existing and Raps "Birth of Nation" Harsh. Claims It Insult to Black Race. Socialist Exponent Denounces Dixon. Whites to Blame.

Terre Haute Ind., Jan. 14.—Eugene Debs, speaking of the "Birth of the Nation," says:

The merits of this spectacular drama excite bitter comment whenever it is presented. There is no question that it is a wonderful production, that many of its scenes are tense and thrilling, and that there is much in the play to approve and commend, but if the author's studied purpose was to insult the black race with its past and intensify the bitter prejudices which grew out of the war, he could not have better succeeded, and it would be passing strange if the colored people did not protest against certain shocking features of the drama as doing them and their race grossest injustice.

If it be absolutely essential to the play to present those harrowing rape-scenes, then why not round them out in their historic completeness and show the dis-solute son of the plantation owner ravishing the black daughter before her parents' eyes?

For every white woman supposed to be raped in the south by a black man, a thousand black women have been seduced and outraged by white gentlemen (?) but no hint of this is given in the series of pictures composing "The Birth of a Nation." It is only the black brute that is guilty according to this and all other stories written about the Negro by Thomas Dixon, the author, who calls himself a minister of Christ

A WOMAN'S PROTEST.

ANNETTE WALLACH ERDMANN
New York Times (1857-1922); Mar 21, 1915;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2007)
pg. C2

A WOMAN'S PROTEST.

History Distorted for Purposes of a Moving Picture Sensation.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

I wish to voice my protest against the second part of the moving-picture film entitled "The Birth of a Nation" presented at the Liberty Theatre. The portrayal, unjust as it is to the negro, showing him as a cruel, inhuman, almost demented being, cannot help but create prejudice against a race that has a difficult road to travel at best and needs all possible sympathy and understanding from his white neighbor.

Furthermore, the film presents a biased point of view that overemphasizes the mistakes of reconstruction days (in regard to carpet-baggers and their influence on negroes, &c.) on the one hand and glorifies the Ku-klux Klan on the other, (the latter is portrayed as constantly rescuing defenseless maidens from the outrageous hands of the colored man.) Thus it rouses the feelings of resentment and hatred that almost shattered our country a half century ago.

At the present date, when the nations across the sea are at each other's throats, when the worst passions of men are unleashed, this film is particularly untimely. It is particularly dangerous to open up old wounds and stir up prejudices of long ago.

I believe it is possible to have moving pictures dramatic and interesting without resorting to portrayals of this sort that are unjust and only half true to history.

ANNETTE WALLACH ERDMANN.

New York, March 20, 1915.