

Amy Kaplan

The Birth of an Empire

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THE SPANISH-CUBAN-AMERICAN war of 1898 was one of the first wars in history to be filmed. Yet despite its participation in the birth of American cinema, the war disappeared as a subject from the later archives of filmmaking. No major films chronicle the three-month war in Cuba or the subsequent three-year war in the Philippines, although films have been made about virtually every other war in American history. My paper is about that duality, about the formative presence and telling absence of this pivotal war in the history of American film.

I argue that the so-called Spanish-American War, with its evocations of an American empire, surfaces at key moments of innovation in the development of American cinema: from the earliest organization of the industry in the 1890s to the emergence of narrative in story films in the first decade of the twentieth century to D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and Oscar Micheaux's response, *Within Our Gates* (1919–20). (A longer version of this paper extends to Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* [1941], based on the career of William Randolph Hearst, whose newspaper empire was built on his proactive endorsement of the war.) Allusions to the Spanish-American War, I will show, appear both at moments of cinematic innovation and at threshold periods of international crisis, when the question of American involvement in European wars was under intense debate and the global role of the US was hanging in the balance (*The Birth of a Nation* in the beginning of World War I and *Citizen Kane* in World War II). If "race movies," as Michael Rogin contends, "provide the scaffolding for American film history,"¹ I argue that imperial films provide the submerged foundation on international terrain for a history that charts not only the internal bonds of national unity but also the changing borders between the domestic and the foreign.

I

The Spanish-American War has long been linked to the rise of the mass media in the United States, particularly to the yellow journalism of Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. Less well known is the connection of the war to the development of early American film. Cameramen for the Edison Company and Biograph joined Hearst's journalists on the yacht he dispatched to the Caribbean. Throughout 1898 and 1899, in urban theaters and traveling exhibitions, crowds flocked to view the novelty of moving pictures shot on-site in Florida and Cuba. These brief films, less than a minute each, conveyed views of battleships at sea, the wreckage of the *Maine* and the burial of its victims, troops marching and disembarking, the Rough Riders on horseback, soldiers resting in camps, generals in conference, and triumphant victory parades for Admiral Dewey and returning troops.

In addition, the films projected reenactments of battles in Cuba and the Philippines, which were staged in New Jersey, and naval conflicts shot in bathtubs with toy ships and cigarette smoke. The films provided public occasions not only for passive viewing of what Charles Musser has called “visual newspapers”² but also for active public expressions of nationalist sentiment, as audiences wildly cheered Dewey’s victory, hissed the Spanish crown, sang patriotic songs, and saluted the oft-repeated raising of the American flag over Morro Castle in Havana. At the height of the war, these films were so popular that they were repeated every hour around the clock in urban theaters, where the line between the representation of war on the screen and the experience of spectatorship seems to have been fluid. The projection machines, such as Edison’s Kinescope, were renamed and advertised as Warograph or Warscope. Soldiers disembarking in New York harbor would go to the Eden Musee to see themselves on screen and to be greeted by spectators. The same theater was remodeled as the interior of an arsenal battleship for the celebration of Dewey’s return in September.³ War films seemed to fulfill J. A. Hobson’s observation that “jingoism is the lust of the spectator,” where the desire to see the spectacle of war for its own sake overtakes any interest in political context or in conflict between opposing sides.⁴

These early films have been viewed as examples either of protonewsreels or of Thomas Gunning’s notion of a “cinema of attractions,” dedicated to the exhibitionary power of film to display disparate spectacles, with no attempt to integrate them into a coherent narrative.⁵ I sense that the appeal of these war films lay less in their exhibition of exotic foreign lands and people, who were rarely visible, or in the battle scenes than in the spectacle of American mobility itself—in the movement of men, horses, vehicles, and ships abroad and in their return home. The films celebrate the capacity of military power and the camera to encompass the globe. As soldiers marched by a stationary camera, or the camera on board a ship circled other ships moving out to sea, the process of movement was more predominant than the point of departure or arrival; in contrast, the few views of Cubans, Spaniards, and Filipinos were static—the people were sitting, waiting in line for rations, or standing before a firing squad, about

to be shot. In the staging of battle scenes, the American soldiers often faced the camera head-on, or the camera stood behind the soldiers shooting directly into enemy fire. Thus the visual relation on the screen was not between US troops and their allies or enemies but between US soldiers and their audience at home. These films made the world accessible to American viewers by highlighting accessibility itself; as the mobility of the camera and of the military was celebrated, specific foreign sites were brought into visibility but paradoxically made secondary, becoming backdrops for American action. Foreign contexts became more accessible to vision and thus real, yet they were disembodied, interchangeable, and derealized at the same time.

Even before the declaration of war, films advertised the power of the media to mobilize men and images. *War Correspondents*, for example, showed newspaper correspondents in Key West racing to the telegraph office.⁶ The film dramatized the speed with which journalists could transport the news but also implied that the newer medium of film could compete with and supersede the newspaper. To advertise another film, a panoramic view of Havana Harbor, the *War Extra* from the Edison Company’s catalog noted that “in view of probable bombardment, when the old-fashioned masonry will melt away like butter under the fire of 13-inch guns, the view is of historic value.”⁷ “Historic” because the filming anticipates and almost precipitates the destruction that the actual bombardment would wreak. Shooting film here precedes shooting guns and thereby creates “historic value.”

While these examples suggest how films may have boosted the war effort, the war also contributed to the effort to organize film as a business. The popularity of war films financially revived a fledgling industry, which was flagging in subject matter and attendance as its initial novelty was fading. An early reporter on film later exaggerated, “An elaborate argument could be based on the premise that the only important contribution of the Spanish-American War to the history of the United States lay in the impetus it gave to the work of Smith and Blackton in placing the foundation blocks for the motion picture industry.”⁸ As in historical accounts of the role of yellow journalism in the Spanish-American War, acknowledging the importance of

the media curiously denigrates the political significance of the war itself.

More interesting to me is Charles Musser's intriguing argument that the exhibition of war films played a pivotal role in the development of narrative in film. Before the war, moving pictures were displayed in a variety-show format of disparate subjects interspersed with lectures, songs, and other entertainment, with no attempt at thematic unity or narrative continuity. In the display of the Spanish-American War films, exhibitors for the first time organized films around a unifying theme and around a chronological narrative of military progress (from, for example, the staged destruction of the *Maine* to the on-site funeral for its victims to troops embarking on ships to camps in Cuba to homecoming parades). This thematic and chronological coherence, argues Musser, contributed to the development of the story film, which would become the dominant mode of twentieth-century cinema.⁹

I am interested in this notion that the crucial capacity of film to tell stories arose not simply from technological or aesthetic innovation but also from an imperative to project national narratives of imperial conquest and geographic mobility. But I am not content with the film historians' assumption that patriotic responses to the war naturally provided an affective source of narrative coherence. Films of the war did not draw on a prior clear narrative teleology but instead referred to fields of contention, subject to conflicting interpretations, as did the political results of the wars themselves in Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Jingoism does not express a simple, preexisting unity, just as images are not immediately legible; rather, both forge moments of public unity by mobilizing multiple and often conflicting fantasies and anxieties. Narrative construction both of the war's meaning and of the new experience of viewing films had to be exerted through an abundance of interpretive materials that accompanied the films, such as catalogs, lectures, and newspaper reviews, which schooled an audience in how to see imperial warfare in foreign arenas newly accessible on the screen.

How then do spectacles of foreign wars and imperial mobility on film become stories with recognizable plots? How at this early moment of cinematic history did film narrativize war, and how did

war offer the occasion for narrativizing film? I suggest that this occurs not simply through military and political narratives of victory, defeat, and negotiation (themselves ambiguous stories, with the defeat of Spain, for example, followed by three years of war in the Philippines) but also by a framing of war through domestic narratives that might have made American viewers feel at home abroad. Spectacles of foreign warfare become stories only in relation to the domestic sphere or to the creation of a home front. By *domestic* I refer to the double meaning of the term as the space of the household and of the nation, which is labeled "domestic" only in implicit contrast with the notion of the foreign. Thus I suggest that these early films of men marching and fighting abroad are not only about wars overseas but also about redrawing the boundaries between home and abroad, between the domestic and the foreign, that are both reinforced and blurred by imperial expansion, and this blurring can be seen in the debates about the status of the territories and inhabitants of newly conquered lands. (A contemporary Supreme Court decision, *Downes v. Bidwell* [1901], labeled Puerto Ricans "foreign in a domestic sense.") Just as film brought the world into the domestic space of the theater, representations of American mobility abroad were intimately involved in reconfiguring the nation as home.

I'd like to explore these observations by analyzing an early story film set during the war in the Philippines to ask how domesticity works to generate a narrative of imperial conquest. *The American Soldier in Love and War* was made by Billy Bitzer in the Biograph studio in 1903 (the same year as Edwin Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Great Train Robbery*).¹⁰ According to the *Biograph Bulletin*, the film is set in the Philippines, at a time when American colonial rule was being established at the end of a brutal three-year war of conquest. While the title refers to two separate spheres of the domestic and the foreign, the film shows that not only the masculine sphere of war but also the feminine sphere of love and domesticity have to be made mobile to tell the story of the American empire. The film does not simply send the soldier away from his love at home to fight a foreign war abroad but also mobilizes that love through domestic discipline to project a colonial regime overseas.

Biograph marketed this three-scene film, along with two other war films in its catalog, with a clear concern about creating a story out of disparate footage:

These three scenes are to be used in connection with war views, to make a *complete story* in one film for projection. The first scene shows the young American officer parting with his sweetheart and starting for the Philippines. The second shows the regiment leaving its post to embark on a transport—then comes a fight in the brush, then the wounding of the young officer; his capture and rescue by a Filipino girl, and finally his meeting the sweetheart and her father in the Filipino hut, where he has been nursed back to life.¹¹

Instead of merely describing the film, the *Bulletin* instructs the exhibitor how to present the disparate films as a continuous and coherent story. This narrative weaves together five films in four heterogeneous spatial registers by moving from a three-dimensional realistic bourgeois interior to footage of real soldiers to a reenacted battle scene (both filmed outdoors) to two patently unreal two-dimensional exotic backdrops. These juxtapositions implicitly contrast the home as real and the foreign as artificial and fantastic, and these spaces are bridged by the presence of the American soldier and by the experience of the viewer.¹² The *Bulletin* relates a narrative perhaps not immediately recognizable in the films themselves but one that would be familiar both to imperial culture and to early film—the story of a rescue. It enacts the dominant popular narrative of the war as a rescue mission by a virile American man, who saves Cubans from decadent Spaniards and delivers Filipinos from their own barbarism. Yet this film, I argue, also suggests a counternarrative that turns imperial adventure into the rescue of American masculinity.

Scene 1 opens with a woman seated in a three-dimensional set of a middle-class drawing room. A soldier enters and embraces the woman in a repeated tearful farewell. The realistic bourgeois interior represents the domestic sphere of female sentiment that correlates with the subjectivity of the crying woman, who is comforted by the soldier. Although war enters the home as a disruption of domestic relations, the domestic sphere also appears as the site from which the war is launched. In a film made by

Edison in 1899, *Love and War*, the family in a similar interior is reading the newspaper and following the course of the war.¹³ The home thus appears analogous to the theater as the site for watching the spectacle of foreign military adventures.

According to the *Bulletin*, the next scene exhibited would be an “actuality”—that is, real footage of men embarking for war. Real, yes, but recycled from a shot of men embarking for Cuba from Governors Island, four years earlier, making the sites of empire interchangeable. The scene following that one would be an unspecified reenacted practice battle.¹⁴

Scene 2 is set in the proscenium of a stage against a painted two-dimensional “jungle” scene. The American soldier enters, falls to the ground, and is immediately assaulted by a generic native in black-face and black leotard. Just as he is about to beat the soldier to death, a native woman appears; she grabs the club and pleads on her knees for the soldier’s life (fig. 1).

This scene is interesting for its portrayal of race and masculinity. As Theodore Roosevelt argued in the “The Strenuous Life,” advocates of empire saw an American-controlled Philippines as a potential crucible in which an enervated white masculinity could restore itself to a primal vigor by subduing primitive men.¹⁵ Yet in this scene the American soldier falls immediately, with no prior struggle, and only afterward is he threatened by this caricature of a primitive man with a club. Although physically stronger than the American, the attacker demonstrates his cowardliness by threatening a fallen man. The native woman then proves herself more civilized than her male counterpart by rescuing the American, in a gesture evoking the rescue of Captain John Smith by Pocahontas (who was a popular figure in the 1890s). The native woman’s appearance splits the colonized subject, turning acceptance of colonial rule into a nurturing woman and resistance into a cowardly, brutish, aggressive man.

Scene 3 takes place against a painted backdrop of a tropical island. The soldier, with a bandage around his head, is seated by the exterior of a hut, while the woman who saved him fans him and a younger woman offers him a bowl of food. The white woman of scene 1 arrives with an older man with a pith helmet and white beard. She embraces the soldier and

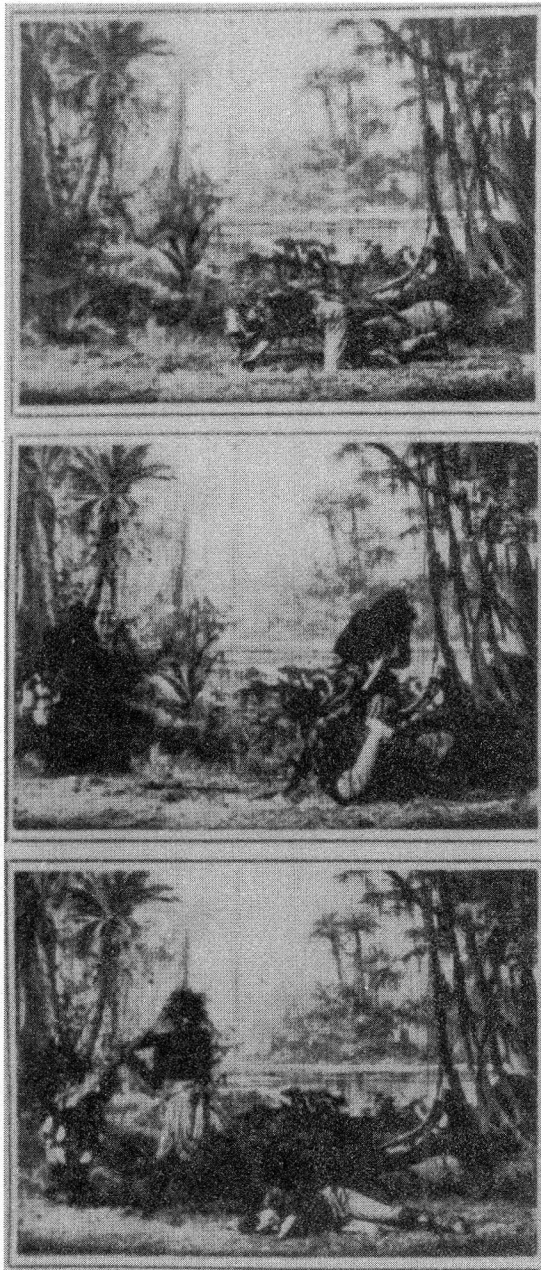


Fig. 1. *The American Soldier in Love and War*, 1903, scene 2. Museum of Modern Art / Film Stills Archive.

then gives her necklace to the native woman, while the old man shakes hands all around (fig. 2).

We return here from war to love, to a domestic frame, the exterior of a primitive hut, which contrasts with the opening bourgeois interior. The soldier does not return home from the war; instead, the white woman takes her domestic sphere abroad to rescue the white man from the proliferation of native women, who, in a haremlike setting, nurture and feed him. The second woman replaces the native man, who disappears in this image of the colonized as the feminized desire to nurture (in the mammy figure) and to serve (in the orientalized and eroticized younger woman). Like the figure of Pocahontas, these female figures represent the desire to serve as the desire for subjugation. An 1899 commission in the Philippines similarly eroticized this desire: "The very thing they yearn for is what of all others our Government desires to give them."¹⁶ This domestic frame, with a wounded soldier at its center, seems to efface any trace of conflict or conquest; yet it also represents a challenge to American masculinity, since the soldier never stands erect in these foreign settings but remains either prone or seated. Recall that the catalog says the soldier is "captured and rescued by the Filipino girl." The implicit danger may be that the American soldier will "go native" by taking a local concubine, a situation that was both a reality and a fear in colonial administrations. The symbolic threat then is implicitly miscegenation—as the logic of the expansion of American borders, of sending men abroad to far-flung frontiers—which is also the ultimate challenge to the racial coherence of national unity.

Hence the white sweetheart to the rescue. The family romance represents the restoration of order that is at once domestic and imperial, when the white couple are reunited on foreign terrain. As the soldier remains immobilized, the white woman gives beads to the native woman as a sign of gratitude but also bondage.¹⁷ Then what is the old man doing there? The catalog says he is the white woman's father, accompanying her as a chaperone. He can also be recognized from political cartoons as Uncle Sam. The white woman rescues her man under the aegis of Uncle Sam, who is then left with the native women. In the coupling at the end, an ambiguous familial figure, the "uncle," replaces the native man amid an

excess of native women. The film thus evokes, settles, but then reopens the specter of imperial expansion as miscegenation, as the incorporation of racial foreigners within the domestic nation.

Thus *The American Soldier in Love and War* narrativizes a foreign war in part by negotiating gender and racial anxieties at home. At a time when Roosevelt was advocating imperial conquest as the expansion of separate gendered spheres to global dimensions and was recommending that women return home while men take up the white man's burden abroad, this film shows how those spheres become intertwined. Imperial conquest appears as the restoration of white American domesticity on foreign terrain. The film is marketed by Biograph along with films about adultery, divorce, and women who kill their adulterous husbands. This film might be viewed as addressing the threat of the white out-of-control New Woman by replacing her with willing submissive native women and by leashing her new mobility to an imperial order.

In the portrayal of Filipino characters as generically black we can also see how early imperial films mobilized marks of racial difference in an international arena. Although an audience would not have recognized these figures ethnographically as Filipino, they would have been identifiable from popular contemporary political cartoons, which conflated Filipinos, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Hawaiians as stereotypically "Negro." At the same time that several films were shot of real African American troops in Cuba and Florida who achieved public notice for their heroism, blackness was transferable to a wide variety of colonized groups. In a trade journal's anecdote about filming the famous battle of San Juan Hill, for example, note that Spaniards are played by African Americans:

A photographer for a moving picture machine had hard luck at Orange NJ, recently in his attempt to depict an engagement on San Juan Hill. He engaged eighteen negroes to represent Spaniards [. . .] and costumed them appropriately. He paid the negroes 75 cents each in advance, gave them some beer, in order that they might be in fighting trim, and then adjusted his photographic apparatus. When ready the Vitascope man found that the "Spaniards" had disappeared, taking with them 200 rounds of blank cartridges. The police found a number



Fig. 2. *The American Soldier in Love and War*, 1903, scene 3. Museum of Modern Art / Film Stills Archive.

of the pseudo Spaniards later engaged in a game of craps, but as they fled no arrests were made.¹⁸

Here the threat of armed black men—some of whom actually fought on San Juan Hill—is evoked and ridiculed. The black actors' comic mutiny is associated with Spanish cowardice and decadence: both African Americans and Spaniards refuse to act like "real men." But ultimately the photographer becomes the butt of the joke, when the actors escape and he loses his vision behind the very apparatus meant to control the representation.

II

The first major war film in the history of American cinema, D. W. Griffith's landmark epic, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), is of course not about the Spanish-American War but about the American Civil War. In a movie about the Civil War and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1860s, the war of 1898 obviously cannot appear directly. But this absence, I argue, is a symptomatic one, as the film is informed by the Spanish-American War from at least two sources: the prior history of war on film and the Thomas Dixon novels on which Griffith based his film, *The Clansman* (1905) and *The Leopard's Spots* (1902).

Scholars have shown how Griffith's famous shots of the Civil War battlefields reproduce Matthew Brady's photographs. I would suggest that they are also shaped by the mode of representing warfare in films. Billy Bitzer, Griffith's cameraman, traveled on Hearst's yacht to film troops in Cuba. Bitzer also made *The American Soldier in Love and War*. In *The Birth of a Nation*, views of the climactic ride of the Klan echo on a grander scale films made of the Rough Riders on their way to rescue Cuba (themselves echoing the many early shots of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show). In addition, the trench warfare in *The Birth of a Nation* is staged quite similarly to the reenactments of battles in the Philippines (as well as those of another colonial war extensively filmed, the Boer War). Among the most striking visual threats in *The Birth of a Nation*, against which the Klan must do battle, are the scenes of black soldiers in Federal uniforms exerting their authority as an occupying force. More recently than the Civil

War, the Spanish-American War had brought this threat to the foreground in films, photographs, and stories of black soldiers in national uniforms.

I am arguing not that Griffith and Bitzer directly copied or were influenced by the Spanish-American War films but that when they came to stage and shoot historical footage about the Civil War, the representational field most immediately available to them and their audience would include not just Brady's photos and European epic films but also the only American war extensively and recently captured on film. In addition, the Spanish-American War was interpreted as a political and symbolic resolution to the domestic disunity of the Civil War, a resolution that in Griffith's film is effected by the rise of the Klan. If Griffith believed that the Klan gave birth to the "real nation [that] has only existed in the last fifteen or twenty years," he placed the nation's birth in the 1890s, not only in the era of Progressivism but also in its related movement toward imperialism abroad.¹⁹

This connection between domestic and foreign conflicts, the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, is explicitly drawn in Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*, significantly subtitled *The Romance of the White Man's Burden*. In this novel, the specter of a black man's rape of a white girl has the same unifying effect on a southern community that the Spanish-American War has on the entire nation. Both events, the domestic and the foreign, cause "the white race" to "fuse into a homogeneous mass" out of different regions, classes, and religions.²⁰ Griffith portrayed this white fusion of the nation through the Klan in response to a threatened rape, the domestic tale, rather than in response to the overseas war, as does Dixon. In fact, in revising Dixon's novels of Reconstruction and its aftermath, Griffith excises the war of 1898 and replaces it with the Civil War.

Yet imperialism isn't absent from *The Birth of a Nation*, where Griffith, like Dixon, narrates the history of Reconstruction as northern occupation of the south. Silas Lynch, the northern mulatto, claims to the white woman he wants to marry, "I will build an empire and you will be my queen." The ride of the Klan, the invisible empire, appears as an insurgent force rebelling against an African empire. The first shot in the film figures slavery as an invasion by blacks, an original threat to the protonational

unity of white Puritan settlers. The original version of the film ends with Lincoln's vision of sending all blacks to Africa, and the final version ends with a Christian god of peace defeating a god of war, who looks like an African icon. The Christian god thus purges the white nation of black soldiers, who have been collapsed into the figure of the black rapist.

Thus I am suggesting that *The Birth of a Nation* takes place on a broader international terrain than the focus on the internal domestic conflict of the Civil War and racial violence overtly suggests. Viewers at the time understood part of this international implication: the Klan riding to the rescue at the beginning of the war in Europe offered a potential figure for the white American nation riding to the rescue of the world.²¹ Not surprisingly, Griffith was the only civilian invited to the battlefields of World War I to make a propaganda film urging United States entry. As Billy Bitzer explained, Griffith, "the world's foremost director, was the one man who could tell a story that all—Americans especially—would understand."²²

One filmmaker did understand the relation of *The Birth of a Nation* to the Spanish-American War and to World War I: the African American filmmaker Oscar Micheaux, whose 1919–20 melodrama *Within Our Gates* has been seen as a direct critique of the earlier film. Whereas in Griffith's film black men in uniform represent chaos on the screen to which the Klan brings order, in *Within Our Gates* the flashback to the lynching of the heroine's foster family is the site of chaos and personal trauma. This powerful lynching scene, in which a family is hanged and a bonfire built to burn them (fig. 3; see 1077), cuts back and forth to a scene directly echoing the black man's threat to white women in the cabin of *The Birth of a Nation*. In Micheaux's film, though, a white man is trying to rape the black heroine, until he discovers a mark on her body that shows he is her father (fig. 4).

What comes next interests me here. Micheaux attempts to contain the powerful flashback to the lynching by cutting to the final scene of the courtship of the heroine by a northern doctor (fig. 5). In the intertitle, his first words in response to her visibly sad memories are not "marry me" but "We should never forget what our people did in Cuba under Roosevelt's command." He goes on to re-

mind her of black participation on the battlefields of Mexico and World War I and finally says, "We were never immigrants. Be proud of our country always.—And you Sylvia have been thinking deeply about this, but your thoughts have been warped. In spite of your misfortunes, you will always be a patriot—and a tender wife" (fig. 6).

And so she marries him (fig. 7). While Micheaux here claims that African Americans are more American than foreign immigrants, they can only prove their national identity as imperial citizens by their participation in wars abroad. The story of foreign warfare enters the domestic field as a marriage proposal, when the male suitor displaces the memory of white violence onto the woman's unhealthy obsession with the past, which he asks her to forget by remembering instead military ventures abroad and by marrying into imperial citizenship. Cinematically, however, her memories of domestic racial violence remain searing on the screen, overflowing the frame and the final promise of a patriotic imperial marriage.

Thus Oscar Micheaux in *Within Our Gates* reveals something disavowed yet implicit in Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*: the domestic unity of the nation depends not only on the violent subordination of blacks at home to forge a whiteness capacious enough to include immigrants but also on the violent assertion of US power abroad, a site from which Dixon and Griffith exclude African Americans, and one that Micheaux turns into an entry into both domesticity and citizenship.

In conclusion, I have argued that the ability of American films to tell stories arises in part out of the imperative to narrate the spectacle of American mobility and power abroad at the end of the nineteenth century and that this narrative depends on constructing the home front as a frame. Later allusions to the Spanish-American War emerge at key moments in the development of both American cinema and American foreign policy to renegotiate the relation between the domestic and the foreign, between the nation at home and the nation abroad. This paper attempts to redefine what we have thought of as either solely domestic or uniquely national elements of American film—the emergence of early cinema or the racial politics of *The Birth of a Nation*—as part of a broader project to remap

United States culture in an international context about which imperialism has told only one story.

Notes

¹Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996) 75.

²Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's, 1990) 225.

³This paragraph summarizes my viewing of the collection of Spanish-American War films in the Paper Print Collection of the Library of Congress and draws on Musser's magisterial research in *Emergence of Cinema: Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991); and, in collaboration with Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton: Princeton UP, c. 1991).

⁴J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902; Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1972) 215.

⁵Thomas Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectators and the Avante Garde," *Wide Angle* 8.3–4 (1986): 63–70.

⁶*War Correspondents*, Edison, 1898, Paper Print Collection, Lib. of Congress.

⁷Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: A Filmography* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1998).

⁸Basil Courtney, writing for *Motion Picture News* (1925), qtd. in Anthony Slide, *The Big V: A History of the Vitagraph Company* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1976) 10.

⁹Musser, *Emergence of Cinema* 258–61 and *Before the Nickelodeon* 126–37.

¹⁰*The American Soldier in Love and War*, reels 1–3, Amer. Mutoscope and Biograph, 1903, Paper Print Collection, Lib. of Congress.

¹¹Kemp R. Niver, ed., *Biograph Bulletins, 1896–1908* (Los Angeles: Locare, 1971) 90. My italics. There are three fictional films made together under the title *The American Soldier in Love and War*, which I will refer to as scenes 1, 2, and 3. The *Bulletin* recommends that the exhibitors intersperse them with two "actualities" made previously, one of real soldiers embarking for war and the other of a staged battle scene.

¹²Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991) 47.

¹³*Love and War*, Edison, 1899, Paper Print Collection, Lib. of Congress.

¹⁴Musser, *Emergence of Cinema* 342.

¹⁵Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life," *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (1899; New York: Scribner's, 1906).

¹⁶Qtd. in James Thompson et al., *Sentimental Imperialists: The American Experience in East Asia* (New York: Harper, 1981) 117.

¹⁷Oscar Campomanes, "Grappling with the Primitive: *The American Soldier in Love and War*," unpublished paper.

¹⁸"Spaniards' Would Not Fight: Vitascope Man Badly Treated by Men He Hired to Mimic the Battle of San Juan," *Phonoscope* Apr. 1899: 15.

¹⁹Qtd. in Michael Rogin, "'The Sword Became a Flashing Vision': D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*," *The Birth of a Nation*, ed. Robert Lang (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994) 252. According to his biographers, Griffith viewed his first films in 1898; given the popularity of war films, he most likely would have seen some of them.

²⁰Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden, 1865–1900* (New York: Grosset, 1902) 368.

²¹Rogin 289.

²²G. W. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer: His Story* (New York: Farrar, 1973) 180. My italics.

Figures 3–7 are frame enlargements from *Within Our Gates*, dir. Oscar Micheaux, 1919–20. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Filmoteca Española Collection, and of the *Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter*.

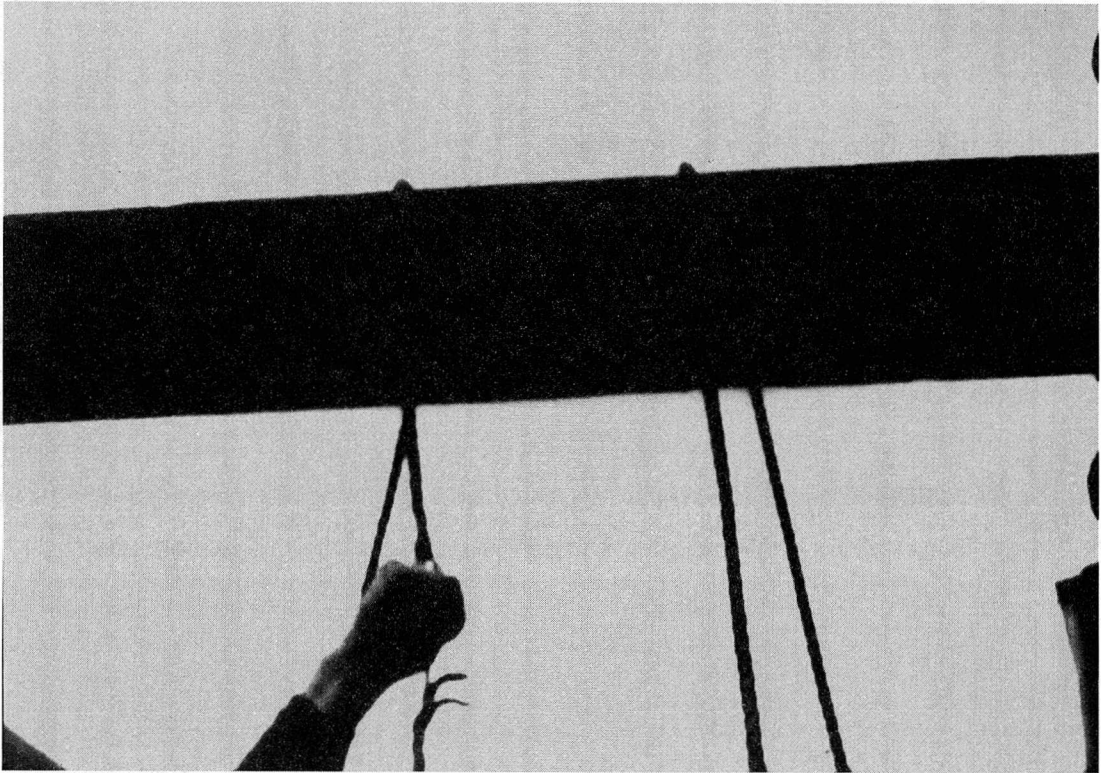


Fig. 3.

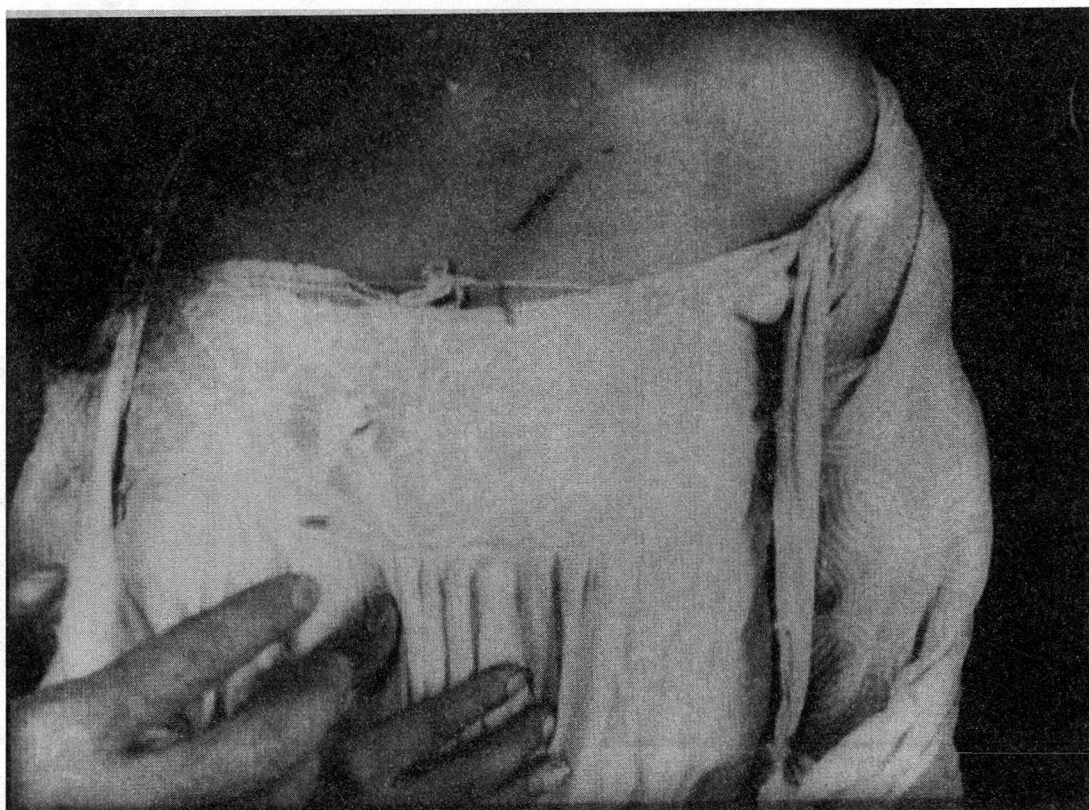


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

"In spite of your misfortunes,
you will always be a patriot—
and a tender wife. I love you!"

Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.