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Trouble on Screen

Screening the Troubled South: “Professional Southerners” in Hollywood Before and During the Code Era

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PLAN

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TEXTE

1 In an opinion piece on clichés about the African continent, Alabamian journalist and writer James Saxon Childers bemoaned the stereotypes that he felt painted a wrong picture of the South, and especially of Southerners, who could only be portrayed either as backward hillbillies and rednecks or as moonlight-and-magnolia types:

> Any Southerner who goes North finds that many Yankees have all sorts of wild ideas about us and about our way of living. Isn’t the reason for this chiefly the movies that are made about the South, the books that are written about the South, and the newspaper stories that are published in the North about the South?

2 Most of the newspaper stories are sensational. Most of the books emphasize the sensational, the picturesque, the bizarre in the South. Most of the movies have to do with banjo-playing mountain folk who say “gol darn” or simpering little idiots in hoop skirts who sigh “Y’all” to the moon and the magnolias. In other words, the South to the editor, the author and the scenario writer, is stereotyped: a gun, a gal, a jug, a noose, and you have the South [1]!

3 Childers’ article was published in 1939. The films the author had in mind were almost certainly *Jezebel* (William Wyler, 1938) and *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), and perhaps *I Am a Fugitive*

from a Chain Gang (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932) or *They Won't Forget* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1937). Southern state and municipal censors especially remembered Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* (1932), a novel and a play which had toured the entire country, and which they viewed as a humiliating and untruthful representation of Southerners. Southern censors hated *Tobacco Road*, and some tried to prevent the play from showing in the South [2]; it subsequently served as a comparison device to assess the acceptability of later films [3]. The proliferation of stereotypes and clichés about the region and its inhabitants on the silver screen might lead one to think that no Southerners existed in Hollywood to advise studio executives on filmic content. Yet Southerners were present, and they were many, as Robert Jackson has outlined in his comprehensive study of Hollywood Southerners [4], which begs the question of the impact these Southerners had on the industry.

4 Contrary to what contemporary audiences might suppose, White Southerners in Pre-Code Hollywood did have a measure of agency over what appeared on the movie screen, and they managed to nuance certain representations of the South. Called "professional Southerners" [5], these white men acted as ambassadors from the South in Hollywood. According to Thomas Cripps, they were asked to provide the studios with "advice on local color and racial etiquette" [6].

5 The phrase "professional Southerner" referred to Southerners who would explain the South to the North; film scholars and historians often point to several key "agents" in Hollywood whose often unstated roles were to act as mediators and negotiators between Hollywood and the South just before and during the Production Code era. All born in the South, some were prolific screenwriters (Nunnally Johnson, Lamar Trotti at Fox, William Faulkner at various studios over a period of twenty years), film directors (King Vidor or Clarence Brown), theater chain owners (Steve Lynch), or studio executives (Y. Frank Freeman at Paramount); others worked at the Production Code Administration and were sometimes consulted to avoid tensions between Hollywood and the South – especially Southern state and city censors (Lamar Trotti, Francis Harmon). As "expatriates" in Hollywood who remained Southerners at heart, these white men walked a tight line between advocating for the South and its identity and condemning some of the South's most violent practices, from slavery

to segregation and lynching. In various ways, they were all concerned with the notion of "trouble" and its paradoxes, as movies about the South could not completely ignore the region's troubling past and present.

6 Concomitantly, as part of the Hollywood film industry, these professional Southerners needed to ensure motion pictures would not stir up Southern audiences, because the industry relied on local exhibitors to pick up the movies and show them in the South. How did these white men collectively manage to convey representations of the South that would be perceived as authentic, without offending all or part of the country south of the Mason-Dixon Line?

The Trouble with "Social Equality"

7 During the first half of the twentieth century, the South was considered a foreign, exotic land by much of the rest of the country, and Hollywood producers and studios saw the Southern market as such. The ways and customs of the South were different from the rest of the nation: some of the laws themselves — such as the Jim Crow laws on segregation — were specific to the region in the twentieth century. Some southern citizens' attachment to the old ways and beliefs regarding slavery and the myth of the Lost Cause definitely set the region apart from the rest of the country. The success of and the controversy surrounding D.W. Griffith's racist masterpiece, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) also meant that future representations of the South on screen continued to be influenced by his work.

8 Representing a handful of states and a mostly rural population [7], it is tempting to think that the South's state of affairs may not have really influenced studio decisions. However, Production Code Administration records and the work of Southerners in the Hollywood studio system show the opposite to be true. Studio executives regarded the South as a region of paramount importance, as it was considered capable of making or breaking a film nationally. Such views were mistaken, as Thomas Cripps has evidenced in his revisionist history of the myth of the Southern box office [8]. In the words of Matthew H. Bernstein, "more than any other region, the South retained a singular

position in the national film marketplace as a geographic area with distinctive tastes and sensibilities" [9].

9 Records show that the main point of contention concerning the South's relationship with Hollywood was the depiction of race and race issues in movies. Local censor boards and exhibitors did not want to see any suggestion of what they termed "social equality" (that is, racial equality) on screen. The reason often stated was that such depictions could cause public unrest in theaters and beyond. Objecting to the fact that a black man stands up to a white man in the film, Atlanta's unofficial censor, Mrs. Zella Alonzo Richardson, warned that the Atlanta release of *In This Our Life* (John Huston, 1942) could ignite race riots, the likes of which Atlanta had known in 1906: "race riots… will come at any minute under more than slight provocation". [10] Never mind that *The Birth of a Nation*, the film that had caused the most racial trouble in American streets including in the South, was one which emphasized racial inequality. What mattered was that the controversy surrounding *The Birth of a Nation* left Hollywood with a lingering sense that the depiction of racial issues, particularly in the South, could potentially lead to trouble, and that these were best avoided altogether. The Production Code Administration regularly received letters from Southerners who were disturbed by what they viewed as Hollywood's propaganda and interference every time a picture with African-American actors in non-servile roles was released. Such situations led to Hollywood's reliance on the advice of "professional Southerners".

10 A closer look at the work of one such Southerner, Lamar Trotti (1900-1952), will shed light on the vexed role of the "professional Southerner". Trotti started his career as a reporter based in Atlanta. His writing skills were noticed by Jason Joy, and he quickly became his personal assistant in the Association of Motion Picture Producers Studio Relations Committee (SRC), where he would review films and pass along advice to the studios, before starting a twenty-year screenwriting career at Fox Film Corporation, which later became Twentieth-Century Fox. Trotti was a proud Southerner, and reportedly once said: "Being Georgian became for me at birth an incurable disease. And I can recall very few times in my life when I haven't been proud of that fact" [11]. During his time working for the SRC and the Production Code Administration, he rapidly became

identified by Southerners as the person to write to if what they saw on screen displeased them. Often the recipient of the irate letters sent by theater owners or local censors and church groups, Trotti passed their letters on to others in the studio system [12].

11 Trotti regularly corresponded with Mrs. Zella Alonzo Richardson, who worked in the Atlanta Better Films Committee and then later became the city's censor in the Atlanta Board of Review in 1925. They knew one another personally, as Trotti's sister, Frances McCormack, worked with Mrs. Alonzo Richardson for several periods of time in the BFC and replaced her on the Board of Review when she went on vacation [13].

12 Richardson's letters to Trotti and others at the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA) and at the PCA frequently concerned the representation of race issues in films. For instance, in a memorandum Trotti wrote to Governor Milliken, the then-executive secretary of the MPPDA, he quoted a letter from Richardson about the release of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Harry A. Pollard, 1927), a film adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 abolitionist novel:

> Colonel Joy has asked me about my reaction to the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the South. I have to write the truth, I think it would be suicidal: I called three members of my Board, this after I had written my own opinion for I did not want to be biased. Everyone agreed that to send this South would increase sectional feeling where it already exists or create it where it does not, that the picture has no historical value [14].

13 Three years later, the Theatre Owners of North and South Carolina sent Will H. Hays a resolution which stated:

> Realizing that much of our success is dependent upon the manner in which talking pictures are received by our Southern patrons and realizing that our Southern men and women are resentful of producers mixing white and black races indiscriminately in production, be it resolved that this association goes on record in questioning the producers, through the Hays Organization, to refrain from using negroes in scenes with whites, excepting in a servile capacity (…) [15].

14 The files at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) library show that studios, directors, and members of the Production Code Administration received mail from Southern censors and filmgoers disgruntled by depictions of "social equality". However, Southern audiences were not the only ones who were greatly displeased by what they saw on screen. Producer and studio executive Darryl Zanuck received a particularly vicious letter from one Roger C. Foss, from Minnesota, upon the release of *No Way Out* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950)[16], a film about the racial violence which erupts when a black doctor treats a white prisoner who later dies. With such reactions, it is no wonder that the industry sought the advice of Southerners on how to deal with matters likely to trouble them most – "social (read: racial) equality" on screen.

Entertainment, Pure and Simple

15 Professional Southerners' responses to outright (and outraged) racism from local censors ranged from ambivalence to resistance, a state of affairs mirrored in the movies produced by the studios under their guidance. Generally speaking, the most influential "professional Southerners" in the Hollywood studio system advised against any storyline that would disrupt the South, which meant that African-American performers and Southern stories which dealt with race issues got virtually no screen time; when they did, care would be taken to avoid going against Southern censorship rules, such as scenes where a black actor touches a white actress. Despite the fact that he was later credited for writing the screenplay of *The Ox-Bow Incident*, an anti-lynching movie, Lamar Trotti leaned on the "conservative side" concerning African-Americans' rights and representation on screen.

16 In a memorandum about *Two Kinds of Women* (William C. De Mille, 1932), Trotti wrote:

> In the scene at the party where there is a negro woman entertainer, this woman has been shown well-dressed, taking a drink with the other guests. It is our opinion that the Southern states particularly will object to the mingling of blacks and whites in such circumstances, and changes will be made in the scene accordingly[17].

17 While this memorandum shows that Lamar Trotti did not challenge the South's views, and did not push for the studios to challenge them at that point in time, his response to Mrs. Alonzo Richardson's letter about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was more nuanced. He stated that her view was that "of a great many Southerners" but that it was "the wrong view". But his reason for not agreeing with Mrs. Alonzo Richardson was strange in its dismissiveness: "It is not mine (my view) because the appearance of Uncle Tom's Cabin could not possibly mean anything to me but an evening not to go to the movies. I've never seen it nor read it. It used to be a joke that no Southerner would ever admit he had anyhow" [18].

18 This position of indifference towards the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* signaled to the MPPDA that most Southerners would not see the movie, which signified that the movie industry should steer clear of any representation of the South's past or present "troubles" on screen if it wanted to keep the Southern market. This decision is precisely what Trotti advised at the end of his memo: "I think Universal should kind of soft pedal its Southern business with this picture". His opinion was taken very seriously – the memo was copied to Colonel Jason S. Joy and to Will H. Hays. Two years later, Trotti's reaction to the all-black cast of *Hallelujah* showed his prejudices in an even clearer light, but also showed that he was aware of his own racial bias:

> I hardly know what to say about "Hallelujah" by King Vidor. If the characters were whites, I would think very definitely that Vidor was treading on very dangerous grounds – that of a renegade parson running off with a strumpet, seeing her die and brutally murdering her lover; But such is the influence of my rearing in the South, I can't get excited about this in the lives of negroes. We think such things happen, everyone seems to accept them as natural and no one bothers about them [19].

19 Later, Trotti recommended that "people interested in the advancement of the negro race" should be consulted in order to avoid them "making a holler". Trotti clearly did not consider himself as a supporter of the "advancement of the negro race." He mainly focused on the fact that white audiences would probably not be interested in seeing the movie, which we may venture was received as the most

significant argument against producing pictures with all-black casts by the movie industry.

20 It would be a mistake to conclude that Trotti and his professional Southerner brethren objected to any representation of African-Americans on screen: rather, they advocated for a particular type of representation. A press article in the *Atlanta Constitution*, praising the film *Can This Be Dixie?* (George Marshall, 1936), whose script was co-authored by Lamar Trotti, was particularly telling about Trotti's views the representation of race in the South:

> Sally Forth has been informed that "Can This Be Dixie?" will be especially appealing to those residing below the Mason-Dixon line. One scene is worthy of mentioning, as it will depict a real cotton field where the darkies are picking cotton. Jane, all blackened with a little black wig and wearing a smart black satin suit with a cutaway coat, makes an attractive figure as she enters the scene as the little preacher and mounting the real pulpit and standing with outstretched arms, with a huge Bible's open pages before her, sings "If You Want to Go to Heaven, Follow Me." Below her are rows of pickaninnies in starched muslin, with their plaits tied with gay bows, and with their escorts, some resembling preachers in swallow-tail coats and gray side whiskers, while others are in striped shirts and white trousers, dressed for church, raising their arms and voices in happy abandon answering her song [20].

21 It is clear that Lamar Trotti understood what would work well in the South commercially, and what would not – hence his advocating for filmic representations of race that did not challenge the Southern status quo. Trotti held the view that the South needed to deal with its own troubles with no interference from the North [21]. In that sense he held the same views as a great many white Southerners in the 1930s and 1940s, who saw laws promoting civil rights for African-Americans as interference from the North in the South's affairs, preventing the South from enjoying "racial harmony".

22 Paramount Vice-President Y. Frank Freeman seems to have generally held the same opinions as Trotti. Paramount was regarded as a conservative studio, headed by Freeman, also viewed as a conservative. He was called an "unreconstructed Southerner" by Walter White, of the NAACP, according to Thomas Cripps. [22] The Southern

character "Y. Frank Freemont" in the Paramount musical film *Star-Spangled Banner* (George Marshall, 1942) was modeled after him – sporting a very heavy Dixie accent, and drinking Coca-Cola, which testified to the fact that Freeman's southernness was a defining characteristic of the businessman in the studio. PCA records and national press articles do not show any attitude of his that was decisively against showing the South's troubles, but they do show that he was a shrewd businessman who understood what would work in the South and what would not, and that he was a staunch supporter of the Production Code and the notion that cinema was entertainment, pure and simple – which usually meant steering clear of provocative silver screen features. In his keynote address to the Screen Publicists Guild in 1951 Freeman declared that "[his] mind was closed to anything which could not be readily classified as mass-appeal entertainment"[23]. In August, a *New York Times* piece had already described him as a Southern Baptist and quoted him as saying "In the present unsettled state of the world, people need something to grasp. Since motion pictures exert a vast influence, I feel the industry has a certain responsibility to meet this need, so long as the screen's initial purpose – to entertain – is preserved"[24]. Controversial motion pictures would not have fit in his understanding of mass entertainment. Thomas Cripps, reporting a conversation he had on the phone with Nunnally Johnson, wrote that he often sank ideas by warning "it would never go down in the South."[25] David Owen confirmed in his article on Luigi Luraschi's role at Paramount that Y. Frank Freeman was "very cold to the idea" of including more African-American performers in Paramount features because, in Luraschi's words, "he [felt] it [would] create a problem for him domestically." Luraschi reported that Freeman required all productions with African-American performers to be checked by him and he would decide whether or not they would see the light of day[26]. One picture he had heavily promoted in 1940 as vice-president in charge of production was *The Biscuit Eater*, whose synopsis revolved around the story of two young boys, one black and one white, raising a puppy in Georgia. The film meant to show simple, perfect racial harmony, showing that black children and white children could be perfectly happy and friendly in the South. However, as Bernice Kliman has shown,[27] inequality between the two boys persists in subtle ways, with Text, the black boy, always taking his cue from Lon, the white

boy, and in overt ways with depictions of crude black characters associated with threats and liquor. For professional Southerners at the production level, racial harmony did not mean racial equality – it meant black characters "knowing their place," which meant that they knew not to directly challenge the status quo.

Navigating the Pressures of the Civil Rights Movement

23 Overall, the movies up until the 1950s broadly reflected a white Southern point of view concerning race, because the advisers often were themselves proud Southern white males, but also because the men who headed the Production Code Administration were wary of igniting any sort of outraged response from audiences, which was a constant preoccupation for them. Joseph I. Breen thus wrote in a letter to Harry Zehner regarding the casting of *Show Boat* in 1935 with Paul Robeson: "I think you should be extremely careful, however, not to indicate any physical contact between the white woman and the negro man for the reason that many people know Aunt Jemima is a white woman and might be repulsed by the sight of her being fondled by a man who is a negro"[28]. The wording here, "repulsed," "fondled," shows that it was not merely an issue of abiding by anti-miscegenation legislation but also a matter of showing the South, and the rest of the US, that white women were safe from black men and that the industry abided by this rule. Motion pictures that directly addressed the South's troubles were dangerous territory, as Trotti eloquently wrote about *The Mating Call* (James Cruze, 1928), a movie about the Ku Klux Klan:

> I have one big thought about *The Mating Call* – that whatever we do is dangerous. As decent people, we cannot be allied with a picture which accepts, or at least condones lawlessness as this one certainly does. As businesspeople, we can't properly afford to alienate a large group of citizens who thrive on attacks. The Klan developed, not through its friends, but through its enemies[29].

24 Trotti outlined here what many Southerners felt – that the depiction of the South's troubles was best avoided altogether, so as not to fan

the flames of an already explosive situation. Here the phrasing also reflects what many professional Southerners and "businesspeople" condemned, that is to say the "lawlessness" of mob rule, without ever linking mob violence to racial violence and African-American suffering[30].

25 As Ellen C. Scott remarked in her book *Cinema Civil Rights*, the Hollywood industry gradually shifted its policies regarding race issues and racial violence during and after WWII, due to several factors: the pressure of organizations such as the NAACP, the growing Civil Rights movement, and a change in MPAA hierarchy, as Breen went on leave several times and Will H. Hays was replaced by Eric Johnston. The principal white professional Southerner in residence was by then Francis Harmon, hailed by Joseph I. Breen himself as a "highly intelligent" man from Mississippi, who had lived "many years in the "deep South" and knew "the so-called Negro problems thoroughly"[31]. In 1937, at the request of Joseph Breen, Francis Harmon had written a memo entitled "Suggested Guiding Principles in Connection with Motion Pictures Dealing with Negroes and Whites," which was approved by Will H. Hays and followed by many studios thereafter[32]. The memo stated in particular that if race was evoked, "members of both races" (black and white), should be seen working together to solve the issue, or "members of both races" should be shown as attackers, so as to avoid the singling out and unfair representation of African-Americans on screen. In particular, Harmon insisted that "sectional aspects of the interracial problem needed to be watched also. Examples: a) Not all southern negroes should be shown as excessively humble while negroes in the north are pictured as independent. b) Not all southern white people are overbearing and prejudiced, and all northerners are not unprejudiced and courteous"[33]. This part of the memo shows how much influence one professional Southerner had on representations of the South and its inhabitants, ensuring that depictions of the South's most racist elements would be toned down so as not to indict an entire region.

26 Producers and directors seem to have heeded Harmon's advice, and Joe Breen consistently referred producers and directors to Harmon's memo (as he did with Walt Disney for *Song of the South* in 1944). Harmon's influence through his memo can be felt in a number of pictures from the late thirties to the early sixties, all of which more or

less always provide a form of mitigation for Southern characters, or frame prejudice as a national and not simply a Southern phenomenon, which was a sure way of rallying the South to Hollywood's cause. For instance, in *The Ox-Bow Incident*, the most violent character is that of Major Tetley, who is also called a "renegade who never even fought the War" by Gil Carter, thus signaling that he is not a true Southerner at heart. Redemption is shown in the character of his son, Gerald, whose guilt indicates that the South wants to atone for the sins of its Confederate fathers. In *Intruder in the Dust* (Clarence Brown, 1949), the lynching of Lucas Beauchamp is stopped by Miss Habersham, played by Elizabeth Patterson, a white Tennessee native who starred in a great many Southern roles. *Intruder in the Dust* was one of the rare Faulkner novels dealing with race and lynching that made it onto the screen without much controversy, which is certainly partly due to the emphasis on a white woman preventing a mob from lynching a black man by standing between them in front of the jail. Southern censors and audiences often bemoaned what they called "the lack of authenticity" or the "phoniness" of motion pictures about the South. Thanks to a screenplay from a known Southern author (Faulkner), and a director, Clarence Brown, who had lived in the South, to filming in Oxford, Mississippi, to Southern actors and actresses, and above all to a Southern character who was a paragon of fairness and virtue, *Intruder in the Dust* was shown in the South with no eliminations at all – which was not the fate of other films of the 1949 race cycle [34]. By having a lone Southern character stand up to racists, the movie avoided indicting a whole region but also avoided forwarding any structural change in Southern society. Clarence Brown even mused in an interview published by the *Los Angeles Times* that the film could do well without the race angle and no African American characters: "However, he continued, 'Intruder' is far from being a purely racial affair. If all the characters were whites we'd still have had a pretty good whodunit" [35].

27 In comparison, *Pinky* (Elia Kazan, 1949), a film about a light-skinned black woman passing for white who returns South to care for her family, spurred more controversy, arguably because it showed the South in a bad light, as a region incapable of progress, and the characters were embodied by "foreigners" to the Southern mind. In 1949,

Francis Harmon had actually recommended that Zanuck go further by depicting Pinky as the result of a rape of a black woman by a white man, a situation which he felt had been prevalent in the South – but this time, Zanuck did not follow the professional Southerner's advice [36]. It seems Harmon was one of the rare professional Southerners who tried to change screen depictions of race issues in the South and make them more unflinching, but it would take more than a decade, long after he left the PCA in 1952, for movies about the South to tackle race issues in a more provocative manner.

28 In 1959, Universal-International encountered trouble in advertising Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* and chose to advertise movies differently for the Southern region and for the rest of the country. A *Variety* piece published in 1959 read:

> For sections of the south where the segregation issue is highly controversial, UI has a different ad campaign. A UI rep said that this policy had been adopted for purely commercial reasons and not to avoid any conflict on the segregation problem. It has been found, he declared, that white southerners avoid films that are advertised as dealing with the race problem [37].

29 This *Variety* piece testifies to the way in which the South's troubles had to remain muted or obscured, for fear that the movies would not do well commercially, just as most professional Southerners had advised in previous decades. It also shows that, as late as 1959, great care was taken by some major studios not to offend a still-sensitive and important, Southern market – showing that Thomas Cripps's myth of the Southern box office actually extended well beyond the 1940s for certain studios. On the contrary, other studios would seek to expose the troubles of the South, like Twentieth Century Fox, nevertheless still making sure that depictions would not go too far.

Conclusion

30 Professional Southerners, who generally held executive studio positions, prominent positions in the Production Code Administration, or directed movies, had some agency over the content of movies – in the sense that they made movies palatable to Southern audiences, which ensured that the same movies would be palatable to American audi-

ences as a whole. It is clear that Darryl F. Zanuck at Twentieth Century Fox gave some of his most inflammatory script ideas to his Southern screenwriters to rewrite into acceptable narratives – making the scripts a little less troubling than the original novels, but still controversial enough that the movies would draw crowds into theaters. However, as these professional Southerners, who were white males, evolved in a Hollywood system overwhelmingly dominated by white males, most productions about the South and its race issues contributed to making African-American struggles invisible, promoting a form of status quo. Productions which directly addressed race issues and the South's troubles revolved around the notion of white guilt towards racism, with scenarios that built up white characters standing up to the region's most racist elements, such as Miss Habersham in *Intruder in the Dust*. What remains of Lamar Trotti's anti-lynching movie, *The Ox-Bow Incident*, is essentially an admission of white guilt, as shown in the letter sequence. Aesthetically, the film seems to indicate that the same injustices will be repeated over and over again, with the end sequence mirroring the opening sequence.

31 The question remains as to why the opinion of these professional Southerners would matter so much, when the Southern box office was not that important to the Hollywood industry as a whole. Southern theaters and their patrons did not represent a significant part of the movie industry's theaters and patrons, according to the figures published by the *Motion Picture Almanac* in 1937 – the five major "Southern" cities (Atlanta, Charlotte, New Orleans, Dallas, Memphis) accounted for roughly 3,000 of the roughly 19,000 theaters in operation then[38]. What might provide an explanation for such importance given to the South's reaction to filmic representations, beyond the fact that they possibly also corresponded to widely-held views about not stirring up trouble with depictions of race, was that these reactions helped the Hollywood industry gauge whether the film would appeal to the nation as a whole. In other words, what pleased the South would please the United States, which would also ensure that there would be no legal challenges to the release of a movie anywhere, saving the studios time and money. Another explanation may be that Hollywood films faced censorship boards all over the world, some of them just as stringent and sometimes even more

so than Southern censor review boards. British censors seem to have often censored films along the same lines as their Southern counterparts [39], perhaps in an attempt to avoid stirring up trouble in the British colonies over representations that promoted "social equality". Documents from the MPPDA show that the PCA made no distinction between US censor boards and foreign censor boards [40]. One can wonder, therefore, whether the South did not represent a way to measure whether motion pictures would be accepted worldwide, a first step before venturing on to foreign markets.

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NOTES

1 James Saxon Childers, "Africa Has Many Sides, Many People," *The Birmingham News Age-Herald*, 03 Sep. 1939, p. 55.

2 "Atlanta Censors Given Broader Powers; May Block Tobacco Road," *Daily Variety*, Wednesday, November 16, 1938, p. 47.

3 *The Atlanta Constitution* ran a story on the production of *I'd Climb the Highest Mountain* which read "King re-emphasized what the 20th Century-Fox press department already has said: "There will be no Tobacco Road element in this film." Paul Jones, "Dr. Rogers Is Named On Film Advisory Staff," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 14 May 1950, p. 8.

4 Robert Jackson, *Fade In, Crossroads: A History of the Southern Cinema*, Oxford University Press, 2017.

5 See Thomas R. Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, and Matthew H. Bernstein, A "Professional Southerner" in the Hollywood Studio System: Lamar Trotti at Work, 1925-1952," in Deborah E. Barker and Kathryn McKee (eds.), *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary*, Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2011, pp. 122-147.

6 Thomas R. Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 10.

7 *Variety* referenced few Southern cities in its monthly "picture grosses" column, and they were often Louisville, Birmingham, and Baltimore, with New Orleans making an infrequent appearance.

8 Thomas Cripps, "The Myth of the Southern Box Office, A Factor in Racial Stereotyping in American Movies," in James C. Curtis and Louis L. Gould (eds.), *The Black Experience in America, Selected Essays*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970, pp. 116-144.

9 Matthew H. Bernstein, A "Professional Southerner" in the Hollywood Studio System: Lamar Trotti at Work, 1925-1952," in Deborah E. Barker and Kathryn McKee (eds.), *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary*, Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2011, pp. 122.

10 Quoted in Matthew L. Baso, *Meet Joe Copper: Masculinity and Race on Montana's World War II Home Front*, p. 164.

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12 For instance, regarding the re-release of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1931, Trotti wrote Hays the following: "In the case of the last, it is interesting to know that there were a great many protests in letters from church groups throughout the South, who declared the showing of the picture stirred up racial trouble and interfered with the work they have been doing for better understanding between the colored and the whites," Lamar Trotti to Will H. Hays, "Inter-office memo", March 17, 1981, MPPDA digital archive, record #2244.

13 Herman Hancock, "Movie Industry Program Recited by Lamar Trotti," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 25, 1926, p. 6.

14 Letter from Mrs. Alonzo Richardson to Lamar Trotti, quoted in Lamar Trotti's memorandum to Governor Milliken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* production file, AMPAS.

15 Resolution of the Theatre Owners of North and South Carolina, sent to Will H. Hays, Dec. 12, 1930, Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) Digital Archive.

16 Joseph L. Mankiewicz papers, folder b. 31 F. 312, AMPAS.

17 Lamar Trotti, "Memorandum for the files – in re: "Two Kinds of Women," November 7, 1931, *Two Kinds of Women* folder, Production files, AMPAS.

18 Lamar Trotti's memorandum to Governor Milliken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* production file, AMPAS.

19 Lamar Trotti to Mr. McKenzie, Inter-office memo regarding *Hallelujah*, October 19, 1928, *Hallelujah* file, AMPAS.

20 Sally Forth, "Movie of Dixie, by Lamar Trotti, Will Star Clever Jane Withers," *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 24, 1936, p. 13.

21 "Speaking at the University of Georgia Commencement exercises, Mr. Trotti declared that "these people" apparently cannot see, or will not see, that the strides which the South has made in solving its own peculiar problems have been made by Southerners, not by outsiders. Further progress in the South will come from an inner understanding and desire on the South's part and not from federal laws, not from coercion, not from intimidation of

any sort (…)”, “’Hands Off South’ Lamar Trotti Tells Northern Liberals,” *Alabama Tribune*, January 20, 1947, p. 6.

22 Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, pages 5 and 45.

23 *The New York Times*, December 16, 1951.

24 *The New York Times*, August 5, 1951.

25 Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, p. 178.

26 Letter 6 of February 6, 1953, reprinted in David N. Eldridge, “’Dear Owen’: The CIA, Luigi Luraschi, and Hollywood, 1953”, *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 20, n°2, 2000, p. 168.

27 Bernice Kliman, “*The Biscuit Eater*: Racial Stereotypes, 1939-1972”, *Phylon*, Vol. 39, n°1, 1978, pp. 87-96.

28 Letter from Joseph I. Breen to Harry Zehner, October 17, 1935, *Show Boat* Production File, AMPAS.

29 Letter from Lamar Trotti to Will H. Hays, August 20, 1927, MPPDA Digital Archives, Record #396.

30 See Amy Louise Wood’s study on lynching and its representations on screen: *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940*, 2009.

31 Letter to Walt Disney from Joseph I. Breen, August 1, 1944, *Song of the South* production file, AMPAS.

32 Francis Harmon, “Suggested Guiding Principles in Connection with Motion Pictures Dealing with Negroes and Whites,” MPPDA Digital Archive.

33 Ibid., p. 2.

34 See McGehee, Margaret T. "Disturbing the Peace: *Lost Boundaries*, *Pinky*, and Censorship in Atlanta, Georgia, 1949-1952." *Cinema Journal*. Fall 2006. Vol. 46, Issue 1; pp. 23-51.

35 Philip K. Scheuer, “Brown Champions Work On Location,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1949.

36 Letter from Francis S. Harmon to Darryl F. Zanuck, March 18, 1949, *Pinky* Production Code Administration File, AMPAS.

37 “Pitt Paper Rejects Ads on UI’s ‘Life’,” *Daily Variety*, April 1, 1959.

38 *International Motion Picture Almanac*, 1937-1938, p. 1018.

39 For instance, when L.B. Mayer sought PCA approval for the movie *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), whose story included racial themes, Joseph I. Breen replied: “We strongly urge, however, that you consult your Foreign Department as to the likely acceptability of this story at the hands of certain foreign censor boards, more particularly the British.” Joseph I. Breen to Louis B. Mayer, June 29, 1942, *Cabin in the Sky* Production File, AMPAS.

40 “It is, likewise, enormously dangerous from the standpoint of political censorship, both in this country and abroad.” Correspondence between Will H. Hays and Joseph I. Breen, March 16, 1938, MPPDA Digital Archive Record #1196 Reel 12.

RÉSUMÉS

English

The term “professional Southerner” was used by film scholars and historians to refer to several “agents” in Hollywood, whose often unstated roles were to act as mediators and negotiators between Hollywood and the South in the Production Code era. All born in the South, some were prolific screenwriters (Nunnally Johnson, Lamar Trotti, William Faulkner), theater chain owners (Steve Lynch), studio executives (Y. Frank Freeman) and others were purposefully hired by the PCA to appease tensions between the South – especially Southern state and city censors – and Hollywood (Francis Harmon). As “expatriates” in Hollywood who remained Southerners at heart, they walked a tight line between advocating for the South and its identity and condemning the South’s most violent practices, from segregation to lynching. They were indeed, most concerned with the notion of “trouble” and its paradoxes, wanting to show some of the South’s troubles, while at the same time making the motion pictures not “troubling” or “troublesome” for the South’s audiences.

Français

L'expression « Professional Southerner » (sudiste professionnel) a fréquemment été utilisée par les spécialistes et les historiens du cinéma pour désigner plusieurs « agents » à Hollywood, dont le rôle officieux était de servir de médiateurs entre Hollywood et le Sud des États-Unis avant et pendant l’époque du Code de production. Tous nés dans le Sud, certains étaient des scénaristes prolifiques (Nunnally Johnson, Lamar Trotti, William Faulkner), des propriétaires de chaînes de cinéma (Steve Lynch) ou des producteurs (Y. Frank Freeman). D'autres furent engagés par la PCA pour apaiser les tensions entre le Sud, en particulier les censeurs des villes et des États du Sud, et Hollywood (Francis Harmon). En tant qu’ « expatriés » à Hollywood, restés sudistes dans l'âme, ils se sont efforcés de défendre le Sud et son identité tout en tentant parfois de condamner les pratiques les plus

violentes du Sud, de la ségrégation au lynchage. Ils étaient en effet très préoccupés par la notion de « trouble » et ses paradoxes, voulant montrer certains des tourments du Sud, tout en faisant en sorte que les films ne troublent pas les spectateurs du Sud.

INDEX

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