

**THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITAIN:  
POLITICAL, MILITARY, INTELLECTUAL AND POPULAR LEGACIES**

Nimrod Tal, St. Anne's College, Oxford

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## **Abstract I**

This thesis explores the continuous British interest in the American Civil War from the war's end to the late twentieth century and the British utilisation of the conflict at home and in the Atlantic arena. Contributing to the limited, yet burgeoning literature on the subject, this study emphasises the independent agency of both the Civil War and its British interpreters. It thus rejects a simplistic depiction of British adoption of American culture and applies a more sophisticated methodology that accounts for the active, versatile and autonomous British use of complex foreign images. This enables a meaningful analysis of the Civil War's place and role in modern British culture.

The thesis examines the British fascination with the conflict as reflected in four facets: politics, military thought, academe and popular culture. Additionally, it takes a transatlantic perspective and explores how Britons' view of the United States has influenced their understanding of the Civil War. This study thus provides a first comprehensive and coherent overview as well as a nuanced picture of the American conflict as it travelled across the Atlantic from a historically distanced perspective.

The thesis reveals that the Civil War achieved unique prominence in British culture and that this British fascination with the war was part of a greater transatlantic encounter between an epic American affair and sophisticated British interpreters. Accordingly, the two main questions underpinning this study are 'why were the

British particularly interested in the Civil War?’ and, following directly on that path, ‘how did Britons use the war both at home and in the transatlantic sphere?’ Answering these questions further establishes the war’s prominence in British culture and explores the character of the British encounter with the conflict. In so doing, it contributes to our understanding of the Civil War’s global impact and casts another light on Anglo-American relations.

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## **Abstract II**

This thesis explores the reasons for the continuous British interest in the American Civil War after the conflict had ended and the ways in which Britons used the conflict both at home and within the transatlantic arena. It argues that as a foreign conflict the Civil War had an unparalleled place in twentieth-century British culture, and presents a comprehensive explanation for this phenomenon. It argues further that the British interest in the Civil War was part of a broader transatlantic encounter between an independent epic American war and equally independent and sophisticated British interpreters. The study shows how this encounter fashioned and was fashioned by contemporary British views of the United States and of Anglo-American relations. The thesis thus demonstrates how an examination of the place and role of the Civil War in twentieth-century British culture contributes to the understanding of the war's lingering global impact and to the study of Anglo-American relations.

To this end, the thesis first explores the nature of the lasting fascination with the Civil War throughout the major spheres of British life. In particular, it draws attention to the war's place in British popular culture, a subject hitherto virtually unexplored. There is, for example, no historical research into the nature and significance of Civil War Round Table and re-enactment societies in Britain and little

is known about the British reception of Civil War films.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the present work explores the war's place in British politics, military thought and intellectual life. Though these subjects have been previously touched upon, they benefit in depth and comprehensiveness of perspective from the treatment of their interaction with each other and with popular culture. This kaleidoscopic view reveals that unlike other foreign conflicts, which were ultimately forgotten outside limited (mostly military) circles, the American Civil War was imprinted into British culture as a whole.

Moreover, this thesis takes on a broad chronological scope enabling it to show that, as opposed to other distant struggles, British interest in the American war did not wane as the conflict passed further into history. At times interest even seemed to have increased and become more consensual. Illustrating this point, the place of Abraham Lincoln and Giuseppe Garibaldi in British public perception could briefly be compared. During the 1860s, Garibaldi was a consensual hero throughout Britain. The “cult of Garibaldi” elevated the Italian icon as a democratic and nationalist leader, a self-made-man and a freedom fighter. Yet by the early 1920s, Lincoln – a controversial figure in Britain in the 1860s – was the one who overwhelmingly dominated British thought as a foreign hero of exactly the same character. Whilst Lincoln has continued to fascinate the British, the image of Garibaldi has sunk into oblivion.

By taking a broad thematic and chronological scope, this thesis unearths the extent to which the Civil War has penetrated British culture in the twentieth century. Previous studies have focused on manifestations of British interest in the conflict in a single sphere of life and on the British turn to a single aspect of the war. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> Re-enactment societies, discussed thoroughly in chapter five, focus on recreating the American conflict and on enacting mock Civil War battles. During re-enactment events, members dress in period costumes and pay heed to historical authenticity.

there are studies on the conflict's place in British military thought and political discourse as well as on the British turn to the image of Lincoln. However, no concerted study is available that explores the common thread that tied together the British interest in the war as a whole. Moreover, studies have examined the war's place in Britain through a limited chronological prism. Generally, the literature has focused on the period until the Second World War and left the second half of the twentieth century unexamined. Taken together, these studies generated a picture of a thematically fragmented and chronologically limited British interest in the Civil War. This, in turn, has downplayed the extent of the war's lingering impact in Britain and overlooked some of the main ways in which it was utilised. The broad perspective of the present research enables it to challenge this picture and give a more accurate and nuanced account of both the war's place in British culture and of its British uses.

To explain the exceptional British fascination with the Civil War, this study isolates the characteristics of the conflict that rendered it unique. One such feature, for example, was the special relation that Britain had to the war in the 1860s. On the one hand, the conflict was a distinctively American affair; on the other hand, the war's impact in Britain was profound. The economic impact of the war on the textile industry in Lancashire and the fact that, despite British neutrality (and often in compliance with it), Confederate ships were built in Liverpool during the war are examples for the war's impact across the ocean. This British link to the events in America put the Civil War in a unique place in the history of Anglo-American relations. Unlike wars in which Britain fought alongside the United States, such as the world wars; unlike the War of Independence and the War of 1812 in which it fought against the United State; and unlike American wars in which it was not at all involved and that had little or no impact in Britain, such as the Spanish-American War, the

Civil War could be seen as both an American and an Anglo-American affair. That, as this thesis demonstrates, made this war useful for the British in cases where other wars were not.

Having identified the distinguishing traits of the Civil War, this study explores how the British used the material with which the conflict presented them. That is, the thesis preserves the autonomy of the British as the interpreters of the war by showing how they made the American conflict of the 1860s relevant to them. The active role of the British in representing the Civil War is thus a key to the war's appeal across the Atlantic, whilst revealing the inherently linked relation between the British interest in the war and their usage of it. In exploring the British utilisation of the war, special attention is given in this research to the way they turned to it in order to understand, comment on and communicate with their contemporaneous United States.

Sources – such as Lord Charnwood's 1916 biography of Lincoln – that reflected evident British interest in the Civil War constitute the main corpus of primary material in this work. These include *inter alia* political records, military writings, private papers, academic works, films, oral history (interviews) and unpublished documents from archives in Ireland, Britain and the United States. Of special importance here are the American sources upon which the British drew in order to fashion their understanding of the war. For example, in addition to analysing Charnwood's *Lincoln*, this study also examines critically the main American biographies of Lincoln that the British peer used for his work. A focus on the American sources upon which the British drew unearths the differences between the American and British views of the Civil War and brings to the fore the pivotal transatlantic aspect of the encounter between the conflict and the British.

There are two methodological advantages to the use of a transatlantic prism in this study. The first is that it exposes the full extent of British autonomy in shaping a genuine understanding of the Civil War. In addition to showing that Britons independently constructed images of the conflict according to domestic events, such as the Great War in Charnwood's case, the transatlantic perspective reveals that Britons acted upon and manipulated American representations of the war as well. It is shown that the British translated and altered the American representations of the conflict and at times even exported them back to the United States. The second, related, advantage is that contemporary views of the United States are revealed as part of the British context within which the British understood the Civil War. That meant that Britons often fashioned their view of the American conflict according to their views of the United States. It also meant that their export of their Civil War representations to the United States reflected an attempt to communicate with the Americans and shape contemporary Anglo-American relations.

In keeping with the above, the thesis shows how the case of the unique British interest in the Civil War enriches our understanding of the war's global impact. Scholars have become increasingly interested in the universal and lingering economic, military and political impact of the Civil War. Equally, the war has had a cultural impact, which seemed to have had a no less lasting global reach. Civil War reenactment, for example, has spread as far as Australia, and it is known that *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915) had an evident impact in France. Scholars have also shown the international reach of Lincoln's legacy. The scholarship on the global lasting cultural impact of the conflict is in its infancy and needs more attention. Above all, there is no one complete case study that examines the war's lingering cultural impact in a place other than the United States. By examining the central place

of the war in British culture in depth and breadth not yet attempted, the present work begins to fill this lacuna in the understanding of the extent of the Civil War's lingering universal impact.

Additionally, the thesis demonstrates the relevance of the British unique interest in the Civil War to fluctuating Anglo-American relations. The field of international relations profits from this comprehensive examination of the war as a cultural tool used by the British as a means of communication with the United States. Only two Anglo-American cultural tools that were constructed on historical consciousness have thus far received any significant scrutiny in academic circles: the Special Relationship and Anglo-Saxonism. This thesis adds the Civil War and its representations to the toolkit of the historian of Anglo-American relations. One of the main analytical advantages that the Civil War as a cultural tool allows for is the broad chronological perspective. Anglo-Saxon sentiments reached and passed their zenith around the turn of the century; the Special Relationship was born in the Second World War. Therefore, these tools allow for a chronologically-limited analysis of the way in which cultural tools that were based on historical consciousness worked in the Anglo-American realm. The Civil War, based on the same premise, allows for a comparison of these periods and, thanks to its continuous use in Britain, provides for an analysis of the period since the war itself to present day.

Such chronological scope is clearly too broad and this work does not pretend to present an account of more than a hundred and fifty years of Anglo-American history. The wide canvass of this work is not a goal in itself but a means to demonstrate how the unique place of the Civil War in British culture could enrich our understanding of its impact and of Anglo-American relations. Accordingly, and in

order not to sacrifice depth for breadth, this research is constructed of key case studies. For the explicit British interest in the war that they reflected and for the richness of evidence that they provided, these cases are the basis upon which this thesis draws its arguments.

The study is divided thematically into five facets. The opening chapter examines the use of the war in British political discourse by focusing on the Irish question between the 1880s and the 1920s. The chapter demonstrates the growing awareness amongst British politicians of the enduring strength of the American political system and their acknowledgement that American power might influence domestic British affairs. The growing prominence of the United States is shown to have been one key reason for the British to turn to the Civil War, which seemed to have explained the American rise to power. In addition, the chapter demonstrates how the British exported their representations of the American war to the United States in efforts to influence the American Irish policy.

The second chapter looks at the Civil War's place in British military thought, mainly through the works of the three preeminent military thinkers of the century: Frederick Maurice, Basil Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller. Alongside an emphasis on the impact of the Great War on their understanding of the Civil War, this chapter shows that British military thinkers' views of the United States were central in determining the place of the conflict in their thought. In so doing, this chapter offers another reading of British military intellectuals' view of the United States and of the Civil War and presents a revision in the currently accepted scholarship in this field.

The third chapter examines the war in the eyes of British intellectuals through their biographical writings about Abraham Lincoln and through their use of Lincoln

both at home and in the United States. To present a novel analysis of this subject, this chapter looks not only on what made Lincoln an appealing icon to the British, but also on what made his legacy problematic. This unearths the unique characteristics of Lincoln that have rendered his legacy irreplaceable to the British. Moreover, this chapter examines Lincoln's place in British academic works in the 1950s and 1960s and thus extends the chronological scope of existing scholarship beyond the Second World War. This enables discussion of the growing centrality of Lincoln's stances on racial issues in his representations in Britain.

The next two chapters deal with popular culture. Chapter four examines the British reception of American films that were milestones in the history of Civil War representations. This chapter focuses more than others on the American export of war representations. It shows how British critics used the Civil War as a prism to both align Britain with the United States and to fashion a distinct British identity in contrast to the American identity. The fifth chapter examines British societies dedicated to studying and re-enacting the Civil War. In the first historical account of these associations, the chapter explores the reasons for their appearance in the 1950s and through them presents an answer to the question of why ordinary Britons have found the Civil War attractive and how it has served them. More than other parts of this thesis, this chapter unearths the breadth of the transmission between the United States and Britain of Civil War representations. It also explores in great depth the tensions that this transmission created between the different American representations of the conflict in Britain as well as between the American war representations and the British ones.

The concluding chapter draws on the findings of all previous chapters to present a multifaceted description of twentieth-century Britons' fascination with the Civil War and, consequently, a broad view of how they used it. It shows how this unique interest and diverse utilisation casts new light on the war's long lasting global impact and on Anglo-American relations.

## Introduction

This thesis explores why twentieth-century Britons were fascinated with the American Civil War, how they understood it and how they presented it to themselves and to Americans. Based upon the findings of this investigation, the thesis presents the novel argument that the American conflict played an exceptionally central role in British culture and it puts forward for the first time a comprehensive and nuanced explanation for this phenomenon. Furthermore, this study exposes the scope of the encounter between the British and the Civil War and shows how in this encounter the British used the war in order to understand, comment on and even shape domestic as well as Anglo-American affairs. This research thus contributes to the study of both the Civil War's long lasting global impact and of Anglo-American relations.

British interest in the Civil War after the conflict had ended has in recent years attracted scholars who have detected an underexplored historical phenomenon that could cast new light on questions in American, British and Anglo-American history. Historians such as Jay Sexton, Brian Holden Reid, Hugh Dubrulle, Kevin Kenny and Adam Smith, have made important headway in explaining the place and role of the war in British culture and in Anglo-American relations.<sup>1</sup> Thus we know that the British used the Civil War in order to understand and align themselves with the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century, as Smith has demonstrated; we know that the Americans used the image of Abraham Lincoln for purposes of public diplomacy in Britain in the late 1950s, as Sexton has shown; and

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<sup>1</sup> Since a full and relevant historiographical survey opens each chapter, here an example of the more updated studies will suffice. For studies on Lincoln's legacy in Britain see: Adam I. P. Smith, 'The "Cult" of Abraham Lincoln and the Strange Survival of Liberal England in the Era of the World Wars', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Jul., 2010), pp. 1-24. On the war in British military thought see: Hugh Dubrulle, 'A Military Legacy of the Civil War: The British Inheritance', *Civil War History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2003), pp. 153-80. On the war in political discourse see: Kevin Kenny, "'Freedom and Unity': Lincoln in Irish Political Discourse', in: Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln* (New York, 2011), pp. 157-71.

we know that lessons that the British drew from the war were connected with their view of the United States, as Dubrulle has shown. These studies provided ample evidence for the British interest in the conflict, they define many of the themes that are worth exploring in this field and they greatly inspired this work.

The above studies also brought to the fore the work that is still needed in order to fully understand the place and use of the American war in twentieth-century British culture and the significance of this phenomenon. Four lacunae can be found in the picture of the war's stature in Britain as generated by extant studies. First, current work focuses on the British interest in a single aspect of the war or on the place of the conflict in a single sphere of British life. We thus have studies about Britons' interest in Lincoln, about the war in British military thought and about the conflict's manifestations in British political discourse. However no concerted research is yet available that unearths and explores the common thread that linked these together.<sup>2</sup> Second, the field of popular culture, where a plethora of evidence for British fascination with the Civil War exists, is currently underexplored. Films, artefacts and even more so Civil War societies such as Round Table and re-enactment clubs have often escaped scholars' attention. The limited chronological perspective of current studies creates a third lacuna. Whereas existing scholarship focuses on the British interest in the war until the Second World War, the second half of the twentieth century has so far received little scrutiny.

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<sup>2</sup> Only two, unpublished, PhD dissertations dealt with the memory of the Civil War, as a whole, from a transatlantic vantage-point: Hugh Dubrulle, "*A War of Wonders*": *The Battle in Britain over Americanization and the American Civil War* (PhD diss., UC Santa Barbara, 1999); and Samuel J. Graber, *Twice-divided Nation: The Civil War and National Memory in the Transatlantic World* (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2008). However, Graber's work reaches only as far as the 1890s and focuses on the American memory of the war. Dubrulle's study, despite reaching as far as the early twentieth century, focuses mainly on the war-years. See esp. ch. 9.

A fourth lacuna was created by the limited place that scholars have hitherto given to the United States in their works. The dominant approach to the study of the British view of the Civil War has focused on Britons' ability to shape the war's meaning according to relevant contemporary British affairs. Historians have emphasised, for example, the impact of the Great War and of the Irish question on British military and political thought about the Civil War, respectively.<sup>3</sup> This methodology has its virtues. Above all, it acknowledges the independent British interpretation of the conflict and shows how Britons shaped the war's meaning autonomously in a domestic context.

However, this approach undermines its own merits. It is too inward looking in that it only rarely considers a foreign influence on the British view of the Civil War and thus fails to recognise three key features of the British interest in the conflict. First, when Britons fashioned their understanding of the Civil War they usually drew on American sources that reflected American views of the conflict. *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915), for example, which was a cinematic manifestation of a Southern view of the conflict, was a cornerstone in British education about the Civil War.<sup>4</sup> Whilst scholars have identified an active British interpretation of the war, they have failed to appreciate its extent by overlooking a major means by which Britons reacted to and acted upon the war's American interpretations. A second feature is that, as Smith and Dubrulle observed, Britons' understanding of the war was closely tied in with their views of their contemporary United States.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on the British

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Brian Holden Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought: Debates with Fuller and Liddell Hart* (Lincoln, 1998), pp. 135-48; and Kenny, "Freedom and Unity".

<sup>4</sup> David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp. 394-5.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, "'The stuff our dreams are made of': Lincoln in the British Imagination", in: Carwardine and Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln*, p. 124; Dubrulle's entire PhD dissertation, cited above, adheres to this approach. For an example of its application in his work see: Dubrulle, "'We are Threatened with...Anarchy and Ruin': Fear of Americanization and the Emergence of an Anglo-Saxon

context to explain how Britons understood the war has downplayed the place of the United States as a pivotal part of this domestic context. The third feature is the British export of their own representations of the Civil War to the United States and their presentation of their view of the conflict before the American public. Here, too, the extent to which Britons used the war at home but also abroad has gone largely unnoticed.

Taken together, the picture that emerges from current studies is of an inward looking, fragmented and ephemeral British interest in the Civil War. This thesis challenges this view, and it does so through the application of a new methodology. First, it takes a broad thematic and temporal scope and examines British fascination with the war in the major spheres of British life as continuous and stemming from common sources. It reviews the links that connected the war's place in British politics, military thought, intellectual life and popular culture throughout the twentieth century. Second, it examines critically the American sources on which Britons drew, and explores the ways in which the British interpreted them. Third, it scrutinises Britons' views of the United States as part of the context that shaped their understanding of the Civil War. Finally, this thesis explores the British export of their interpretations of the conflict to the United States and the motivation behind it.

Such an analysis unearths a new picture that raises new questions. For one thing, it reveals that the Civil War had an exceptionally central place in British culture. It reveals that for a hundred and fifty years Britons have been fascinated with an American historical conflict, which penetrated the major sphere of British life. Imprinted onto the political discourse, military thought, intellectual life and popular

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Confederacy in England during the American Civil War', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2001), pp. 583-613.

culture, no other foreign conflict left such a deep, lasting mark on the British society as did the American Civil War. By comparison, the Austro-Prussian War (1866) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) have not sustained their appeal in Britain outside limited, mostly military circles.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the British enchantment with the Italian *Risorgimento*, which in midcentury was consensual and widespread, ultimately waned.<sup>7</sup> British interest in other foreign conflicts, such as the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), was even more short-lived. Conversely, the British fascination with the American Civil War remained high. At times, it even seemed to have intensified as the conflict moved further into history. To illustrate this point, the place of Giuseppe Garibaldi and Abraham Lincoln in British thought could be briefly compared. In the 1860s, the British “cult of Garibaldi”, in the words of Maura O’Connor, celebrated the Italian icon as a democratic and nationalist leader, a self-made-man and a freedom fighter.<sup>8</sup> Yet ultimately, Lincoln – a controversial figure in Britain at that time – was the one who overwhelmingly dominated the British thought as a foreign hero of exactly this character. The image of Garibaldi has in the meantime sunk into oblivion.

Following Tom Buchanan’s study, it seems that only the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) could potentially claim similar stature to the American war.<sup>9</sup> Yet much remains to be said in favour of the unique place reserved for the American conflict in British life. For one thing, the American war has sustained its appeal even a hundred

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<sup>6</sup> Dora Neill Raymond, *British Policy and Opinion during the Franco-Prussian War* (New York, 1921), see for example the British response to the French declaration of war, pp. 69-84; Peter H. Peel, *British Public Opinion and the Wars of German Unification, 1864-1871* (College Park, Md, 1981), pp. 162-200 and 284-88; P. M. Kennedy, ‘Idealists and Realists: British Views of Germany, 1864–1939’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 25 (Dec., 1975), pp. 140-2; Richard Millman, *British Foreign Policy and the Coming of the Franco-Prussian War* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 199-218.

<sup>7</sup> Maura O’Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 149-85; Kees Windland, *Garibaldi in Britain: Reflection of a Liberal Hero* (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2002), pp. 1-14.

<sup>8</sup> O’Connor, *The Romance of Italy*, p. 152. On the British image of Garibaldi see: *Ibid*, pp. 155-78.

<sup>9</sup> Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 30-1.

and more years after its end. Whilst the reasons for the rise and decline of British fascination with the war need to be examined, the fact remains that as late as the 1960s – and in some spheres even much later – the war was not forgotten across the Atlantic. Additionally, unlike the memory of the Spanish Civil War that since the 1990s has remained prominent mostly in Leftist circles in Britain, the American conflict won a place in the minds of Britons across the political and social spectrum.<sup>10</sup> Finally, not even the Spanish Civil War seems to have generated as broad and diverse a commemorative culture as the American war has. American Civil War Round Table and re-enactment societies, for example, began to appear in Britain as early as the 1950s and they have been flourishing here since the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> A first group to re-enact the Spanish war, the *La Columna*, appeared only in 2000, and its members have been playing mainly Britons and other foreigners who fought on the Continent, not the Spanish, as opposed to Britons re-enacting the American war who assume American identities.<sup>12</sup>

The above methodology reveals also that the British image of and interest in the Civil War was part of a wider transatlantic encounter between the British and the American conflict. Both actors were rich, complex, dynamic and independent. The war, in a word, was epic. It was seen as the first modern war; it saw extensive involvement of civilians and politicians in warfare and it featured strong moral aspects that touched upon questions of freedom and slavery, democracy, nationality and independence, to name just a few of the aspects affording the war with ‘epic’ traits. The war also generated multiple representations and interpretations that had

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<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> The thesis thoroughly discusses re-enactment in chapter five. Generally, the term refers to the popular activity of dressing in a similar way as in 1860s United States, re-creating period scenery and playing mock Civil War battles.

<sup>12</sup> For information about *La Columna* see the group’s web site: <http://www.lacolumna.org.uk/index.html>. Accessed on 12 Aug. 2012.

become part of its legacy. The Northern, Southern, conciliatory and African American narratives of the Civil War were the main, in many ways conflicting, views of the war. On the other side, the British were sophisticated, dynamic and independent interpreters. They autonomously turned to the war (that is, they interpreted the historical conflict as they saw it) as well as to its multiple interpretations (that is, they re-interpreted the war's different narratives) according to their needs and within a domestic and Anglo-American context. The autonomy and richness of each actor produced a complex, multi-faceted and dynamic historical phenomenon. The second section below elaborates on the character of these actors and on the scholarly significance of the encounter between them.

The transatlantic character of this encounter was manifest in several ways. For one thing, it was an encounter between an American war and its British interpreters. Additionally, the Civil War was widely regarded as the moment of birth of the modern United States, intrinsically tied in with that identity. The British understood the connection between the Civil War and the modern United States and as their approach to their contemporary United States changed so did their view of the war. The transatlantic facet of the British encounter was evident also in that the British frequently drew on American books, films, studies, artefacts and other American cultural commodities when constructing their view of the conflict. These sources, as noted, featured American understandings of their war. Finally, the encounter was transatlantic because the British at times exported their representations of the war to the United States and presented them to the Americans.

The above arguments, to be substantiated throughout the thesis, raise the two correlating and interlinked questions that drive this study forwards. Regarding the

argument about the war's centrality in British culture, the historian is compelled to ask why the British have been interested particularly in the Civil War and, furthermore, why has this foreign conflict played such central role in British culture. The transatlantic aspect of the British interest in the war, and even more so their autonomy in representing it raises the question of according to which principles and rules the British translated and used the war both in Britain and in the Atlantic arena. These questions are interlinked in that that an attempt to answer one necessarily touches upon and illuminates the other. Accordingly, the chapters that follow discuss these issues conjointly, separating them only when doing so contributes to further establishing the Civil War's central place in British culture and sheds further light upon the transatlantic encounter between the American war and the British.

## II

Honing key methodological points brings to the fore this study's potential contribution to the historical research of Anglo-American relations and of the long-lasting global impact of the Civil War. As a first step, owing to the focus of this thesis on the British encounter with the Civil War, a deeper examination of the complex and fluid character of the main actors that played a part in this encounter is called for.

As noted above, the Civil War was of epic proportions. In addition to its remarkable scope, many of the conflict's fundamental aspects have been a source for debate going on to this day, over a century and a half. Such debate includes the very causes that had led to the conflict;<sup>13</sup> the war's military aspects and its place in the

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York, 1980), pp. 194-245; for more recent studies see: Gary J. Kornblith, 'Rethinking the Coming of the Civil War: A Counterfactual Exercise', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 1, No. 90 (Jun. 2003), pp. 76-105; Frank Towers, 'Partisans, New History, and Modernization: The Historiography of the Civil War's Causes, 1861-2011', *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jun. 2011), pp. 237-64;

history of warfare have also been constantly reconsidered;<sup>14</sup> Lincoln's policies and military conduct have been a subject of discussion, as have the President's stance regarding race, slavery, black colonization and emancipation;<sup>15</sup> the role and experience of African Americans in the war has been equally debated and Reconstruction has generated a contested historiography of its own.<sup>16</sup> This is all to say that in addition to being epic, the Civil War was a complex historical affair, the understanding of which has been constantly evolving.

The symbolism that was associated with the war was equally complex and fluid. A single view of the Civil War's meaning never existed and it has generated multiple narratives. Broadly speaking, the conflict's legacy has been a continuous battle between the Northern, Southern, African American and conciliatory narratives of the conflict.<sup>17</sup> The Northern narrative emphasised the moral superiority of the North – which fought for the restoration of the Union and the abolition of slavery – over the decadent Confederacy. The Southern narrative, known as the Lost Cause, marginalised slavery as a cause of the war and emphasised instead the belief in the states' right to determine their internal affairs. It also celebrated Southern chivalry, and mourned the demise of the Southern way of life because of the war and because of Northerners and freed slaves' vengeance during Reconstruction. The African American narrative accentuated the place of slavery in the conflict and the role of

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and Michael E. Woods, 'What Twenty-First-Century Historians Have Said about the Causes of Disunion: A Civil War Sesquicentennial Review of the Recent Literature', *Journal of American History*, Vol. 99, No. 2 (Sep. 2012), pp. 415-39.

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, 'Total War and the American Civil War Reconsidered: The End of an Outdated "Master Narrative"', *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep. 2011), pp. 394-408.

<sup>15</sup> Stamp, *The Imperiled Union*, pp. 164-84; Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization after Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia, 2011), pp. 5-10.

<sup>16</sup> Carole Emberton, "'Only Murder Makes Men': Reconsidering the Black Military Experience', *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Sep. 2012), pp. 369-93; Eric Foner, 'Reconstruction Revisited', *Reviews in American History* Vol. 10, No. 4 (1982) pp. 82-100.

<sup>17</sup> For a succinct account of these see: Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 2008), pp. 2-4.

African Americans in its abolition. Additionally, it depicted Reconstruction as an unfinished project, in which slaves were legally freed but remained socially and politically repressed. Finally, the narrative of reconciliation celebrated the reinvigorated unity of the United States after the war and perpetuated the notion that neither the North nor the South was to blame for the conflict and that both the Union and the Confederacy fought for just causes.

Furthermore, research on the war's meaning in the United States showed that these representations and the battle between them had a deep impact on American society. It also revealed that the war's symbolism was flexible and that it has changed over time. Since Paul Buck's seminal work from 1937, historians have examined the role of the conflict's representations in American politics and society and used them to illuminate key processes in American history since the war itself to as late as the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> David Blight, for example, has shown how the rise of sentiments of reconciliation after the war suppressed the African American memory of the conflict, a process that reflected the social and political suppression of African Americans in the post-war United States.<sup>19</sup> Gaines Foster demonstrated how the Lost Cause fashioned and was fashioned by the development of the South in the 1880s and the rise of the New South.<sup>20</sup> This showed that these representations were not frozen in time. Rather, all Civil War narratives have constantly changed, as have the interaction

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<sup>18</sup> Paul H. Buck, *The Road to Reunion* (Boston, 1937). For works on the earlier period, between 1865 and 1914, see also: Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York, 1987); Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, 1993); Carol Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Blight, *Race and Reunion*; William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill, 2004); John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence, 2005). For recent works on the later period, mostly focusing on the 1960s, see: Robert Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge, 2007); David Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy*, pp. 79-103.

between them and their dominance in the United States. The great majority of historians agree that during the 1880s the conciliatory representation of the conflict began to dominate the American perception of the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> Having achieved its place at the core of American culture in the 1910s, this narrative was significantly challenged only around the period of the war's centennial (1961-1965), when the African American legacy of the conflict began to raise its head.<sup>22</sup>

Across the Atlantic, the British were also an autonomous historical actor. For the purposes of this study, the British views of the Civil War and of the United States are of particular importance. Indeed Britons had their view of the Civil War. Engulfed in its global resonance, the British in the 1860s acknowledged the epic scope of the conflict and they showed much interest in the events in America. As Richard Blackett has argued, "no other international event [...] had such a profound effect on the economic and political life in Britain as did the war in America."<sup>23</sup> As historians have

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<sup>21</sup> Obviously, there are dissenting voices, such as John Neff, whose study highlights the abyss and continuous resentment between North and South over the legacy of the war into the twentieth century. See: Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead*, pp. 4-13.

<sup>22</sup> Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, p. 5

<sup>23</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2001), p. 7. The literature on this subject is vast and it is customary to start surveying the historiography on the subject with Ephraim Douglass Adams's seminal work from 1925. See: Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (London, 1925). See also: D. P. Crook, *The North, the South and the Powers, 1861-1865* (New York, 1974); Philip S. Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York, 1981); Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1992); Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (Woodbridge, 2003); Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill, 2010). For economic perspectives see: Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 82-189; for a military analysis: Brian Holden Reid, 'Power, Sovereignty, and the Great Republic: Anglo-American Diplomatic Relations in the Era of the Civil War', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2003), pp. 45-76; for diplomatic and political examinations see: Phillip E. Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, 2008); and Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London, 2007), pp. 142-68. For a more focused study on the war's impact on British intellectuals and on democratic thought in Britain in the 1860s, see: Brent E. Kinser, *The American Civil War in the Shaping of British Democracy* (Farnham, 2011). For the war's impact on specific places and areas in Britain see: Lorraine Peters, 'The Impact of the American Civil War on the Local Communities of Southern Scotland', *Civil War History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Jun. 2003), pp. 133-52; Robert Huw Griffiths, *The Welsh and the American Civil War c. 1840-1865* (Unpublished PhD diss., University of Wales, Cardiff, 2004); Francis M. Carroll, 'Belfast and the American Civil War', *Irish*

shown, the British in the 1860s fashioned an independent understanding of the conflict and of the war's impact on their country in a domestic context and according to their own world-view.

Twentieth-century Britons have continued to appeal to the war and to its impact in Britain autonomously and continued to construct an independent understanding of the war's symbolism. For one thing, as noted, existing research has established that the British continuously fashioned the war's meaning in a British context. That, the present study shows, was true also of their reception of the American representations of the war. When the British used American sources, they chose from the American narratives of the war those narratives and aspects that they found relevant to contemporary British affairs and altered them accordingly. In addition, for twentieth-century Britons, the war's historical impact in their country had often been an abundant source of lessons and war narratives. The outlines of the most dominant narrative that emerged from the war's resonance across the Atlantic stressed that the British aristocracy had supported the Confederacy, based on sentiments of kinship, opposition to democratic reforms at home and on the hope of seeing the demise of the United States. The working class, according to this narrative, had endorsed the Union based on workers' support for democratic reform at home and of abolition. As Duncan Andrew Campbell has shown, this narrative of Britain's involvement in the conflict penetrated the twentieth-century academic debate on this subject.<sup>24</sup> The following chapters expand on Campbell's observation and show that the British have cherished narratives about their involvement in the conflict in other spheres too.

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*Studies Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2011), pp. 245-60; Nigel Hall, 'The Liverpool Cotton Market and the American Civil War', *Northern History*, Vol. 34 (1998), pp. 149-69.

<sup>24</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, pp. 1-13.

Equally, the British had their own independent views of the United States. Whilst British visions of the United States changed over time and often according to class, gender, race, political affiliation, vocation or plain personal considerations, two aspects, common to all these views, could be identified.<sup>25</sup> The first was that for the British, the United States symbolised a distinct and often unfamiliar set of political, social and cultural ideas.<sup>26</sup> James Bryce, for example, was fascinated with the unique form of American democracy and his monumental *The American Commonwealth* (1888) was an explicit effort to understand it.<sup>27</sup> Half a century later, preeminent media-man Alistair Cooke saw in explaining the character of American culture and society to the British his public mission.<sup>28</sup> His aim, he once noted, was to “explain [...] the passions, the manners, the flavour of another nation’s way of life.”<sup>29</sup> Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British observers, such as Frances Trollope, Harriet Martineau, James Silk Buckingham, E. S. Abdy, Charles Dickens, H. G. Wells, G. K. Chesterton and Harold Laski, made evident efforts to understand the United States.<sup>30</sup> This eternal endeavour showed that for the British, the United States was an archetype for a nation and society, which was in many ways unfamiliar.

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<sup>25</sup> For literature on the United States in British imagination see for example: Robert P. Frankel, *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890-1950* (Madison, Wisc., 2006); Catharine Armstrong, Roger Fagge and Timothy James (eds.), *America in the British Imagination* (Newcastle, 2007); Aurelian Craiutu and Jeffery C. Isaac (eds.), *America Through European Eyes: British and French Reflection on the New World from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Pennsylvania, 2009); Allen McLaurin, ‘America Through British Eyes’, *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 8 No. 5 (2007), pp. 694-714; Robert Singh, ‘Anti-Americanism in the United Kingdom’, in: Brendon O’Connor and Martin Griffiths (eds.), *Anti-Americanism: History, Causes, Themes* (Westport, Conn., 2007), pp. 183-95; Brook Miller, *America and the British Imaginary in Turn-of-the-Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York, 2010); James Epstein, ‘“America” in the Victorian Cultural Imagination’, in: Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault, *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 107-23.

<sup>26</sup> Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 231-59.

<sup>27</sup> Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London, 1888). On Bryce’s views of American democracy see: Russell L. Hanson, ‘Tyranny of the Majority or Fatalism of the Multitude? Bryce on Democracy in America’, in: Craiutu and Isaac (eds.), *America Through European Eyes*, pp. 213-236.

<sup>28</sup> Nick Clarke, *Alistair Cooke: The Biography* (London, 1999), pp. 129.

<sup>29</sup> Cooke, *Letters from America* (London, 1951), p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Frankel, *Observing America*.

At the same time, the second aspect of the British view of the United States was of a close and familiar political, social and cultural relative. Around the turn of the century, for example, the idea of a common Anglo-Saxon race that linked the two peoples closely together gained ground in Britain.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in the post-Second World War years, historians, such as H. C. Allen, H. C. Nicholas and A. C. Turner advanced an understanding of the relations between the United States and Britain that stressed their shared culture and set of values that connected the two countries and was the basis of what Frank Thistlethwaite called in the 1950s the “Atlantic community”.<sup>32</sup> “The central fact in the growth of this Atlantic community”, Thistlethwaite wrote in 1954, “was an informal partnership between the American and British peoples. However radically the political relation altered, the American Revolution did not change the fundamental pattern of economic and social relations across the Atlantic.”<sup>33</sup> Churchill’s influential *A History of the English-speaking Peoples*, advanced a similar narrative both within and outside academic circles.<sup>34</sup> Geographically distant and politically independent, in the eyes of many, the United States and Britain nevertheless shared a single culture, ideology and heritage.

The United States was close and familiar to the British in another sense, too. It was a growing power that has had an increasing bearing and influence on their affairs.

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<sup>31</sup> Jessica Bennet and Mark Hampton, ‘World War I and the Imagined Community: Civilization vs. Barbarism in British Propaganda and American Newspapers’, in Joel Wiener and Mark Hampton (eds.), *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 155-75. On Anglo-Saxonism in British and American thought see: Eric P. Kaufmann, *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Walter Lippmann coined the phrase “Atlantic Community” in 1917; the idea of an “Atlantic Community”, which encompassed not only Britain and the US, gained ground in the 1940s. See: William O’Reilly, ‘Genealogies of Atlantic History’, *Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2004), pp. 66-8. For an analysis along the line of Anglo-American Special Relationship see: H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations* (London, 1955); H. G. Nicholas, *The United States and Britain* (London, 1975); A. C. Turner, *The Unique Partnership, Britain and the United States* (New York, 1971). On American ideas of an Atlantic community see: Kenneth Weisbrode, *The Atlantic Century: Four Generations of Extraordinary Diplomats who Forged America’s Vital Alliance with Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Thistlethwaite, ‘Atlantic Partnership’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1954), p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Churchill, *A History of the English-speaking Peoples*, (London, 1956-1958).

W. T. Stead's prediction in 1902 of the Americanization of the world was but one famous example of Britons' understanding of the United States' growing presence in and impact on their life.<sup>35</sup> This understanding was more widely recognised when the impact became increasingly evident as the century wore on. Examples could be drawn from all spheres of life. Politically, the United States' involvement in the post-Great War treaties demonstrated its unprecedented involvement in world affairs, as, for example, did the joint Anglo-American efforts to bring stability to Europe through the Locarno Accords.<sup>36</sup> On a military level, the two world wars brought the United States closer to Britain than ever before;<sup>37</sup> and financially, after the First World War, Britain became debtor to the United States.<sup>38</sup> In the cultural sphere Hollywood's penetration of British popular culture since the 1920s was unprecedented. The increasing American presence in their lives called upon the British to take special notice of it. Subsequently, rather than just a faraway model, the United States was also seen as a familiar relative and part of the context in which Britons understood and experienced their world.

Historically, there were periods during which Britons stressed America's social, political and cultural foreignness and remoteness over its familiarity whereas in other times the opposite image was more dominant. For example, as noted, both around the turn of the twentieth century and after the Second World War Britons stressed America's familiarity. By contrast, other periods saw the British promoting a narrative that emphasised the difference between the countries, their often opposing

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<sup>35</sup> Stead, *The Americanisation of the World: Or the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1902).

<sup>36</sup> Patrick Cohrs, 'The First 'Real' Peace Settlements After the First World War: Britain, the United States and the Accords of London and Locarno, 1923-1925', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12 No. 1 (2003) 1-31; Margaret MacMillan, 'Isosceles Triangle: Britain, the United States, and the Dominions, 1900-26', in: Jonathan Hollowell (ed.), *Twentieth-century Anglo-American Relations* (New York, 2001), pp. 8-12.

<sup>37</sup> David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 49-71.

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen Burk, *Britain, America and the Sinews of War, 1914-1918* (Boston, 1985), pp. 1-10.

interests and their cultural differences.<sup>39</sup> This was the case, for example, with the historical school that in the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s challenged the Special Relationship interpretation. The Anglo-American partnership, stressed William Clark in 1957, “is not a natural and inevitable part of the structure of world politics. It is fragile, delicate and in constant need for careful nurture.”<sup>40</sup> Since the late 1980s historians such as Alex Danchev and David Reynolds, have built upon this revisionist analysis and showed how rivalries, interests and power shaped the un-special relations between the two, sometime very different countries.<sup>41</sup>

However, underneath the broad historiographic trends lies a more nuanced historical British perception of the United States as always close and familiar and at the same time also alien. As Duncan Bell has shown, in the second half nineteenth-

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<sup>39</sup> See for example: B. J. C. McKercher, ‘Introduction’, in McKercher (ed.), *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Edmonton, 1990), pp. 1-14; on the parallel American view of Britain at the same time see: Benjamin D. Rhodes, ‘The Image of Britain in the United States, 1919-1929: A Contentious Relative and Rival’, in *Ibid*, pp. 187-206; and John E. Moser, *Twisting the Lion's Tail: Anglophobia in the United States, 1921-1948* (Basingstoke, 1999). Although Moser over stresses the case for American Anglophobia.

<sup>40</sup> Clark, *Less Than Kin: A Study of Anglo-American Relations* (Boston, 1957), p. 1. For studies that emphasised Anglo-American cultural and political rivalries and suspicions see: John Trumbour, *Selling Hollywood to the World: U.S. and European Struggles for Mastery of the Global Film Industry, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 119-99; Dubrulle, “‘We are Threatened with...Anarchy and Ruin’”. On British antagonism towards American culture see for example the British reaction to McCarthyism in Jussi M. Hanhimaki, “‘The Number One Reason’: McCarthy, Eisenhower and the Decline of American Prestige in Britain, 1952-1954’, in: Hollowell (ed.), *Twentieth-century Anglo-American Relations*; and the British view of Vietnam in John Dumbrell, *A special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (Houndmills, 2001), pp. 149-59; on the British antagonism to American cinema: Tom Ryall, *Britain and the American Cinema* (London, 2001), pp. 14-36; and Paul Marshall, ‘The Lord Chamberlain and the Containment of Americanization in the British Theatre of the 1920s’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Nov., 2003), 381-394. On specific critical British views of the United States: on Carlyle see, Brent E. Kinser, *The American Civil War in the Shaping of British Democracy*, (Farnham, 2011), pp. 13-51; on Bagehot see: Frank Prochaska, *Eminent Victorians on American Democracy: The view from Albion* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 47-71. See also studies on Anti-Americanism in Britain. For example: Robert Singh, ‘Anti-Americanism in the United Kingdom’, in: O'Connor and Griffiths (eds.), *Anti-Americanism*, pp. 1-17.

<sup>41</sup> Danchev, *On Specialness: Essays in Anglo-American Relations* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 1-12. The recent seminal works here is are by David Reynolds, see for example: Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (London, 1995). See also: Alan P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers* (London, 1995); J. Hollowell, ‘Isosceles Triangle: Britain, the United States, and the Dominions, 1900-26’, in: Hollowell (ed.), *Twentieth-century Anglo-American Relations*, pp. 8-13; S. E. Graham, ‘American Propaganda, the Anglo-American Alliance, and the “Delicate Question” of Indian Self-Determination’, *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33 (2009), pp. 223-59.

century, for example, when pan-Anglo-Saxon sentiments were peaking, America occupied the place of part of a larger Anglo-American political, social and cultural entity as well as a foreign competitor and even a threat in British mind.<sup>42</sup> In the post-Second World War years, too, there were those for whom the United States was a close relative whereas others saw it as a foreign country with its own, sometimes hostile culture and political interests.

This thesis brings the dual sense of concomitant American familiarity and foreignness in British mind – indeed, sometimes in the mind of a single historical protagonist – to the forefront. It shows how the United States, familiar and increasingly present in British lives, was even by the 1970s also, to use Alexander Stephan’s words, “a country almost as unknown as it had been in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was more the locus of wishes, dreams, and fears than a place of real experience”.<sup>43</sup> Accordingly, the thesis examines how Britons autonomously used the Civil War as a prism through which to explore, understand, comment on and communicate with the United States, especially in light of its growing impact on their world.

Clearly, then, the Civil War and its British interpreters were independent historical subjects, each complex and ever changing. In order to preserve their independence and complexity, this study often focuses on the gaps between them. Being a story of a transatlantic encounter between the British and a historical American war, this work concentrates on gaps and bridges between history and its representation and between British and American representations of history.

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<sup>42</sup> Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 242-57.

<sup>43</sup> Stephan, ‘Cold War Alliances and the Emergence of Transatlantic Competition: An Introduction’, in Stephan (ed.), *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism After 1945* (New York, 2006), p. 15.

Accordingly, the thesis argues that whilst twentieth-century Britons were fascinated with the Civil War, as it had ended in 1865, they often encountered the conflict through a mediating agency. A plausible agency might have been memory. Within memory studies scholars have argued that collective memory could be fashioned in an international context.<sup>44</sup> Such works have opened the way to explore, as Samuel Graber has, the memory of the Civil War through a transatlantic lens.<sup>45</sup> However, for the present work, memory posed a difficulty since few of the protagonists in this study could have remembered the war, having being born after it had ended. As Duncan Bell has argued, the idea that memory could be passed to future generations has not yet been substantiated and, for physiological and psychological considerations, it is questionable that it will.<sup>46</sup> Memory, then, was an unstable foundation upon which to build this work.

Rather than memory, this thesis argues that what bridged between the conflict of the 1860s and twentieth-century Britons were the Civil War's representations. Representations here imply the continual use, construction and reconstruction of historical events that one had not necessarily experienced into utilisable "facts" and narratives. For example, *The Birth of a Nation* was a representation of the Civil War to the extent that it presented a narrative of the conflict that was meaningful to

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<sup>44</sup> For an early review of the field and its challenges see: Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5 (Dec., 1997), pp. 1386-403; Kerwin Lee Klein, 'On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse', *Representations*, No. 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering (Winter, 2000), pp. 127-50; and Patrick Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', *The History Teacher*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Aug., 2000), pp. 533-48. For studies on global and cross-borders memory see: Aleida Assmann, 'Introduction', in: Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, (eds.), *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 1-16; Peter Howard, *Heritage: Management, Interpretation, Identity* (London, 2003), pp. 1-10 and 175-6; Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, (trans. Assenka Oksiloff), *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 1-13; Dan Diner, 'Memory and Restitution: World War II as a foundational Event in a Uniting Europe', in: Dan Diner and Gotthard Wunberg (eds.), *Restitution and Memory: Material Restoration in Europe* (New York, 2007), pp. 9-20.

<sup>45</sup> Graber, *Twice-divided Nation*.

<sup>46</sup> Bell, 'Agonistic Democracy and the Politics of Memory', *Constellations* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2008), pp. 148-51.

contemporaries in 1915 and had bearing on their life. The same was true about Lord Charnwood's 1916 biography of Lincoln.<sup>47</sup> The purpose of this thesis is in many ways to track the development and realisation of such representations and narratives and examine what the gaps between them and the historical events in America in the 1860s could tell about the ones who created and used them. These representations were manifest in the sources – like *The Birth of a Nation* – upon which Britons constructed their understanding of the conflict and in the sources – like Charnwood's *Lincoln* – that were generated by their interest in the war. For this reason, these resources constitute the main corpus of primary sources in this work.

The other, physical and theoretical, gap upon which this thesis focuses is the one between the British and the American representations of the Civil War. Physically, that the British often drew on the Civil War's American representations raises the question of their export from the United States across the Atlantic. As noted, the Civil War played a key role in modern American life and gradually it became a prominent and integral feature of American culture.<sup>48</sup> Subsequently, representations of the war penetrated every corner of American life: from political discourse to scholarly work to military thought to popular culture. From there, the road overseas was short. American films, novels, games, studies, statues, artefacts and television series that featured the Civil War became common cultural exports, especially after the early decades of the twentieth century when American cultural

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<sup>47</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1916).

<sup>48</sup>For a survey of literature on the subject see: Matthew Grow, 'The Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory', *American Nineteenth Century History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2003), pp. 77-103. For studies published after Grow's article, see: Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2003); Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, (eds.), *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (Chapel Hill, 2004); Will Kaufman, *The Civil War in American Culture* (Edinburgh, 2006).

export significantly increased.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, if cultural export was chiefly unintentional and stemmed from the fact that the Civil War was a central prism through which Americans understood themselves, the United States exported the Civil War also deliberately. For example, as Jay Sexton has shown, the United States Information Agency had used Lincoln's image as a means of cultural diplomacy to spread a benign image of the United States abroad during the Cold War.<sup>50</sup>

Methodologically, the gap between British and American views of the Civil War was created by the British interpretation of American representations. That is, that the British – who, as shown, had their own views of the Civil War – widely used American sources to construct their view of the conflict meant that they translated and adapted and thus altered American culture. This, in turn, requires situating this thesis more fully in the academic debate about Anglo-American cultural exchanges.

As stressed, this study is based on the accepted wisdom that every American cultural transmission that was received in Britain was adapted to a British locale. Other models were available. An older view, for example, focused on American cultural export and rarely considered its reception abroad.<sup>51</sup> This scholarship suggested, implicitly or explicitly, that at the other end, American culture was received willingly and as sent. This, in turn, implies that foreign people were passive in their reception of American culture, that American culture had a fixed meaning and

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<sup>49</sup> See for example Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York, 1982), pp. 87-107; Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York, 1995), pp. 75-119; and Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 1-14.

<sup>50</sup> Sexton, 'Projecting Lincoln, Projecting America', in: Carwardine and Sexton, *The Global Lincoln*, pp. 288-308.

<sup>51</sup> For example: Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*; Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*. For a recent survey on studies about Americanization see: Volker R. Berghahn, 'The Debate on Americanization Among Economic and Cultural Historians', *Cold War History*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2010), pp. 107-30. See also: Walter LaFeber, 'The United States in Europe in an Age of American Unilateralism', in R. Laurence Moore and Maurizio Vaudagna (eds.), *The American Century in Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2003), pp. 25-46.

that the process of cultural export was one-sided. By contrast, this thesis argues that the British were active in their reception of Civil War representations. Building on Michel de Certeau, it contends that:

The presence and circulation of a representation [...] tells us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization.<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, the thesis shows that as a cultural export that embodied American values, the Civil War was dynamic and ever changing; and that Britons exported their understanding of the war westwards using the Atlantic's two-way cultural highway.

A different approach, dominant since the 1990s, suggests a more complex view of American cultural export and of transatlantic exchanges by looking also on the receiving end, i.e. on the countries that received the American cultural export. Here, too, some methodologies proved more useful than others for the purposes of this thesis. Scholarship that examined American cultural export in terms of imperialism or colonialism often focused on the process by which American culture had overtaken foreign cultures and Americanized foreign institutions. In his study of the Americanization of Germany, Ralph Willett, for example, stressed that almost without exception “goods from private American agencies, ideology, and media events were accepted willingly.”<sup>53</sup> This scholarship thus validates the methodologically problematic suppositions of the studies that examined only the American side. These findings were not in line with the plethora of evidence used in this thesis that showed the reverse, namely that upon arriving in Britain, American

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<sup>52</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1984, trns. Steven Rendall), p. xiv.

<sup>53</sup> Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949* (London, 1989), p. 2; see also: Herbert I. Schiller, *Culture, Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression* (New York, 1989), pp. 111-34; Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill, 1994, trans. Diana M. Wolf), esp. ch. 8.

culture became subjected to the local culture and institutions and was altered accordingly.

From the opposite direction, the studies that argued for overwhelming rejection of American culture in Britain also did not match the story told by the sources examined in the dissertation. For example, the contention that during the interwar period the British elite abhorred and rejected American culture is at odds with the evidence showing that British military intellectuals were often enthusiastic about American values, an enthusiasm which was reflected in their representations of the Civil War.<sup>54</sup> If not Americanized, Britons often did accept American culture and adopt American values for a variety of reasons that this thesis exposes.

Since this is a study of an encounter between an independent American war and autonomous British interpreters, it belongs in a more mutual, refined and complex analytical framework. A framework was thus sought that would preserve the independence of both the Civil War and the British, and at the same time allow for the examination of the alteration of both as an outcome of their encounter. Victoria de Grazia argued in 2003 that American cultural imperialism, created “a New Europe, but a close ally of the Market Empire rather than the exact image of the United States.”<sup>55</sup> Still emphasising the power of American cultural imperialism, according to De Grazia American culture transformed Europe but at the same time was transformed by it. From a more Eurocentric vantage point, Richard Pells, giving

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<sup>54</sup> John Trumbour, *Selling Hollywood to the World: U.S. and European Struggles for Mastery of the Global Film Industry, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 119-99; Dubrulle, “We are Threatened with...Anarchy and Ruin”. See also studies on Anti-Americanism in Britain. For example: Singh, ‘Anti-Americanism in the United Kingdom’, pp. 1-17.

<sup>55</sup>De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, p. 11. See also: Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford, 2005), esp. pp. 35-59.

priority to local culture, has suggested that upon arriving in Europe, American culture was transformed according to domestic views and affairs.<sup>56</sup>

The present study is subtly located between De Grazia and Pells. It shows, on the one hand, that the Civil War and the American values that were embedded in it often kept their American identity, even when Britons re-interpreted them at home. On the other hand, it is shown that Britons were aware of the American nature of both the war and the values it embedded. It is shown further that the British did not challenge the war's American traits, indeed if and when they did not challenge it, consciously in order to make the conflict useful precisely as an American cultural symbol. Using and even assuming American values, Britons nonetheless kept their British independence and were not Americanized or culturally colonised.

This approach allows for a more nuanced analysis of Anglo-American cultural relations. For example, and again building on De Certeau, it allows for the consideration that the British subverted American culture and representations, “not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept”.<sup>57</sup> “The system”, in the present case, consists of the American traits of the war, discussed here earlier, that could not be detached from it. Moreover, examining the Civil War as an independent historical agent, this work allows to see it as often unconscious or “reluctant propagandist”, to use Jessica Gienow-Hecht's terminology.<sup>58</sup> This brings to the fore the spontaneous aspect of the British encounter with the Civil War, and indeed of the continuous

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<sup>56</sup> Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York, 1997). See also: David W. Ellwood, ‘American Myth, American Model, and the Quest for a British Modernity’, in Moore and Vaudagna (eds.), *The American Century in Europe*, pp. 131-50. Specifically about Britain see also: Hugh Wiford, ‘Britain: In Between’, in Stephan, *The Americanization of Europe*, pp. 23-40.

<sup>57</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xiv.

<sup>58</sup> Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany, 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge, 1999), p. 2.

British encounter with the United States. These encounters, after all, were shaped by free and casual cultural engagements more than by intentional propaganda. This thesis thus adds important nuances to the complex model that the existing scholarship offers.

Furthermore, this thesis emphasises the mutual nature of Anglo-American cultural exchanges. Scholars have shown that in the Atlantic sphere, cultural transmissions travelled in both directions.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, we now know much more about the British cultural export to the United States and its reception there as well as about the American image of Britain.<sup>60</sup> Building on this methodology, this thesis looks at a somewhat different phenomenon, namely a British export of British culture dressed in American clothes. That is to say, it examines how Britons presented British views on domestic and Anglo-American affairs to the Americans by using Civil War representations and by linking American values with British affairs.

In keeping with the above, the thesis' main contribution is to the study of the Civil War's long lasting transatlantic impact and of its continual place in Anglo-American relations. Scholars have become increasingly interested in the global and lingering impact of the Civil War. From an economic perspective, a good example is Sven Beckert's work, which examined the war's immense and enduring impact on the

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<sup>59</sup> For theoretical works accounts: Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, 'Introduction: Decentering American History', in Gienow-Hecht (ed.), *Decentering America* (New York, 2007), pp. 1-14. Daniel Rodgers is a classical work that shows how ideas travelled between Britain and the United States in both directions. See: Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998). See also: Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform* (Chapel Hill, 2007); and Gienow-Hecht, *Sound Diplomacy: Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850-1920* (Chicago, 2009).

<sup>60</sup> A. M. Burton, 'When was Britain? Nostalgia for the Nation at the End of the "American Century"', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (2003), pp. 259-374; Frank Prochaska, *The Eagle and the Crown: Americans and the British Monarchy* (New Haven, Conn., 2008); Nicholas Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American "Neutrality" in World War II* (New York, 1995); Fred M. Leventhal, 'Public Face and Public Space: The Projection of Britain in America Before the Second World War', in Leventhal and Quinault (eds.), *Anglo-American Attitudes*, pp. 212-26.

global cotton market.<sup>61</sup> Examples from the military sphere have existed for a long time, often in studies about the origins of the Great War and of total warfare.<sup>62</sup> Equally, the Civil War has had a cultural impact, which seemed to have had a no less long-lasting global reach. Civil War re-enactment, for example, has spread as far as Australia, and it is known that *The Birth of a Nation* had an evident impact in France.<sup>63</sup> Scholars have also shown the international reach of Lincoln's legacy.<sup>64</sup> The scholarship on the lasting global cultural impact of the conflict is in its infancy and needs more attention. Above all, there is no one complete case study that examines the war's lingering cultural impact in a place other than the United States. Examining the central place of the war in British culture in depth and breadth not yet attempted, the present work begins to fill this lacuna in the understanding of the extent of the Civil War's lingering universal impact.

A second field to which this thesis contributes is that of Anglo-American relations. Academic scepticism notwithstanding, historians have in recent years established the need for a cultural approach to the study of Anglo-American – and international – relations.<sup>65</sup> Within this field, scholars have shown how historical

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<sup>61</sup> Beckert, 'Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 5 (Dec., 2004), pp. 1405-38. See also, Douglas R. Egerton, 'Rethinking Atlantic Historiography in a Postcolonial Era The Civil War in a Global Perspective', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (Mar., 2011), pp. 81-5. See also: W. Caleb McDaniel and Bethany L. Johnson, 'New Approaches to Internationalizing the History of the Civil War Era: An Introduction', *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jun. 2012), pp. 145-50.

<sup>62</sup> See for example: Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization, and Field Command* (Bloomington, Ind., 1988), pp. xi-xvii; Mark E. Neely Jr., 'Was the Civil War a Total War?', *Civil War History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Mar. 1991), pp. 5-28.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen Gapps, 'Authenticity Matters: Historical Re-enactment and Australian Attitudes to the Past', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 23 (2003), p. 110; Melvyn Stokes, 'Race, Politics, and Censorship: D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* in France, 1916-1923', *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Fall, 2010), pp. 19-38.

<sup>64</sup> Carwardine and Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln*.

<sup>65</sup> See for example: Cull, *Selling War*; Jessica Bennett and Mark Hampton, 'World War I and the Imagined Community', pp. 155-75; Inderjeet Parmar, 'Anglo-American Elites in the Interwar Years: Idealism and Power in the Intellectual Roots of Chatham House and the Council on Foreign Relations', *International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Apr. 2002), pp. 53-75; For criticism on the "cultural turn" in the field of international relations see: David Reynolds, 'International History, the Cultural Turn and

consciousness functioned as cultural diplomatic tools that contemporaries used in order to understand and shape Anglo-American relations. David Reynolds for example, has argued that the notion of the Special Relationship has been a constructed instrument that was used in order to advance both American, but mostly British interests in the years since the Second World War.<sup>66</sup> Similar work has been conducted regarding the notion of Anglo-Saxonism. Edward Kohn, for example, has shown that Anglo-Saxon rhetoric was a “device” that was “utilized in responding to Anglo-American crises and their resolutions.”<sup>67</sup>

The Civil War and its representations have not yet been scrutinised through this lens. This study contributes to the toolkit of the historian of Anglo-American relations by showing how the British used narratives of the war as a tool at home and in the transatlantic arena in order to understand and shape Anglo-American relations. It thus presents the Civil War as another prism through which to examine these relations. Potentially, unlike the notion of the Special Relationship, which emerged in the 1940s, and the sentiments of Anglo-Saxonism, which reached and passed their

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the Diplomatic Twitch’, *Cultural and Social History*, 3 (2006), pp. 87–90. Reynold’s main difficulty with the cultural approach is with questions of agency and causation. For a response to critics, and with special emphasis on the problem of causation see: Frank Ninkovich, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865-1890* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), pp. 5-9. See also: Markus Mösslang and Torsten Rlotte, ‘Introduction: The Diplomats’ World’, in: Mösslang and Rlotte (eds.), *The Diplomats’ World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 17-19.  
<sup>66</sup> Reynolds, ‘Roosevelt, Churchill and the wartime Anglo-American Alliance’, 1935-1945: Towards a New Synthesis’, in: William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds.), *The “Special Relationship”: Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (Oxford, 1986), p. 85-6. See also: Reynolds, ‘Rethinking Anglo-American Relations’, pp. 94-9. There the Special Relationship is a British “stratagem”. See also: Danchev, *On Specialness*, pp. 1-12; Danchev, ‘The Cold War “Special Relationship” Revisited’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, (2006), Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 579-95; David Watt, ‘Introduction: The Anglo-American Relationship’, in: William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds.), *The “Special Relationship”*, pp. 5-6; Steve Marsh and John Baylis, ‘The Anglo-American “Special Relationship”: The Lazarus of International Relations’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2006), pp. 173-211; William Wallace and Christopher Phillips, ‘Reassessing the Special Relationship’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (2009) 263-284; John Dumbrell and Axel R. Schäfer, ‘Introduction: The Politics of Special Relationship’, in: Dumbrell and Schäfer (eds.), *America’s “Special Relationships”: Foreign and Domestic Aspects of the Politics of Alliance* (London, 2009), p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montréal, 2004), p. 12. See also, Ninkovich, *Global Dawn*, pp. 90-4. For a critical view of the role of Anglo-Saxonism in U.S. foreign policy see: Jay Sexton, ‘Toward a Synthesis of Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1848-77’, *American Nineteenth Century History*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2004), pp. 63-5.

zenith around the turn of the century, the Civil War and its representations would allow, *inter alia*, for another way to study the ever-changing Anglo-American cultural relations since the war to the present day.

This brings to the fore the chronological and thematic scope of this thesis. This study examines a period of nearly a hundred and fifty years. Such chronological scope is clearly too broad and this work does not pretend to present an account of a century and a half of Anglo-American history. The wide canvass of this work is not a goal in itself but an instrument. Above all, a broad perspective was needed in order to overcome the weaknesses of the existing fragmented scholarship and present a concerted analysis of the interlinked and continuous British interest in the Civil War. Additionally, in an attempt to explore the full spectrum of possible British views of the conflict and the full range of British utilisation of these views in both a British and Anglo-American context, a broad chronological scope was needed that encompassed changes in both British and Anglo-American history.

In order not to sacrifice depth for breadth, this work is constructed of case studies in political, military, intellectual and social British history in which the Civil War played a central part. For the explicit interest in the war that they reflected and for the richness of evidence that they provided, these cases are the basis upon which this thesis draws its arguments about the underlying factors that rendered the war special in British culture and about the nature of the encounter between the British and the Civil War.

The study is divided thematically into the four fields of politics, military thought, intellectual life and popular culture. Each chapter exposes a spectrum of British uses of the Civil War in a particular field, which in turn reflects a range of

views both of domestic affairs and of the United States. Since Britons' view of local affairs and of America varied, their interpretations of the Civil War, even in a single field, were myriad and manifold. Together, the chapters expose the full range of British uses of the war and thus the full scale of this cacophony. It is precisely this multiplicity of voices that each chapter, and the thesis as a whole, wishes to emphasise in order to answer this study's main question regarding British use of the Civil War. However, each chapter, as the thesis itself, also finds the harmony that exists and permeates this tension. Turning to De Certeau a final time, the thesis holds that, after establishing that "users make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules. We must determine the procedures, bases, effects, and possibilities of this collective activity."<sup>68</sup> The chapters' connectedness and the thesis' internal coherence lie in that they expose a varying multiplicity and the constant principles based upon which it flourishes.

Whilst the thesis asks to find the principles upon which the British interest in and use of the Civil War was founded, its internal coherence lies also in showing a relatively linear change of focus in the British view of the war. Chronologically, it demonstrates British focus shift from looking to the war for political lessons to military lessons to lessons about civil rights and even entertainment. These lessons, however, were not exclusive. If the British focus changed from politics to warfare in the 1920s and 1930s, the American war's political aspect merely moved to the background rather than disappeared.

The opening chapter examines the use of the Civil War in British political discourse by focusing on the Irish question between the 1880s and the 1920s. The

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<sup>68</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xv.

chapter demonstrates the growing awareness amongst British politicians of the enduring strength of the American political system and their acknowledgement that American power might influence what Britons saw as domestic British affairs. The second chapter looks at the war's role in military thought mainly through the works of the three preeminent military thinkers of the century: Frederick Maurice, Basil Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller. Alongside an emphasis on the impact of the Great War on their understanding of the Civil War, this chapter shows that military thinkers' views of the United States were also influential in determining how they interpreted the war's military and non-military lessons.

The following chapter takes issue with the war in the eyes of British intellectuals through their biographical writings about Abraham Lincoln. To present a novel analysis of this subject the chapter examines not only that which made Lincoln an appealing icon to the British, but also that which rendered him and his legacy problematic to British appropriation. The next two chapters deal with popular culture. Chapter four examines the British reception of American films that were milestones in the history of Civil War representations whilst the fifth chapter focuses on British societies dedicated to the study and re-enactment of the conflict. In the first historical account of these popular clubs, the reasons for their initial appearance in the 1950s and their continuous popularity to this day are inspected and discussed.

The concluding chapter draws on the findings of all previous chapters in order to present an inclusive picture of the British use of the Civil War and an explanation as to why twentieth-century Britons were fascinated with that particular conflict. In so doing, this thesis depicts for the first time a coherent, inclusive and nuanced picture of

the American Civil War as it was understood from across the Atlantic and through a historically distanced perspective.

## **Chapter One – The American Civil War in British Political Discourse: The Anglo-Irish Conflict as a Case-Study**

In his seminal study, Joseph Herson (1968) has argued that British Unionists used the Civil War in order to buttress their arguments against Irish Home Rule in the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> According to Herson, those who opposed the initiative used the war as precedent to stress the need for, and even moral superiority of, national unity. Recently, Kevin Kenny has shown that Unionists and later Home Rule advocates who opposed Irish independence had used the image of Lincoln to a similar end as late as the 1920s.<sup>2</sup> However, Kenny has shown that Irish nationalists used Lincoln's image in support of their calls for national freedom. Herson and Kenny provided ample evidence showing that the Civil War was an important point of reference in the debates in Britain about the Irish question.

This chapter explores why British politicians turned to the Civil War specifically by examining how they used the American conflict in the context of the debate about Ireland. The above studies partly account for one reason for this when they show that the Civil War was useful in advancing different British views on the Irish question. Kenny in particular has contributed to the understanding of the British appeal to the conflict when showing that Lincoln's image presented relevant and useful lessons on both national unity and national freedom. In this, Kenny has begun to shed light on the multifaceted nature of the war and its ability to buttress an array of political views.

The present chapter similarly argues that one reason for British politicians' appeal to the war was that it was multifaceted and could convey diverse, at times

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<sup>1</sup> Herson, *Celts, Catholics & Copperheads: Ireland Views the American Civil War* (Columbus, 1968), pp. 115-35.

<sup>2</sup> Kenny, "'Freedom and Unity': Lincoln in Irish Political Discourse', in: Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln* (New York, 2011), pp. 157-71.

opposing lessons. As such, Britons holding different political views on domestic affairs, such as the Irish question, could find the Civil War relevant, providing both a justification for their different opinions and a common arena for discourse. This chapter advances this argument in two ways. First, it details how Britons began to turn to the war for political lessons when the Irish question came to the fore in British politics in the 1870s and made certain political aspects of the war relevant. Second, it shows that the Civil War was useful also for supporters of Irish Home Rule, who in the 1880s and 1890s sought a middle-path regarding the Irish question between Unionists and Irish nationalists and argued for limited devolution for Ireland.

This chapter further demonstrates that British politicians turned to the war because of its meaning and the values that it came to embody from the late nineteenth century. For many in Britain in the 1860s the Civil War projected political weakness, national disintegration and hatred to be criticised and abhorred. The United States and its conflict did not appear, at the time, to provide positive lessons. However, during the five decades that followed Appomattox the meaning of the war changed. The post-war representations of the conflict gradually portrayed it as a manifestation of gallantry, patriotism, brotherhood and love of the Union. Additionally, the war came to explain the birth of modern, post-war American federalism. In that way, the war presented values with which the British willingly associated themselves.

However, the values embedded in the war's representations would not have been as appealing but for the growing prominence of the United States. Since the later part of the nineteenth century, the Civil War came to explain a political model that proved highly successful. The United States grew in every aspect – from industry to population to finance to military power – and the Civil War was presented as a key

element of this success. Additionally, because the conflict became an American symbol, it also became a path through which to approach the Americans. The chapter shows that when the United States became a pivotal actor on the world stage, Britons exported to America their views on Anglo-Irish affairs through the prism of the Civil War. In this, they hoped to cultivate American understanding and sympathy regarding Britain's Irish policies.

In keeping with the above, the chapter follows three parallel developments, which, it argues, led British politicians to internalise, use and export narratives of the Civil War. The first was that Irish parliamentary nationalism began to undermine the British political system from within, generating a thorough discussion about the nature of the British union. This, in turn, made the question of union and secession, which lay at the basis of the war, relevant to British politicians as never before. A second development was that of the Civil War becoming a symbol of American greatness, unity and national brotherhood. The third development was a change in the British perception of the United States, from a questionable political experiment to a world power. The combination of the above made the Civil War exceptionally appealing to British politicians.

Finally, it is important to note that in the context of the Irish question, the British did not fashion their view of the Civil War in a vacuum. Rather they often reacted to an Irish understanding and use of the conflict. Accordingly, although the focus here remains on the British, this chapter gives much space to the Irish representation of the American war as well.

## I

From the very outbreak of hostilities Britons were exposed to the contesting notions of political unity and political autonomy that were embedded in the rhetoric explaining the Civil War. British correspondents and envoys reported from America, and throughout the war, Northern and Southern agitators worked indefatigably in Britain to convey their respective – naturally conflicting – ideas about these issues.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, as historians have already pointed out, Britons could and did draw parallels between the war in the United States and the questions that it raised about nationalism and British affairs.<sup>4</sup>

However, in the Irish context, for Britons of the mid 1860s the debate about national autonomy and unity was almost irrelevant outside Irish nationalist circles. True, since the Act of the Union in 1800, Anglo-Irish relations had been ever turbulent.<sup>5</sup> Compared with Scotland and Wales, Ireland seemed a less natural addition to the union, and both the Irish and British constantly debated the nature of their relations.<sup>6</sup> However, the turmoil of Ireland's relationship with the United Kingdom, especially in the Civil War era, should not be overstated. The 1850s, for example, was a relatively calm decade. Additionally, Fenians and members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) had remained unorganised and divided until at least late 1863.<sup>7</sup> As Richard Blackett has argued, many at that time recognised that “no British

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<sup>3</sup> See for example: R. J. M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts, Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2001), pp. 128-37.

<sup>4</sup> Herson, *Celts, Catholics & Copperheads*, pp. 90-1; D. P. Crook, 'Portents of War: English Opinion on Secession', *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1971), pp. 176-7; Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London, 2003), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State, From Repeal to Revolutionary Nationalism* (Montreal, 2006), pp. 40-42; S. J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland, 1630-1800* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 484-93.

<sup>6</sup> Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct., 1992), p. 314.

<sup>7</sup> R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848-82* (Dublin, 1985), pp. 68-116.; and Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood, from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 24-33.

government had ever conceded the legitimacy of calls for independence in either [India or Ireland].”<sup>8</sup> For a time there was no reason to think that this would change. With danger to their political order far from sight, Britons saw few political lessons to draw from the war in America regarding Ireland’s status within the British union.

For Irish nationalists, the case was different. In Ireland, mass-movements promoting ideas of national autonomy began to appear as early as the 1790s.<sup>9</sup> By 1861, notions of self-rule were not new and hardly irrelevant to Irish nationalists, who thus saw the conflict in America as a timely opportunity to advance their goals. As Herson has noted, Irish nationalists were aware of the analogy between the secession of the South in the United States and their aspirations for national autonomy at home.<sup>10</sup> However, in the context of the Irish question, Irish nationalists, both at home and in America, viewed the war chiefly in a pragmatic way that was based on two main assumptions. First, they thought that they could find an ally or allies in America. That is, supporters of the Union reasoned that a unified United States would be a natural and invaluable ally in their fight against Britain.<sup>11</sup> Much along the same lines of reasoning, Irish support of the Confederacy stemmed partially from the belief that two American nations – a northern one and a southern one – would pose greater opposition to Britain than one.<sup>12</sup> A second pragmatic calculation was that the war was an opportunity to gain military training to be utilised later against the British.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1989), pp. 289-317 and 390-95; Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 13-37.

<sup>10</sup> Herson, *Celts, Catholics & Copperheads*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell Snay, *Fenians, Freedmen, and Southern Whites: Race and Nationality in the Era of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 2007), pp. 65-76.

<sup>12</sup> Herson, *Celts, Catholics & Copperheads*, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York, 2006), p. 54.

However, Irish nationalists interpreted events erroneously. For one thing, military lessons from the Civil War, such as guerrilla warfare and the use of explosives, achieved limited success and endorsement when they crossed the Atlantic. The methods employed during the Dynamite War in the 1880s, for example, roused mainly bitter feelings, even amongst the Irish.<sup>14</sup> It was clear, too, that trained as they might have been – and an Irish-American military elite did emerge out of the war – the Irish did not have the discipline, organisation or military power to stand against the British.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Irish nationalists had misread the political map. Seeking an ally in America, they failed to realise that despite evident tensions, Anglo-American relations were in fact on the road of rapprochement. As Phillip Myers has argued, rather than undermining Anglo-American rapprochement, the Civil War in many senses contributed to this motion.<sup>16</sup> The failed raids in Canada between 1866 and 1871, by which Fenians sought to incite a transatlantic conflict, but instead met with Anglo-American cooperation, or the celebration of the Treaty of Washington (1871), were good indications that by this stage a war between Britain and the United States was but a daydream.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hernon, *Celts, Catholics & Copperheads*, pp. 114-19; K. R. M. Short, *The Dynamite War, Irish-American Bombers in Victorian Britain* (Bristol, 1979), pp. 1-7; Niall Whelehan, “‘Cheap as Soap and Common as Sugar’: The Fenians, Dynamite and Scientific Warfare”, in: Fearghal McGarry and James McConnel, (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism, Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), p. 107; on guerrilla warfare, waged primarily by the South, see: Anthony James Joes, *America and Guerrilla Warfare* (Lexington, 2000), pp. 51-62; Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 2009), pp. 9-25; and Clay Mountcastle, *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals* (Lawrence, 2009), esp. pp. 21-55.

<sup>15</sup>David Sim, ‘Filibusters, Fenians, and a Contested Neutrality: The Irish Question and U.S. Diplomacy, 1848–1871’, *American Nineteenth Century History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2011), p. 275. For the lack of organisation and discipline see: Shin-Ichi Takagami, ‘The Fenian Rising in Dublin, March 1867’, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 115 (May, 1995), pp. 340-362; Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, pp. 116-127; and McGee, *The IRB*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>16</sup>Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, 2008), pp. 1-7.

<sup>17</sup>For an account of the raids see: Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Toronto, 1978), pp. 81-135; for the raids’ diplomatic repercussion see: Myers, *Caution and Cooperation*, pp. 245-47; Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special*

As mentioned earlier, the Civil War had few political implications for the British regarding Ireland. This began to change towards the war's end. "It is only since the termination of the American war and the appearance of Fenianism", stated W. E. Gladstone in the House of Commons in 1868, "that the mind of this country has been again turned to Irish affairs."<sup>18</sup> British politicians were conscious of Irish nationalists' aspirations and supposed gains from the war, and they linked the conflict and its possible repercussion on Anglo-Irish affairs much as the Irish did. In 1866, John George, former Solicitor-General for Ireland, expressed his anxiety in the House of Commons about the war's implications on the military abilities of Irish nationalists. Fenianism, he feared, "had attained a greater power and strength in consequence of the hundreds and thousands of men who had been disbanded at the termination of the American Civil War."<sup>19</sup> The Fenians stir, then, brought together in the British mind, lessons from the Civil War, British politics and the question of Ireland.

However, the Fenians in America as the IRB at home were illegitimate extra-parliamentary movements. They did not generate a genuine debate about the political status of Ireland in the British union. Since British politicians did not see a concrete challenge from Ireland to the integrity of the union, the Civil War continued to bear limited relevance to Anglo-Irish politics. A week before John George expressed his distress about the potential danger of the Fenians' military skills, Earl Russell had raised his concerns in the House of Lords:

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*Relationship* (London, 2007), pp. 176-87. On Fenianism and Anglo-American diplomacy in this period see: Sim, 'Filibusters, Fenians, and a Contested Neutrality', pp. 265-87.

<sup>18</sup> W. E. Gladstone in the House of Commons on 30 Mar. 1868, in: Isaac Butt, *Ireland's Appeal for Amnesty: A Letter to the Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone, M.P.*, *Bristol Selected Pamphlets* (1870), p. 22.

<sup>19</sup>HC Deb 22 Mar. 1866, Vol. 182 cc740-74.

With regard to Fenianism, I believe my noble Friend the Under Secretary of State said what was perfectly correct when he contended that it was another of those movements coming from foreign countries; that as the movement of 1798 had been connected with the French Republic, and as the movement of 1848 was connected with the revolutionary ideas which were rife at that time on the Continent, so this Fenian movement of our own day has been connected with the American Civil War.<sup>20</sup>

For the British, as Russell's words made clear, Irish radicalism, the Civil War and the idea of a fight over national unity and national freedom that both represented, were American and thus foreign. As such, Russell calmly predicted that "[t]hat spirit, I trust, will not be one of long duration, and it certainly is not one which ought to be connected with the general condition of Ireland."<sup>21</sup> He was largely correct. As a source for potential conflict with the United States or for Irish military power, Britons had no reason to worry about the Civil War's impact. Additionally, they saw no reason as of yet to look to the United States for relevant lessons on this matter.

The 1870s saw a profound shift in the British attitude to the Civil War. Starting from this period, three parallel developments moved Britons to see the conflict's political aspects as relevant. The first was a change in the Irish question. In the early 1870s, as Irish revolutionary activism declined, an Irish parliamentary movement, under the leadership of Isaac Butt, became the leading voice of Irish nationalism.<sup>22</sup> This movement first made Irish Home Rule a conceivable, if at this stage unlikely, political model for Britain.<sup>23</sup> Butt's idea of Home Rule ran along federal lines. "I believe", he stressed in 1870, "that Ireland would be happier and better under a Federal Union with England than she would be either as a member of the American Confederation, or as an independent nation under the protection of any

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<sup>20</sup>HL Deb 16 Mar. 1866 Vol. 182 cc358-418.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Kelly, 'Dublin Fenianism in the 1880s: "The Irish Culture of the Future"?', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Sep., 2000), pp. 729-50.

<sup>23</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 397-9.

European power.”<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, whether within the Empire or not, the Irish question began to undermine the nature of the British union from within the British political system.

A second development was a change in the British perception of the United States. The Civil War cast doubts on the viability of the American political system.<sup>25</sup> Many in Britain saw the conflict as a test that would reveal whether American democracy – a novel political ideology and form of government – could endure.<sup>26</sup> Deterred by the scale of violence and sceptical that reunion could ever be achieved, some saw the war as evidence that the American experiment had already failed.<sup>27</sup> However, after the war and as the century wore on, the United States proved to be everything but an abortive endeavour. Increasingly industrialised and populated, rapidly growing financially and more willing to practice its power in the western hemisphere, the durability of the Gilded Age United States was unquestionable.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, British political thinkers frequently used the United States as a practical model through which to assess their own governmental system.<sup>29</sup> As Hugh Tulloch has observed, even conservatives, previously critical of the United States, had by the 1880s come to commend it.<sup>30</sup> As time passed, the success and resilience of the American model became more evident, less doubtful and thus a more applicable model.

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<sup>24</sup> Butt, *Home Government for Ireland: Irish Federalism!: Its Meaning, Its Objects, and Its Hopes* (Dublin, 1870), p. 76.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>26</sup> Brent E. Kinser, *The American Civil War in the Shaping of British Democracy* (Farnham, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Amongst the most famous and ardent criticsers of the American democracy was Walter Bagehot, Editor of the *Economist*, who saw in the American political system part of the cause for the war. See: *Ibid.*, pp. 102-5.

<sup>28</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower, U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 265-98.

<sup>29</sup> Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 231-57.

<sup>30</sup> Tulloch, ‘Changing British Attitudes towards the United States in the 1880s’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec., 1977), pp. 825-40.

The third development was the continuous consolidation of the representation of the war that depicted it as a glorious constitutive moment for the modern United States. This was true especially with the rise of the conciliatory narrative of the war in the latter part of the century. This narrative emphasised that both Northerners and Southerners showed their Americanism and patriotism in the fighting.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, rather than a symbol of national decline, the war was rooted in contemporary American memory, culture and national identity as a moment of rebirth into greatness. It came to symbolise patriotism, citizens' love for their nation and national unity.

Notions of a noble fight for secession were perpetuated in the Southern legacy of the war, known as The Lost Cause. However, whilst according to this narrative secession was legitimate, it was also stressed – again, especially with the rise of sentiments of reconciliation – that the South did not want to take this path and was forced to do so when its way of life was endangered. The narrative of reconciliation accommodated these sentiments alongside the celebration of reunion. Subsequently, the view of the Civil War as a patriotic and romantic event that had united America and forged the modern American political system became the dominant narrative of the conflict.<sup>32</sup>

The change in the nature of the Irish question, the growing prominence of the United States and the rise of the conflict's reconciling representation made the Civil War appealing to British politicians. Examining Ireland's political status in the union, they now began to internalise the war and to draw lessons from the American

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<sup>31</sup>John R. Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence, 2005), pp. 161-62.

<sup>32</sup>Peter Parish, 'Abraham Lincoln and American Nationhood', in: Susan-Mary Grant and Peter J. Parish, (eds.), *Legacy of Disunion: The Enduring Significance of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2003), p. 117.

experience that the war's narratives reflected. Thus, when Butt presented his political scheme in the House of Commons on 2 May 1872, Gladstone reminded him that:

You cannot have two supreme authorities in a country; and as in the great American Civil War it was the Federal Government and the Federal Legislature which found it necessary to take into its own hands the circumscription of the liberties of the States, and the solution of the controversy which had formerly been raised on that subject.<sup>33</sup>

The Prime Minister did not neglect to remind Butt that the war also gave the Fenian “conspiracy” an “additional scope”, but the focus of the speech was clearly elsewhere. Increasingly, the military and diplomatic aspects of the war's possible impact on Anglo-Irish affairs gave way in British political discourse to its political facets. Furthermore, as Gladstone's words showed, rather than looking at the Civil War as a foreign affair, external to British politics, British politicians started to appropriate the conflict, apply it to the British union and draw lessons from it.

Evidently, Gladstone presented a contemporary and legitimate British reading of the Irish question and, consequently, of the Civil War. For one thing, Butt did not call for secession as did the Confederate states, but rather for an Irish autonomy fully subordinated to British rule. In fact, Butt – an imperialist who saw Ireland as an integral part of the British Empire – repeatedly stressed that he “was anxious to maintain the union.”<sup>34</sup> Gladstone also denied the Irish claim based on a construction of the British union as an American federation. He further omitted from his analogy the liberties that the American states enjoyed under the Federal Union and which were denied to Ireland, e.g. having a state legislature. Appealing to American heritage, Gladstone nonetheless filled it with British substance.

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<sup>33</sup>HC Deb 2 May 1872 Vol. 211 cc140-69.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

As the century progressed, and at the time when the American growth became increasingly evident, so too the Irish question became more pressing. Succeeding Butt, in 1882 Charles S. Parnell had established the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and cemented the idea of Irish Home Rule in British political discourse. By 1885, the IPP had expropriated the Irish vote in Ireland from Liberal hands, and became the latter's indispensable, if inconvenient, political partner.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, British Liberals had to alter their use of the Civil War. Instead of accentuating the war's unifying force, Liberals began to emphasise the political liberty that the war and its aftermath had secured for the individual states. On 13 April 1886, Gladstone, whose Liberal Party was by now politically shackled to Parnell's IPP and who now promoted his own Home Rule bill, told the House of Commons:

My Right Hon. friend finally laid very much stress on the case of the United States of America. He pointed out that insidious advisers recommended the Northern States not to insist upon the maintenance of the Union, but that they did insist on the maintenance of the Union and carried their point. Why, true, sir; but, having carried their point, what did they do? Having the Southern States at their feet, being in a position in which they were entitled to treat them as conquered countries, they invested every one of them with that full autonomy, a measure of which we are now asking for Ireland.<sup>36</sup>

To great cheers, Robert Wallace, Liberal MP for Edinburgh East, expressed a similar position in a Junior Liberal Association's convention in Glasgow in 1887. To Conservatives and Liberal Unionists who argued that federalism was but the first step towards full separation, Wallace answered that "[t]he experience of the American Republic proves that that is an utter fallacy."<sup>37</sup>

Gladstone's later reading of the Civil War in a way that supported Home Rule was no less selective than his previous reading that opposed the same motion. He

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<sup>35</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 400-28.

<sup>36</sup> W. E. Gladstone, *Speeches on the Irish Question in 1886* (Edinburgh, 1886), p. 66.

<sup>37</sup> Wallace, *Home Rule in America Being a Political Address Delivered in St. Andrew's Halls on Tuesday, 13 September 1887 by Andrew Carnegie, Esq. under the Presidency of Robert Wallace, Esq., M.P. edited from the text of the Scottish leader Glasgow*, p. 13.

knew, for example, that his bill offered Ireland a very different status in the United Kingdom than that of the American states under the Federal Union. Although this time he did not omit mentioning the liberties held by the American states, Gladstone's bill did not allow for Irish representation in Westminster in the same way that the American states were represented in Congress. However, if Gladstone's use of the Civil War pointed to a change in the Liberals' interpretation of the war, it did not show a change in their understanding of the meaning of the war as a constitutive moment in American history. The Liberal interpretation continued to perpetuate and depend upon the idea that the Civil War had made the United States a thriving nation and a successful political model.

The Civil War further provided Home Rule advocates with the evidence that self-rule could in fact guarantee quieter and closer Anglo-Irish relations. The rise of the narrative of reconciliation in the 1880s, which acknowledged Southern sentiment, made the Civil War an example for national brotherhood that was secured by a degree of political autonomy. This, it showed in turn, secured a stronger political order. In an 1886 essay in support of Irish Home Rule, E. L. Godkin, an Ulster-born American and founder of the influential journal *The Nation*, wrote that:

The withdrawal of the Federal troops from the South by President Hayes, and the consequent complete restoration of the State governments to the discontented whites, have fully justified the expectations of those who maintained that, if you remove what you see to be the cause, the effect will surely disappear. It is true, at least in the Western world, that if you give communities a reasonable degree [of freedom to manage their own affairs], it is sure in the long run to do the work of creating and maintaining order.<sup>38</sup>

Concessions on national unity, Godkin claimed, drawing upon the war's reconciling message, brought order to the United States. On this basis, Godkin advocated Irish

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<sup>38</sup> Godkin, 'American Home Rule', in: W. E. Gladstone et. al., *Handbook on Home Rule, Being Articles on the Irish Question* (London, 1887), p. 5

Home Rule. Evidently harnessing the legacy of reconciliation in support of Irish self-rule, Samuel Smith, a Gladstonian Liberal MP for Liverpool, called in 1884 to overcome the bitterness in Anglo-Irish relations by taking example from the post-war American brotherhood:

No war excited deeper animosity than that war [...] It was said both before and during the war that it would be impossible to bridge over the chasm. But it had been bridged over [...] There had now been for several years past the most sincere desire for amicable relations, and, to a large extent, it had been attained.<sup>39</sup>

By the turn of the century Smith would have had amended his position on Home Rule and called to oppose it. However, in the 1880s, reconciliation and limited devolution seemed to him to be the keys to stronger Anglo-Irish unity, as they proved to be in the United States. In this way, the war exemplified the notion that a degree of self-rule promised to generate deeper nationalistic feelings and thus provided the basis for a strong nation.

With Home Rule becoming a conceivable notion and possible reality in Britain, opposition to Irish autonomy intensified. Conservatives and Liberal Unionists were not at all convinced that Home Rule was not, as Robert Wallace promised, in fact a step towards secession. In a speech in the House of Commons on 11 April 1893, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, Conservative Civil Lord of the Admiralty, loyally presented the case against Home Rule and its employment of Civil War analogies:

I know that an attempt has been made to compare the 45 States Governments of the United States to a separate Irish Parliament. The analogy is ridiculous, and absolutely false, and could only have occurred to the mind of some academical philosopher, who is totally unfitted for practical politics. There is a far closer analogy between our present local government system of County Councils and the State Legislatures of America, than between those Legislatures and a separate Irish Parliament. It was, indeed, to prevent a separate Congress for the whole Southern States that the North undertook the great Civil War of 1861. It is an interesting coincidence that the present Prime Minister of England [Gladstone] was then on the side of the Separatists of the United States, just, as he is now the chief apostle

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<sup>39</sup>HC Deb 20 Feb., 1884 Vol. 284 cc1465-526.

of separation in the United Kingdom. I believe that [...] the people of the United Kingdom will decide in favour of Union, just as did 30 years ago the people of the United States. If the progress, the wealth, and the prosperity of the people of the United States appear now to be almost boundless, it is mainly because they came to this great national decision 30 years ago, that any sacrifice was worthy to be undertaken in order to maintain their Union.<sup>40</sup>

In 1886, Liberal Unionist Joseph Chamberlain had raised the same arguments against Gladstone's first Home Rule bill – including the emphasis on the latter's support of the Confederacy during the war.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Home Rule advocates, Unionists and Liberal Unionists appealed to the war to draw parallels between Irish autonomy and the South's secession. Home Rule, they argued, would bring the United Kingdom to the verge of destruction, as did the Southern secession to the United States.

Despite their use of the Civil War to buttress opposing Irish policies, both Unionists and Home Rule advocates appealed to the war because it represented a powerful political model. Both factions saw it as the historical event that explained the contemporary “almost boundless” prosperity of the United States. The United States and the Civil War were in turn flexible enough for British politicians, Unionists and Home Rule advocates alike, to use for opposing purposes. Moreover, the use of the Civil War and of the United States by both sides showed that the wartime popular view of the conflict as evidence of the weakness of the American system had become a marginal one. To those who might have still criticised the federal system as the cause for the Civil War, James Bryce, an academic and Liberal MP for Aberdeen South, answered in his seminal 1888 study of the United States:

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<sup>40</sup>HC Deb 11 Apr. 1893 Vol. 11 cc29-116.

<sup>41</sup>Chamberlain, *Home Rule and the Irish Question: A Collection of Speeches Delivered Between 1881 and 1887* (London, 1887), pp. 60-1.

not merely that the national government has survived this struggle and emerged from it stronger than before [...] but Federalism did not produce the struggle, but only gave to it the particular form of a series of legal controversies over the Federal pact followed by a war of States against the Union.<sup>42</sup>

Whilst Bryce did not write much about the Irish question, his monumental *The American Commonwealth*, the accepted work on America in Britain at that time, provided a picture of the United States as a strong, unified nation.<sup>43</sup> Upon such an image, British Unionists drew their analogies between the Civil War and the Irish question. No longer was the strength of the American political system questionable, and no longer could it be argued that the Civil War had proved this system brittle. On the contrary, now the Civil War came to explain the rise of post-war American power.

The clash between Unionists and Home Rule supporters led to scrutiny of the British involvement in the Civil War. Whilst in the above examples both factions appealed to historical events that took place in the United States, events in Britain during the war now proved to be relevant to the debate as well. When Chamberlain and Ashmead-Bartlett accused Gladstone of being a supporter of the Confederacy in the 1860s, they did not draw from American history or use American heritage. Rather, they looked back to Britain's history. "I remember", said Chamberlain in 1886, "that in the time of its greatest crisis [...] my Right Hon. friend [Gladstone] counselled the disintegration of the United States."<sup>44</sup> As with American heritage, the British use of their heritage was selective. Gladstone supported the Confederacy during the war. However, he did not think that secession or the breaking of the Union were positive or desirable. As Howard Jones has argued, Gladstone believed, like many of his contemporary Britons, that the Union could not be restored and that, in light of this,

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<sup>42</sup> Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London, 1888), p. 340.

<sup>43</sup>On Bryce's impact on British views of the United States see: Tulloch, 'Changing British Attitudes towards the United States in the 1880s', pp. 825-40.

<sup>44</sup> Chamberlain, *Home Rule and the Irish Question*, p. 61.

Britain ought to stop the carnage in America.<sup>45</sup> In the debate with Chamberlain, Gladstone tried to make this point and argued that he “did not counsel” the breaking of the Union. This was to no avail.

This showed that for the British two aspects of the Civil War were important. One was the American aspect, which they interpreted, translated and appropriated. When Unionists and Home Rule advocates appealed to the Civil War as an event that established a strong national model and planted the love for the federal Union in the hearts of all Americans, they drew on the American heritage of the conflict. These, after all, were seen as part of the war’s impact on the United States. The other was the British aspect of the war, which focused on Britain’s involvement in the war and on the war’s impact on Britain.

Britons’ stances towards the war whilst it was raging became morally charged and politically powerful in the post-war domestic political discourse. In 1892, for example, the Duke of Argyll opened his argument against Home Rule thus:

I took an early part in trying to set right the misguided current of feeling which at first set strongly in England against the American Union in the great Civil War. Both on the ground that slavery was the institution really fought for by the South, and also on the ground of the right of the American Union to fight for its single nationality, I felt that the “North” was in the right, and that the cause of civilization was at stake in the success of the Union. My feeling and opinion on the Irish question of Home Rule is founded on the same convictions.<sup>46</sup>

The Duke of Argyll used the Civil War and his stances during the war as a point of reference in order to reaffirm his contemporary character and political reasoning. Based on his stances regarding the Civil War in the 1860s, he hoped to give additional credence to his position regarding Ireland in the 1890s. As shown in the second

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<sup>45</sup> Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over Britain’s Intervention in the Civil War* (London, 1992), pp. 183-85. Bryce, however, supported Irish home rule.

<sup>46</sup>The Duke of Argyll, ‘English Elections and Home Rule’, *The North American Review*, Vol. 155, No. 429 (Aug., 1892), p. 129.

section below, by the second decade of the twentieth century, the question of the British response to the war in the 1860s had diplomatic consequences, too.

Whereas Unionists, Home Rule advocates and Irish nationalists all found in the Civil War an applicable analogy, this was not to last. Following a fundamental change in Irish nationalism in the late 1910s, the uses of the Civil War in Britain underwent an additional shift, this time solely within Irish circles. The enactment of the third Home Rule bill in 1912 and its suspension in 1914; the Easter Rising and the British reaction to it in 1916; and the conscription crisis in 1918 brought constitutional nationalism in Ireland to an end. In its place, the radical wing of Irish nationalism, the Sinn Féin, led by Arthur Griffith, took the reins.<sup>47</sup> When Irish aspirations were no longer for autonomy within the Empire, but rather for complete independence, the Civil War became an inadequate source for them upon which to draw. During the conscription crisis in 1918, for example, prominent IPP member Joseph Devlin told the House of Commons that:

The Leader of the House [Andrew Bonar Law] in his speech, quoted from his favourite statesman, President Lincoln, as to what he was prepared to do if men were not prepared to conscript themselves into the American Army. I am afraid the right hon. Gentleman does not understand the difference between the two situations. President Lincoln was conscripting Americans in America in defence of American rights. You are conscripting Irishmen, and Ireland is not your country.<sup>48</sup>

Daniel Boyle and Jeramoah MacVeagh, other IPP members, used similar language and drew on the same chapter in American history during that debate. Flexible as it was, the Civil War had always been perceived in British politics as a war that had established a great, united nation and as a conflict that both proved and further

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<sup>47</sup>Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 461-493; Karen Stanbridge, 'Nationalism, International Factors and the "Irish Question" in the Era of the First World War', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (2005), pp. 25-31; Adrian Gregory, "'You Might As Well Recruit Germans": British Public Opinion and the Decision to Conscript the Irish in 1918', in: Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, (eds.), *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite Us All?* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 113-29; Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland, The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 3-76.

<sup>48</sup>HC Deb 12 Apr. 1918 Vol. 104 cc1885-2006.

propelled patriotism. As such, it could not have provided Irish nationalists with the support they needed when they aspired for complete autonomy.

Ultimately, during the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921) Irish nationalists rejected the analogy between the Civil War and the Irish question altogether. In July 1921, the *Irish Bulletin*, Sinn Féin's official publication, published a two-part article in which it stated that:

It has been the practice of British ministers to draw an analogy between the War of Independence in Ireland and the Civil War in America [...] The analogy is false both in essentials and in detail. There can be no question of secession on the part of the Irish people, who have always denied the right of the British Government to rule Ireland or to include her in the territories of the Empire.<sup>49</sup>

Instead of the Civil War, the article suggested an alternative American precedent, which explicitly appeared in its title: "The True Analogy, The American Revolution and the Irish War of Independence". The new analogy gained ground quickly. Responding to Jan Smuts' plea for the Irish to accept Britain's offer to grant Ireland a dominion status, Mary MacSwiney, a prominent Sinn Féin member, told the Dáil Éireann on 14 September 1921:

Take the strong analogy that lay between the position today and that of the American colonies in 1778. England then made all the promises and offers she was making to Ireland today. There were compromisers who at all costs wanted to remain with England. Even those who supported the Republic were divided, and Congress would have accepted a compromise were it not that George Washington and the army stood out. They in Ireland to-day knew they had a George Washington at their head not a Jan Smuts.<sup>50</sup>

For Irish nationalists in their struggle for independence, the American War of Independence became the comfortable source from which to draw analogies.

Against Irish radicalisation, British politicians felt increasingly comfortable with the Civil War analogy and with the political ideas of national unity for which it stood. Lloyd George denounced Éamon de Valera, a Sinn Féin leader and President of

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<sup>49</sup>*Irish Bulletin*, Vol. 5 No. 34, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Dáil Éireann, Vol. 4, 14 Sep. 1921.

Dáil Éireann, as being worse than Jefferson Davis because of de Valera's insistence on keeping Ulster as part of a future Irish state. Davis, Lloyd George argued, at least did not demand autonomy for those who did not want it.<sup>51</sup> "Jefferson Davies's [*sic*] more moderate claim was fought for by the whole strength of the majority of the States of the American Union", he noted.<sup>52</sup> Home Rule advocates and Ulster Protestants, who now sought to grant Ireland a degree of autonomy whilst keeping Ulster fully in the union, used the Civil War, as Unionists had done in an earlier period, to argue against the more radical demand of Irish nationalists for full independence.

The increasing British tendency to use Civil War analogies is understandable. As seen, the American conflict could not have supported complete disunion. This made the Irish opposite tendency to reject the Civil War as an apt analogy equally logical. However, the new Irish practice of appropriating the American War of Independence might raise some questions. After all, the Irish argued that they were not fighting, as did the Americans in the 1770s and 1780s, for future independence, but rather that they were struggling to regain a lost independence. Irish nationalists might have done better to have promoted their goals by drawing parallels with the Polish uprising of the mid 1860s or the Hungarian revolt of 1848, as Griffith had famously done before.<sup>53</sup> For Griffith, a central feature in the Hungarian analogy was that Ireland, like Hungary, had lost its previously-held independence.

However, American analogies had an advantage that other analogies lacked: they were understood in America. By the late 1910s, as the Irish question reached a boiling point and American power peaked, this had become a central consideration.

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<sup>51</sup> 'Notes by Lloyd George', 20 Mar. 1920, in: Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Speeches, LG/F/243 1920, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> 'Notes on de Valera', in *Ibid*, not dated.

<sup>53</sup> Griffith, *The Resurrection of Hungary, A Parallel for Ireland* (Dublin, 1918, [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), pp. ix-xii,

Unlike Hungary and Poland, the United States had become a world power; unlike Hungary and Poland, there was a significant Irish electorate in the United States. These, as the next section shows, made American analogies far more relevant to the British and Irish than Polish, Hungarian or other analogies. By the late 1910s, the Civil War and War of Independence analogies had transcended the borders of Parliament. Lloyd George's comparisons of the Anglo-Irish quarrel with the Civil War provide a good example in that they gained publicity through the press and became well known to the British, Irish and American public.<sup>54</sup> However, even as British and Irish politicians naturally sought their people's support, as the dispute between them escalated, and American power became more real and evident, it was the United States that both sides courted.

## II

Early on, both Unionists and Home Rule advocates acknowledged the potential influence of the United States on Anglo-Irish relations. During his ten-week tour of the United States in late 1879 and early 1880, Parnell explicitly declared in the House of Representatives that, "the public opinion of the people of America will be of the outmost importance in enabling us to obtain a just and suitable settlement of the Irish question [...]."<sup>55</sup> Also from the start, both opponents and supporters of Irish Home Rule used Civil War analogies when they attempted to attract audiences across the Atlantic. In 1892, for example, Gladstone, himself addressing an American

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, the *Leitrim Observer*, 26 Jun. 1920, p. 2; and *Freeman's Journal*, 29 Aug. 1921, p. 6 for a reprint of an article from the *American Daily News*.

<sup>55</sup> Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, or the Story of the Land League Revolution* (London, 1904), p. 198.

readership, accused the Duke of Argyll of trying to manipulate American public opinion by drawing false parallels between the Civil War and the Irish question.<sup>56</sup>

However, even by the mid 1910s there were still those, on both sides, who did not ascribe much significance to an American involvement in Anglo-Irish relations. Referring to American opinion on the issue, Lord Robert Cecil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated in 1916: “I do not myself take a very serious view of this aspect of the question at present”.<sup>57</sup> On the Irish side, too, it is worth noting that Parnell’s was a brief single visit to the United States, which harvested minimal success in pressing the Irish question into the mainstream of American politics.<sup>58</sup> Parnell’s successor, John Redmond, visited the United States three times in 1899, 1904 and 1910 but yielded no more than unofficial American sympathy. Additionally, at this stage Irish endeavours in the United States focused chiefly on rallying Irish-Americans rather than on appealing to Americans as such. At the same time contemporary American interests were focused on internal affairs and on the western hemisphere, and intervention in Anglo-Irish affairs seemed unlikely.

By the late 1910s, however, that situation had changed. For both the Irish and British, American involvement in the Great War had turned the United States from a faraway model to a leading actor on the world stage. As Katherine Hughes, representative of the Irish Women’s Council of America, told the House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1918: “America must intervene to

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<sup>56</sup>W. E. Gladstone, ‘A Vindication of Home Rule, a Reply to the Duke of Argyll’, *The North American Review*, Vol. 155, No. 431 (Oct., 1892), pp. 385-391. For the Duke of Argyll’s arguments see: The Duke of Argyll, ‘English Elections and Home Rule’, *The North American Review*, Vol. 155, No. 429 (Aug., 1892), p. 129.

<sup>57</sup>Memorandum by Lord Robert Cecil opposing the granting of Home Rule to Ireland, 26 Jun. 1916 in: Asquith Papers, MSS 45, 10-14, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

<sup>58</sup> Alan O’Day, ‘Media and Power: Charles Stewart Parnell’s 1880 Mission to North America’, in: Hiram Morgan, (ed.), *Information, Media and Power Through the Ages: Papers Read before the 24th Irish Conference of Historians, held at University College Cork, 20-22 May, 1999* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 216-17.

aid Ireland in her struggle for self-determination because America now is the world's arbiter.”<sup>59</sup> As the United States' centrality in, and impact on, global affairs became more profound and more evident, so the British and Irish views of its potential role in the Irish debate changed. Whilst since the 1870s neither side had ascribed any special importance to potential American mediation, this was to change gradually as American involvement in the dispute became the primary concern of both. American acceptance of the Irish call for independence would have put considerable pressure on Britain to accept partition; an uninterested America, by contrast, would have signalled that as far as the United States was concerned, the Irish question was a domestic British affair. Both the British and Irish acknowledged that and wanted to have the United States on their side. To this end, they began to export to the United States their opposing positions on the Irish question portrayed using the values embedded in the narratives of the Civil War.

At the end of the Great War, Irish nationalists looked to America with renewed hope. It was, after all, Woodrow Wilson who, more than any other contemporary politician, declared the war as one fought in the name of national freedom.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, the now radical Irish leadership worked ceaselessly to rally the United States to its cause. In a letter from Mary MacSwiney, just back from the United States, to de Valera, still there, the former stressed that she was “certain that all energies should be concentrated on that country [...] In my opinion it is absolutely essential that a lot of the very best and most suitable people should go there at once

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<sup>59</sup> The Irish Question, Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 12 December 1918 (printed 26 Feb., 1919), p. 73.

<sup>60</sup> Mary N. Harris, 'Irish Americans and the Pursuit of Irish Independence', in: Matjaz Klemencic and Mary N. Harris (eds.), *European Migrants, Diasporas and Indigenous Ethnic Minorities* (Pisa, 2009), pp. 135-8; Stanbridge, 'Nationalism, International Factors and the "Irish Question" in the Era of the First World War', pp. 21-42; Finnegan, 'Irish-American Relation', pp. 95-110; Francis M. Carroll, 'The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919', *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1985), pp. 103-18.

[underlined in original].”<sup>61</sup> As opposed to Parnell or Redmond before them, MacSwiney and de Valera – amongst the most prominent and most representative Irish leaders of the time – did not hurry back to Ireland during the decisive moments in the country’s history. On the contrary, they rushed to the United States.

As their perception of the United States’ place in the world changed, Irish leaders started to export to the United States Irish-selected narratives of American history and heritage. In the same speech in San Francisco, for example, MacSwiney told her audience that:

[...] the books that I carry around with me are the Declaration of Independence of the United States, the Constitution of the United States, and the War Speeches of Woodrow Wilson. I want those of you who are of Irish blood to realize that it is not as Irish-Americans that you can best help Ireland today, but by being American citizens. I want those of you who are not of Irish blood [...] to realize that if you are going to be true One-Hundred-Per-cent Americans, you must be true to the ideals and the traditions of this great country, and the better Americans you are, the more you love freedom, the closer you are to follow the precepts of Washington and Jefferson and Patrick Henry and Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln [...]

Unlike her predecessors, MacSwiney did not go to the United States in search of the Irish. Rather she was after “true One-Hundred-Per-Cent Americans” and she thought that the best way to appeal to them was through their own history, heritage and values. Accordingly, to convey her message, MacSwiney reiterated what by this time had become a regular motif in her American speeches: “In 1776, you declared your independence, and in 1916 we declared ours [...] I ask the people of America to give us our Yorktown this year by recognizing the government of the Irish republic by that date.”<sup>63</sup>

What made MacSwiney’s presentation of American history Irish were the events that she chose to emphasise, not the narratives she ascribed to them or the

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<sup>61</sup> De Valera papers, University College Dublin, Archive, P150/656. (henceforth cited as UCD)

<sup>62</sup> Mary MacSwiney Papers, UCD, P48a/173, pp. 3-4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6

values that she tied to them. The Irish presentation of the American War of Independence correlated with the way contemporary Americans understood it. For them, too, it symbolised national freedom and the overthrowing of tyranny. The Irish ability to present their case in a language the Americans both understood and agreed upon was precisely their strength.

Within the intensifying war for the American heart, the narratives of the Civil War were to become a deciding battlefield. The key statement given and endorsed unanimously in the Irish Race convention in New York in 1916 was a good example of one way in which the Irish used the war. “[W]e know to our cost”, it read, “of the savage blows struck at us by England during the Civil War in the efforts to divide the country [...]”<sup>64</sup> Through a narrative of the Civil War that they chose, the Irish endeavoured to resurrect bitter Anglo-American sentiments. They used the war as a decisive turning point in American history, and argued that at that time Britain had sought to destroy the United States by supporting the Confederacy. The 20,000 soldiers of Irish descent, recent immigrants from Ireland to the American South, who fought for the Confederacy, were, of course, omitted from the Irish representations of the Civil War.<sup>65</sup> Irish nationalists in Ireland sought to use the war in much the same way and for similar ends. On 21 November 1921, Arthur Griffith sent de Valera, now in the United States, what he thought might be used as evidence for English support of the Confederacy during the Civil War:

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<sup>64</sup> John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (Shannon, 1969 [1929]), p. 451.

<sup>65</sup> David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877* (Chapel Hill, 2001), pp. 121-73; another count puts the number of the Irish in the Confederate ranks at 40,000, although this seems exaggerated. See: Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, p. 120. For the Irish in the North see: Martin W. Ofele, *True Sons of the Republic: European Immigrants in the Union Army* (Westport, 2008), p. 34; Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, pp. 1-3; William L. Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union's Ethnic Regiments* (New York, 1998), pp. 112-60.

I enclose you copy of list of English subscribers to the Confederacy Loan during the Civil War. It was issued, I believe, by State Secretary Seward. There were perhaps some errors in it. Gladstone, Ashley, and others denied they ever subscribed. But others did not impugn it. If the files of the N. Y. Press of that period be looked up (Sept-Oct 1865) much information might be got. At the same period the “Shenandoah” Confederate privateer was although the war was month over preying on Federal commerce and receiving belligerent rights from England. [underlined in original]<sup>66</sup>

“Written up this fact could make good propaganda”, Griffith summarised. The Irish and Irish-American message to the American public was clear: Britain had betrayed the United States when it intervened in the Civil War and recognised the Confederacy, and it was now time for the United States to respond in kind.

Britain, of course, did not one-sidedly endorse the Confederacy, just as Irish soldiers did not fight solely for the Union. This was a distortion that served the Irish. By this time, however, as chapter three thoroughly discusses, the accepted narrative of the Civil War perpetuated the notion that the British elite did support the Confederacy. This narrative gained ground in Ireland, Britain and, to the latter’s misfortune, in the United States, as well.<sup>67</sup> As they did with the War of Independence, the Irish again used an agreed-upon representation of American history.

The Irish had other uses for the American Civil War in the United States. As Kevin Kenny has shown, Irish nationalists appealed to Lincoln’s image as a source of moral support for their demands for national unity and national independence.<sup>68</sup> This was true also of the war more generally, especially when the Irish addressed American audiences. Facing the prospect of the political separation of Ulster from the rest of Ireland, a motion that was officially introduced in the Government of Ireland Act (1920), Irish nationalists turned to the Civil War in much the same way as did the British. “A parallel with your war of secession is the parallel between Ulster and the

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<sup>66</sup>Éamon de Valera papers, UCD, P150/727.

<sup>67</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>68</sup> Kenny, ‘Freedom and Unity’, pp. 157-71.

rest of Ireland today”, MacSwiney stressed in a hearing before the American Commission of Inquiry on Conditions in Ireland in December 1920. “If you were justified in fighting that war rather than let part of your country secede”, she added, “then you must admit that we’re justified in fighting for a century, if need be, rather than let a part of Ireland secede.”<sup>69</sup> As for national freedom, Lincoln’s immortal phrase from the Gettysburg Address, that the Civil War was fought so that a “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”, had become one of de Valera’s most recognisable adages and trademarks.

The British were not far behind. They too were convinced that if only they could convey their message in a language that was familiar to the Americans, they could muster the American public. As Carlyon Wilfroy Bellairs, Conservative MP for Maidstone, argued in the House of Commons in 1918:

I think, too, it is practically the unanimous opinion of this House that night and day the door stands open to Home Rule for Ireland on the basis on which it is possessed by every State in the American Union, and when that fact becomes known throughout America then all American sympathy with regard to the position of hon. members below the Gangway disappears at once.<sup>70</sup>

As a constituting moment in the establishment of the American political system and as an American symbol, the Civil War seemed a useful precedent for the British in explaining themselves across the ocean. Presenting Britain’s side in the Anglo-Irish dispute “before the court of public opinion”, Philip Whitwell Wilson, former MP and later a major promoter of Britain’s cause in the United States, launched a typical British blow to counter Irish efforts. It was the United States in the Civil War, he argued, that had established the case against secession: “[T]he unity of the United Kingdom is as sacred a thing as the unity of the United States is sacred to American

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<sup>69</sup>Mary MacSwiney papers, UCD, P48a/160.

<sup>70</sup>HC Deb 7 Aug. 1918 Vol. 109 cc1412-508.

citizens. If we are wrong, then Lincoln was wrong.”<sup>71</sup> Wilson used the Civil War in the same way that British Unionists had used it in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s to support national unity. Using this interpretation of the Civil War, Wilson now asked Americans to look to the conflict for lessons about contemporary Anglo-Irish affairs.

P. W. Wilson then moved on to consider the question of Britain’s intervention in the Civil War, which in light of possible American mediation or acceptance of the Irish call, had become acute by 1920. Wisely, he separated popular opinion from diplomacy. “There were in Britain at that time many men who agreed with Gladstone that Jefferson Davis had created a nation”, he conceded, “[y]et during the whole of that struggle, the diplomacy of Britain was admittedly irreproachable [...]”<sup>72</sup> Wilson appealed to the British heritage of the war and was forced to do battle against prevailing, if misleading wisdom that many amongst the British had supported the breaking of the Union. Britons had done all they could to present the Irish question as a domestic affair and prevent the Americans from accepting the Irish call for independence. Considering similar efforts carried out by the North during the Civil War, and considering that Britain did not intervene in the American conflict, the use by British agitators of the war as a useful precedent in the United States seems to be a natural one.

The Irish and British planted their analogies in fertile soil in the United States. Indeed the Americans were impressed. “Her knowledge of American history”, stressed a report on one of MacSwiney’s’ hearings in the United States, “was quite as thorough as her knowledge of Irish history.”<sup>73</sup> The success of the British and the Irish

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<sup>71</sup> Wilson, *The Irish Case Before the Court of Public Opinion* (New York, 1920), p. 112.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>73</sup>Mary MacSwiney papers, UCD, P48a/160. The said hearing was before the American Commission of Inquiry on Conditions in Ireland, held on 8-9 Dec., 1920.

was evidenced in the late 1910s and early 1920s by Americans repeatedly turning to the Civil War and War of Independence in order to assess and fashion an opinion on Anglo-Irish affairs. Speaking in the Dáil Éireann on 9 May 1919, Frank P. Walsh, Chair of the American Commission on Irish Independence, stated that:

Today the people of America understand the aspirations of the people of Ireland; they are so beautifully lucid, so remarkably clear, that any person of ordinary understanding may not be confused. Ireland to-day has done with all talk as America understands it, of the Repeal of the Union, of Home Rule, of Dominion Home Rule, of the various shades of refinement of European, Irish, and English politics; and I may paraphrase – if I may, Mr. President – your interest in the words of our great President at Mount Vernon, when I say that you take your cue from us; you intend what we intended.<sup>74</sup>

“You intend what we intended”, here was a language that Americans understood and goals that they were willing to endorse.

The British case also resonated across the ocean. George L. Fox, for example, a scholar and educator who, *inter alia*, taught at Yale University, echoed the British view in front of the House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1918. “Sinn Feinism in Ireland”, he argued, “is simply the doctrine that we knocked out in Appomattox Courthouse, and which Ireland accepted.”<sup>75</sup> On much the same note, an American reader of the *New York Times* wrote in September 1921 that:

As a friend of the Irish people [I] urge the acceptance of the terms now offered. I am one of the few survivors who had come to man’s estate before the American Civil War in 1861. Certainly the Southern leaders were as de Valera and his associates [...] [I]t was the sworn duty of Abraham Lincoln to enforce the law in the Southern States just as it is the sworn duty of Lloyd George to enforce the law in Ireland.<sup>76</sup>

Lloyd George himself could not have put it better. As Britons had intended, by 1921 many in the United States had come to read the situation in Britain through the prism of the Civil War narrative that deplored disunity.

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<sup>74</sup>Dáil Éireann, 9 May, 1919.

<sup>75</sup>The Irish Question, Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 12 December 1918 (printed 26, Feb., 1919), p. 61.

<sup>76</sup>*New York Times*, 22 Sep. 1921, p. 12.

Ultimately, however, it was the Irish, rather than the British selections and views of American history that prevailed in the United States. Although it is difficult to determine the impact of cultural perceptions on political actions, evidence supports the argument that Irish exports of American heritage and values had strengthened a discursive framework that encouraged concrete political actions in their favour. For example, in 1919, President Wilson sent George Creel, head of the United States Committee on Public Information in the Great War, to Ireland to assess the situation there. Creel denounced Britain for presenting the Irish question as “England’s domestic problem” and wrote:

Men of Ireland gave heart and strength to Washington, they died by thousands that the Union might endure, and of the army raised to crush German absolutism fully 15 per cent, were of Irish birth or descent. It is with this record of love and sacrifice behind them that the Irish in the United States call upon America to lend hope to their unhappy motherland. It is a call that America must answer. A decision cannot be evaded.<sup>77</sup>

Creel, as many Americans at the time, remembered only the Irish who had supported Washington and American independence and later only those who had sacrificed themselves so that “the Union might endure.”<sup>78</sup> On this basis, he called for concrete American intervention on their side.

The Irish – and British – success in conveying their messages by using American heritage resulted not only from their ability to appeal to the United States as a responsible world power and present their case in terms of American values. Rather it was also an outcome of Americans’ exceptional readiness at that time to understand the world and their place in it in these terms, to view themselves as accountable, as responsible. In essence this tapped into their embrace of their newfound position as a

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<sup>77</sup> Creel, *Ireland's Fight for Freedom: Setting Forth the High Lights of Irish History* (New York, 1919), p. xvi.

<sup>78</sup>On the Irish legacy of heroism in the U.S. see: Craig A. Warren, ““Oh, God, What a Pity!”: The Irish Brigade at Fredericksburg and the Creation of Myth’, *Civil War History*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Sep. 2001), pp. 193-221.

world power. Pointing to the United States' new global responsibility, Creel argued in 1919 that with regard to the Irish question "[i]t is idle to adopt a tone of heavy reproof and talk of 'America first.'" <sup>79</sup> The same year, the California State Assembly and Senate jointly resolved:

That at a critical time in the history of the human race, when the idealism of America dominates the world's thought, we respectfully represent to our spokesman, the President of the United States, that in speaking for the self-determination of all nations, small as well as great, he should not overlook the claims of the oldest nation of western Europe, to wit, Ireland. <sup>80</sup>

For many Americans it became the duty of the United States to go out to the world and spread American "thought" and values. Since the turn of the century, Manifest Destiny – first applied mainly to continental North America – stood in the eyes of many Americans for a messianic mission of bringing democracy, freedom and protection to places outside the continent as well. <sup>81</sup> Motivated by this sense of divine mission, an increasing number of American officials sought to assist Ireland in what they were by now convinced was the latter's quest for exercising American values.

British officials were concerned over Irish success in the United States in rallying public opinion and the possible effect of this on the Irish question. In a summary of the political situation in the United States in 1919, William Wiseman, head of the British intelligence service in Washington during the Great War, stated that a great danger now "is [the] effect on American public opinion of speeches of de Valera and his friends [...]." "It may be", he added, "that America will accept [the]

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<sup>79</sup>Creel, *Ireland's Fight for Freedom*, p. xiv.

<sup>80</sup>De Valera papers, UCD, P150/1012.

<sup>81</sup>Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York, 1995), pp. 67-100 and 112-20.

idea of a separate Irish Republic as something which is an inevitable and generally accepted solution [...]”<sup>82</sup>

As seen, the British were confident that if only they could convey their intentions in a more familiar language, they could win over America’s public opinion. However, representations of the Civil War were a more complicated diplomatic apparatus to use than first thought. This was not because of the perceived problematic British involvement in the war, discussed above. Rather it was due to British use of the American heritage of the conflict. On 24 April 1920, N. E. Forrest, commander in chief of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans (SCV), issued an official condemnation of Lloyd George’s analogy between the Civil War and the Anglo-Irish dispute:

In comparing the Irish republic to the Southern Confederacy and De Valera to Jefferson Davis Lloyd George has offered, unconsciously, perhaps, a gratuitous insult to the Southern States in the American union and to the splendid sons of the Southern Confederacy who fought and distinguished themselves in the fields of France in the world war. It is remarkable that a statesman holding the high office of premier of Great Britain would be so ignorant of the political history of America. Ireland has not the status of an independent State as was the case with the American colonies. Ireland has not been a self-determined republic. De Valera, without discrediting his status is not the elected president of a confederation of states, called as was Jefferson Davis, to the high office. There is no parallel in which the status of the so-called republic of Ireland and that of its president correspond to the Southern Confederacy and its chief executive.<sup>83</sup>

As Forrest’s statement made clear, his discontent was not raised by a differing opinion to the British on Anglo-Irish issues. On the contrary, as his questioning of de Valera’s status as the Irish president indicated, Forrest supported the case against Irish autonomy. However, this was exactly the source of tension. Whilst Irish independence in the 1910s and 1920s was – to Forrest as to Lloyd George – illegitimate, the South’s secession in the 1860s was to Forrest legal and justified. This invalidated the analogy in Forrest’s eyes.

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<sup>82</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Series 1, Vol. 5: Western Europe June 1919 - January 1920 and Viscount Grey’s mission to Washington, August - December 1919.

<sup>83</sup>*The Watchman and Southron*, 24 Apr. 1920, no page number.

The legacy of the Civil War had remained contested in the post-war United States. The narrative of reconciliation, which came to dominate the American memory of the war in the early decades of the twentieth century, offered a delicate and fragile harmony between several competing views of the conflict. It balanced between acknowledging that the Confederacy had fought for just causes, of which one was their autonomy and way of life, and celebrating the post-war North-South reunion. Forrest's words mirrored this balance when he made clear that in his attack on Lloyd George he sought to defend the dignity of the "Southern States in the American union." The sons of the Confederacy, he emphasised further, fought in France, as Americans. Organisations like the SCV and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) were particularly sensitive to the place of the Southern memory of the war in this equation of reconciliation. At times, Britons missed this complexity and broke this delicate balance.

Because the SCV and UDC enjoyed much influence on Southern politics and society, the British failure to keep this balance was translated into diplomatic repercussions.<sup>84</sup> By June 1920, shortly after Forrest's assault, Auckland Geddes, British Ambassador to the United States, telegraphed home his impression that, "[...] the best of the Southerners are not pleased at the comparison between Lincoln's declaration on the subject of maintaining the Union and the present Irish situation, recently made by the Prime Minister."<sup>85</sup> Considering that the British aimed to align themselves with, and approach Americans, and certainly not to insult or alienate them, their use of the Civil War in the South was a diplomatic failure.

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<sup>84</sup>James McPherson, *The Mighty Scourge: Perspective on the Civil War* (Oxford, 2007), p. 99.

<sup>85</sup>Foreign Countries Report No. 20. 30 June 1920, in: CAB/24/154, National Archives.

Associating the Irish question with the War of Independence, the Irish were on relatively solid ground since the view on that chapter in American history was more consensual within the United States. Until the early decades of the twentieth century, for example, Washington was a more consensual icon than Lincoln.<sup>86</sup> That is not to say that the Irish communication with the Americans, and especially with the South, had always been conducted serenely. De Valera, as a case in point, faced a fierce protest in Birmingham, Alabama, by British supporters in 1920.<sup>87</sup> However, whilst often differing on Anglo-Irish issues, Irish nationalists and the American public agreed on American history, heritage and values. Although they could disagree on whether the Civil War and the War of Independence were applicable analogies to describe the situation in Ireland, both the Americans and Irish agreed on what these American events had represented. Thus de Valera was cordially received by the Governors of New York, Indiana and New Hampshire, but also by the Governor of Virginia. Even in Alabama in 1920, he eventually achieved a resolution to pressure Wilson to act in favour of the Irish cause.<sup>88</sup>

Ultimately, this Irish influence was to little effect. Public opinion never amounted to significant official action regarding the Irish question and the United States did not accept Irish independence above British opinion. However, it is not determined that this was due to the British projection and export of their view of the Civil War on and to the United States. In Congress, in numerous state legislatures and amongst many in the public, it was the Irish and not the British voice that gathered

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<sup>86</sup>Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago; London, 2008), p. 14.

<sup>87</sup>David Franklin, 'Bigotry in 'Bama: De Valera's Visit to Birmingham Alabama, April 1920', *History Ireland*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>88</sup>De Valera papers, UCD, P150/744.

supporters.<sup>89</sup> Thus, despite his reluctance to do so, Senate Resolutions forced Wilson to give stage in the Paris Peace Conference to both the Irish-American and Irish delegations.<sup>90</sup> Still, Sinn Féin representatives did not achieve much in Paris and never persuaded Wilson to pressure the British seriously.<sup>91</sup> What finally determined the United States' response to the Irish question was Wilson's *realpolitik* approach to this matter.<sup>92</sup> Although he was sympathetic to the Irish call, the United States' interests, Wilson believed, lay with Britain.<sup>93</sup>

### III

For British and American politicians, the Irish acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 resolved the Irish question. President Harding, although sympathetic to the Irish cause, largely kept his administration clear of the Irish turmoil.<sup>94</sup> The British evacuated their forces from all but the six counties in the north-eastern part of the island and turned their back on both Northern Ireland and the newly-born Irish Free State.<sup>95</sup> And the IRB fell into civil war. However, neither the Irish nor the British ceased to use the Civil War as a source for political lessons. Both the war and the United States continued to be relevant precedents, symbols and political models throughout the century.

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<sup>89</sup>Richard B. Finnegan, 'Irish-American Relation', in: William Crotty and David E. Schmitt, (eds.), *Ireland on World Stage* (Harlow, 2002), p. 95; F. M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-23: A Study in Opinion and Policy* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 162-6.

<sup>90</sup> Carroll, 'The American Commission on Irish Independence and the Paris Peace Conference of 1919', pp. 106-14.

<sup>91</sup>Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, pp. 250-1.

<sup>92</sup>Bernadette Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland: From Empire to Independence, 1913-29* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 277-8; Seán Cronin, *Washington's Irish policy 1916-1986: Independence, Partition, Neutrality* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 12-19.

<sup>93</sup>Michael Hopkinson, 'President Woodrow Wilson and the Irish Question', *Studia Hibernica*, No. 27 (1993), pp. 89-111.

<sup>94</sup>Whelan, *United States Foreign Policy and Ireland: From Empire to Independence, 1913-29*, pp. 401-2; Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-23*, pp. 188-189; Cronin, *Washington's Irish Policy 1916-1986*, p. 47.

<sup>95</sup>Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 516; Christine Kinealy, *War and Peace, Ireland since the 1960s* (London, 2010), p. 41.

The Anglo-Irish Treaty split the Sinn Féin and tore the Free State apart.<sup>96</sup> In the internal dispute over the treaty, both pro- and anti-treaty factions used the Civil War in support of their position. Speaking in front of the Dáil Éireann on 17 May 1922, anti-treaty Mary MacSwiney stressed that, “The unity and independence of Ireland are as much worth civil war to Ireland, as the unity of the United States was worth civil war to Abraham Lincoln.”<sup>97</sup> Two days later, pro-treaty President, Arthur Griffith, told the Dáil that what was at issue was:

[...] whether the people have a right, or have no right, to decide on the issues which affect them and the country. Abraham Lincoln said: “While acting as the representative of the people, I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is, and upon all others I shall do what my own judgment bids me to best advance their interest.” We know what the Irish people’s will is. Everyone knows it is that the Treaty be taken and worked.<sup>98</sup>

MacSwiney feared the division of her country, much like Lincoln had feared the division of his; Griffith, supported by the return of two elections in January and June 1921, felt that his camp represented the true will of his people, as Lincoln had represented his.<sup>99</sup>

Ultimately, the pro-treaty wing held the upper hand. Ireland remained divided and the notion of a united Republic was to be set aside for a time. However, Republican nationalists did not let the dream of full Irish independence and unity to die out.<sup>100</sup> With them, the Civil War lingered on in the Irish political discourse. In a speech in Dublin in December 1925, for example, de Valera stated that, “the southern states of the American Union had a far better case for secession than our Northern Unionist have, and President Lincoln faced four years of terrible civil war rather than

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<sup>96</sup> Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 55-75.

<sup>97</sup>Dáil Éireann, Vol. 2, 17 May, 1922.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 19 May, 1922.

<sup>99</sup>Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*, p. 73.

<sup>100</sup>Kinealy, *War and Peace, Ireland Since the 1960s*, p. 10; for a detailed account of the de Valera’s and Fianna Fáil’s political ideology and platform during this period, see: John Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question, 1917-1973* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 79-142.

permit it, and the opinion of the world has justified him – and the results have justified him.”<sup>101</sup> In a special broadcast to the United States on the anniversary of Lincoln’s birthday in 1933 he repeated the same arguments.<sup>102</sup> As before, the war remained an attractive point of reference since it seemed relevant; since it represented values of unity and a successful national model; and since it was an American symbol and thus a way to approach the American public.

In British political discourse, the main import of the Civil War remained that the conflict had created a successful model for a unified nation and generated patriotic feelings. Whilst the Irish case was the clearest example of this use of the American conflict, it was not the only one. During the debate about a possible Scottish devolution in 14 December 1976, William Benyon, Conservative MP for Buckingham, stated in the House of Commons that:

As we move more and more into this morass of legislation [...] I find my mind turning increasingly to the position of Lincoln and the Northern States prior to the American Civil War. [...] we all know that if Lincoln had not fought for the Union, the strongest democracy in the world today would never have been born [...].<sup>103</sup>

The Civil War continued to be an available point of reference for British politicians in their debates about national unity and national freedom. Nowhere was this more evident than during the debates about the Scotland and Wales Bill in the late 1970s.<sup>104</sup> During the 1970s and within this context, the Civil War returned to the forefront of British political discourse.

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<sup>101</sup>Maurice Moynihan, (ed.), *Speeches and Statements by Éamon de Valera, 1917-73* (Dublin, 1980), pp. 122-3.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 74-8.

<sup>103</sup>HC Deb 14 Dec. 1976 Vol. 922 cc1249-486.

<sup>104</sup> Vernon Bogdanor, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Oxford, 2001), for the rise of Scottish nationalism see p. 177-191; for the rise of Welsh nationalism see pp. 152-7; for an account of the debates about devolution for Scotland and Wales during this period see pp. 177-191.

Furthermore, as before, the British appeal to the war stemmed from the war's relevance to the British situation and from the fact that it now symbolised a powerful country. Much in the same spirit as Benyon, on the previous day Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Conservative MP for Edinburgh West, drew the House of Commons' attention to the fact that:

We are not the only country to be threatened with disunity. Before the United States Civil War [,] when the United States was threatened with break-up President Abraham Lincoln said Whatever I do with regard to the Institution of Slavery, I do because it will save the Union. He not only helped to abolish slavery but also succeeded in saving the Union. Today few would disagree that the United States has been a far stronger and greater country through retaining its unity than it would have been through breaking up into smaller, hostile groupings.<sup>105</sup>

In the same debate, Julian Amery, Conservative MP for Brighton Pavilion, expressed his opposition to Scottish devolution and noted that, "Abraham Lincoln waded through blood to produce the United States which is today the guardian of Western security."<sup>106</sup> As the words of all of the above made clear, even as late as the 1970s the Civil War remained a key to explain the United States' national unity and unparalleled power.

Finally, whereas national unity and national freedom remained the main motivation for politicians' references to the Civil War, as of the late 1950s race had become an aspect of the conflict that the British also found relevant. This is thoroughly discussed in chapters three, four and five. For the present discussion it is important to note that, although race had become central to the British political thought about the Civil War, it was nonetheless predominantly connected, as before, to questions of national unity. Although, as Kenny has argued, slavery and race were not part of the Anglo-Irish political language, when these aspects of the Civil War did

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<sup>105</sup> HC Deb 13 Dec. 1976 Vol. 922 cc974-1150.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

surface in the British political discourse, it was to propel further arguments about nation building.<sup>107</sup> Philip Whitwell Wilson's words, quoted in another context earlier, showed how British politicians had translated aspects of race and slavery into nationalistic ones. "We simply say", Wilson stressed, "what [Lincoln] said that the United Kingdom cannot be a house divided against itself."<sup>108</sup> Wilson in 1920 did not at all say what Lincoln had said in 1858. Whilst Lincoln's "house divided" speech was all about slavery, for Wilson it had nothing to do with that issue, or, for that matter, with race relations in either Britain or the United States. Wilson, like other British politicians of his time, removed slavery from the debate and used it only insofar as it served his arguments about national unity and national freedom.

#### IV

Between the 1870s and 1920s the Irish question made questions of national unity and national devolution relevant to British politicians. The American Civil War, not yet passed far into history, was an available reference point in the Atlantic world in debates on issues of this nature. In the 1860s, the British took great interest in the conflict, they were well informed and were conscious that at its basis lay questions of national unity and national autonomy. When these aspects of the American conflict seemed relevant because of developments in Anglo-Irish relations, Britons began to turn to the war for reference. As this chapter showed, after looking at the American conflict chiefly as a source for Irish military training and a possible point of Anglo-American tensions, the British began to internalise the war and look into it for domestic political justifications.

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<sup>107</sup> Kenny, 'Freedom and Unity', p. 158.

<sup>108</sup> Wilson, *The Irish Case Before the Court of Public Opinion*, p. 112.

However, the British internalisation of the Civil War required an adaptation of the historic American war into contemporary British contexts. The American Union and political system were different from those of Britain; and the historical, political and legal status of Ireland in the British union was not similar to the status of the American states in the federal Union. Consequently, Irish independence was not analogous to the South's secession; Irish Home Rule was not analogous to the relations between the federal government and state legislature in the United States. Accordingly, although ideas such as unionism, patriotism and nationalism remained at the foundation of the British use of the war, Britons emptied them of their original substance and filled them anew with contemporary domestic issues that reflected the political order within which they acted.

The British adaptation of the war in a domestic context was possible since the conflict was multifaceted and flexible. The war, of course, reaffirmed the need for national unity. However, it also reaffirmed the viability of a political system that featured both a central government and state legislatures. Thus, the Civil War could have delivered lessons about national unity but also about limited devolution. As a multifaceted event, the war served Britons holding an array of opinions on the Irish question, from Unionists to Home Rule advocates to Irish nationalists. This chapter has shown that in addition to Unionists and Irish nationalists, supporters of Home Rule in the 1880s and 1890s also found the war relevant and thus appealing. The latter, mainly Gladstonian Liberals, looked to the war and its aftermath for the abovementioned lessons about the need for a degree of autonomy in order to generate good feelings and secure a strong national union.

Moreover, for the British the war was appealing also because it featured a British aspect. As this chapter has demonstrated, in the internal debate about Irish Home Rule, the Civil War was relevant because Britons found a historical connection between their country (even between themselves) and the American war. Through the prism of the British heritage of the war, as through the prism of the American heritage of it, British politicians sought to buttress their opinion on Irish affairs and reaffirm their morality and political skills. As shown, the impact of the Civil War on British opinion and the British response to the conflict became relevant for the British both in the domestic debate about the Irish question and, as summarised below, in their transatlantic communication with the United States.

The British also appealed to the war as a result of its representations. The meaning of the Civil War changed after it had ended and it became a symbol for unity, patriotism, gallantry and national strength. It became, in other words, a romantic, heroic and epic story of a national triumph and rebirth into greatness. Moreover, the representation of the war contributed to its later multifaceted nature. The war's ability, as seen, to present lessons on both national unity and limited autonomy was partly possible because of the rise of the narrative of reconciliation. The accommodation of Southern and Northern views of the war into one narrative balanced notions of unity and autonomy. For Home Rule advocates, as shown, this was a pivotal precedent.

Furthermore, the conflict did not only symbolise abstract values of gallantry, unity, patriotism and national strength. In the context of the Civil War, these were attributed first and foremost to the United States. The war, in other words, presented American gallantry, American unity, American patriotism and American strength.

The conflict thus became an American symbol that explained much of the modern American political order and the rise of the United States to world prominence. As such, British politicians appealed to the war also because it represented a strong country. If in the 1860s, the Civil War was a symbol of a nation on the verge of destruction, then by the turn of the century it was a symbol of a world power.

As an American symbol, the conflict became relevant also because the United States became relevant. Simply put, the Civil War became not only a prism through which to understand Anglo-Irish affairs or to explain the American rise to power, but it also became a tool by which to approach the Americans. As the second section of this chapter has demonstrated, when contemporaries thought that the United States might have bearing on the Irish question, they began to use the Civil War to convey their views on Ireland to the Americans. The British hoped that in exporting their view of the Irish question through the prism of the Civil War their messages would be received better and more sympathetically amongst Americans.

In this instance, the British heritage of the Civil War proved problematic in garnering American understanding. The British needed to confront the possible negative implications on contemporary Anglo-American affairs of the British response to the war in the 1860s. In addition, the British analogies were ill received in the South. This was due to their use of the American heritage of the war, not because of the British heritage. The gaps created by the British translation of American history and American values to British context proved problematic in British communication with the American public. Nonetheless, the chapter has argued that the British were aware of their ability to translate the Civil War and the values for which it came to stand and export them back to the United States.

In sum, this chapter has put forth the claim that British politicians appealed to the Civil War in the context of the Irish question because it seemed relevant to them. They also appealed to the American conflict because it represented romantic and relevant values; because it had a British aspect; because it represented the United State; and because it enabled them to communicate with the Americans.

On 31 August 1921, the *Westminster Gazette* published a caricature featuring David Lloyd George and Éamon de Valera talking over the telephone. “Don’t forget Abraham Lincoln!” urged the British Prime Minister; “Remember George Washington!” cried the President of Dáil Éireann.<sup>109</sup> It is now clear what led to this conversation and what stood behind the two statesmen’s expressions. It is also clear that had the caricature been more accurate it would have featured Uncle Sam, too, holding an additional earpiece.

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<sup>109</sup>*Westminster Gazette*, 31 Aug. 1921, p. 1.

## **Chapter Two – The American Civil War in British Military Thought: Beyond the (Great) War**

The American Civil War was imprinted onto twentieth-century British military thought between the turn of the century and the Second World War. Owing to the prolific works of military intellectuals such as G. F. R Henderson, Garnet Wolseley, Basil Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller, the American war of the 1860s has been part of British military thought since the 1890s and on into the twenty-first century. Existing scholarship provides only partial explanation as to why British military thinkers continued to appeal to the war, as this scholarship has focused mostly on professional lessons that these thinkers drew from the conflict. It has thus overlooked the way in which these intellectuals' views of the United States and of the war as a constitutive event in American history shaped their understanding of the American conflict.<sup>1</sup> This chapter argues that alongside the war's 'value' professionally – and in close correlation with it – the experience of American power and the image of the United States as reflected through the different representations of the Civil War, are pivotal to understanding British military intellectuals' fascination with the war.

Turn of the century British military thinkers re-discovered the Civil War when they came to believe that its military lessons were more relevant to them. After long being neglected, British officers thought that no other past conflict – including Britain's own wars – could better reflect the challenges of future warfare. In addition, contemporary military-men became interested in the war because of the rising power

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Luvaas's 1959 study has rightly been the starting point for any work on the Civil War in British military thought. See: Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: European Inheritance* (Chicago, 1959), pp. 14-51, 100-18, 171-201 and 204-16. For updated studies and critic on Luvaas, see: Brian Holden Reid, "'A Signpost that was Missed'?" Reconsidering British Lessons from the American Civil War', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (2006), pp. 385-414; Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought: Debates with Fuller and Liddell Hart* (Lincoln, 1998), pp. 133-49; Albert Castel, 'Liddell Hart's "Sherman": Propaganda as History', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (2003), pp. 405-26; J. J. Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (London, 1988), pp. 91-2. The only exception is Hugh Dubrulle's illuminating study, discussed below.

of the United States. Drawing from the representation of the war, which depicted it as the event that both united the United States and gave birth to the modern American nation, Britons found the war appealing as an explanation of the United States' success as a modern nation.

Upon this understanding grew a dominant view of the Civil War. According to this view, the war created a better United States because it both united and modernised the nation. This view was manifest in the works of contemporary military intellectuals in two main ways. First, as opposed to the 1860s, little to no criticism was expressed towards the North, heralded as bringer of unity and modernity to the United States. On the contrary, for British military thinkers the North often seemed – militarily, socially, politically, culturally and ideologically – more appealing than the South. Second, British military thinkers began to draw parallels between their country and the North as the side that represented the new, post-Civil War United States.

Nonetheless, that was not how the Civil War was imprinted into twentieth-century British military thought. The conflict did remain relevant for interwar British military-men as a source for lessons on modern warfare and as an emblem for the birth of the modern America. However, when their views on modern warfare and the modern United States changed, so too did their interpretation of the Civil War. In the wake of the Great War, when British officers began to revise the British military doctrine, they also reviewed the pre-1914 professional lessons taken from the Civil War. Additionally, military thinkers' experience of the Great War as a watershed in British history, along with closer-than-ever experience of American power, led them to cast doubts as to the positive outcome of the Civil War and benign nature of the contemporary United States.

Subsequently, the dominant pre-1914 view of the Civil War was fractured. In its stead a more nuanced and contested view of the conflict and of America emerged in British military thought. When the power of the United States and modernity no longer seemed wholly positive, two novel views of the Civil War came to the fore alongside the previous interpretation. According to one view, the war created a degenerated version of the old republic; according to the other, post-Civil War America was a defective middle-phase between the primitive American nation and what holders of this view thought America still ought to become. Underlying both visions was criticism of the contemporary United States, until then marginal in British military thought. Since the 1930s, the British understanding of the Civil War has been shaped and re-shaped through the debate between these three views.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section analyses British military thought about the Civil War from the late nineteenth century to 1914 as a basis for discussion of the changes to come about during the interwar period. This part argues that this “first renaissance” in British interest in the Civil War was driven by a view that, with the growing tensions in Europe and in light of the Second Boer War, the American conflict had become relevant to British military thinkers after being overlooked for nearly two decades. Additionally, observed from afar and in accord with the dominant representation of the Civil War, the post-Civil War United States seemed a successful model for a modern nation. The second part systematically examines the writings about the war of Frederick Maurice, Basil Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller, the preeminent thinkers of their time, and of their interwar followers. Examining their military lessons from the war alongside their views of Britain and America, this section follows the disintegration of the British understanding of the Civil War and of the modern United States into three main threads of interpretation.

## I

Whilst the Civil War caught the attention of British officers from the outset, shortly after its end the interest of British military thinkers waned. Although Jay Luvaas' contention that Britons did not learn much from the American conflict before the Great War is now largely rejected, the fact remains undisputed that between the late 1860s and the mid 1880s, no major work appeared in Britain on the subject.<sup>2</sup> Instead, as Luvaas noted, the Civil War gave way to studies on the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, which seemed more relevant.<sup>3</sup> Other than its apparent irrelevance, the army that had been the centre of attention and the subject of admiration for British officers throughout the conflict, the Confederate Army, lost. As late as 1864, Arthur Fremantle, a British military officer who had spent three months with the Confederate forces in America, could still predict that the Confederacy would win the fight. The South, he wrote, that "display[s] a unanimity and a heroism which can never have been suppressed in the history of the world, is destined, sooner or later, to become a great and independent nation."<sup>4</sup> Yet Southern heroism had been suppressed, a fact that must have cast at least some doubts on the validity of the lessons that its way of warfare presented.

By the last decade of the century, the Civil War had re-entered British military consciousness as military intellectuals began to see its contemporary relevance. Round the turn of the century – a period that Luvaas justly termed a "renaissance" in British military interest in the Civil War – the conflict became a central subject of

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<sup>2</sup> For criticism on Luvaas, see: Hugh Dubrulle, 'A Military Legacy of the Civil War: The British Inheritance', *Civil War History*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (2002), pp. 153-4; Reid, "'A Signpost that was Missed'?", pp. 385-90.

<sup>3</sup> Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War*, pp. 115-18.

<sup>4</sup> Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States: April-June, 1863* (New York, 1864), p. 6.

inquiry in the British army and numerous military writers turned to it for lessons.<sup>5</sup> Two concerns above all had made the historic American war relevant to contemporary Britons: the increasing likelihood of a major war in Europe and the Second Boer War. In both cases, the Civil War was seen as a rich repository for professional lessons unavailable in any other past conflict, British or foreign. Yet there was another reason. British military thinkers came to see the Civil War as a conflict that gave birth to the modern United States. As the latter's prominence became more apparent, so the Civil War became more appealing as a source for both military and non-military lessons.

Tensions in Europe brought the Civil War back into the limelight as British military thinkers thought that a future war on the continent would possess similar features. Highlighting the importance of studying the American conflict, G. F. R. Henderson, the driving force behind the revived interest in the Civil War across the British army, noted in 1894:

Now I do not think I am predicting impossibilities when I say that armies somewhat similar in constitution may at some future date have to be handled by ourselves. England has before now been drawn willy-nilly into continental wars; she has before now had to engage in a life-and-death struggle with the Great Powers [...] History repeats itself. There is no sign whatever, despite long years of peace, that the prospect of our being drawn into a great European conflict is more remote than heretofore.<sup>6</sup>

During the last decade of the century Henderson could vividly see future British generals leading mass armies of both professional and civilian volunteers to battle. Whilst none of Britain's previous wars would serve as a source of reference for such war, the Civil War was a relevant precedent. Henderson was not alone. By 1900, an increasing number of British military-men and politicians were seeing a large-scale

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<sup>5</sup>Jay Luvaas, 'G. F. R. Henderson and the American Civil War', *Military Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1956), pp. 149-50.

<sup>6</sup>Henderson, 'The Campaign in the Wilderness in Virginia, 1865', A Lecture to the Military Society of Ireland, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1894, in: Neill Malcolm, (ed.), *The science of War: A Collection of Essays and Lectures 1892-1903* (London, 1905), p. 309.

continental conflict against Germany as an alarming, viable possibility.<sup>7</sup> Thus alongside diplomatic efforts to break Britain's isolation in the international arena, extensive reforms had been implemented throughout the army aiming to prepare it for future challenges.<sup>8</sup> In this light, as Brian Holden Reid has shown, British military thinkers saw in the Civil War a useful precedent, because it was a massive war waged by a modern democracy in which many of the soldiers were untrained civilians and it was a war where discipline and generalship became especially important.<sup>9</sup> All of the above, British officers thought, would be the prevailing, dominant features of modern warfare.

In many senses, the Second Boer War (1899-1902) was a materialisation of Henderson's and others' prophesising regarding the future of warfare. With approximately 500,000 soldiers deployed in the field (of them about 100,000 non-professional volunteers), 22,000 dead, broad civil and political involvement, guerrilla warfare and usage of new firearms on a far larger scale than ever before, the Boer War was a departure from Britain's previous colonial conflicts.<sup>10</sup> As such, it brought to the surface difficulties that had hitherto been either unfamiliar or marginal. George

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<sup>7</sup> T. G. Otte, "'The Method in which We Were Schooled by Experience': British Strategy and a Continental Commitment Before 1914", in: K. Neilson and G. Kennedy, (eds.), *The British Way in Warfare : Power and the International System, 1856-1956 : Essays in Honour of David French* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 303-19; C. Messenger, *Call-to-Arms: The British Army, 1914-18* (London, 2006), pp. 15-37.

<sup>8</sup> Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army: A Military, Political and Social History of the British Army, 1509-1970* (London, 2000), pp. 353-70.

<sup>9</sup> Reid, "'A Signpost that was Missed'?", p. 409.

<sup>10</sup> Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The South African War and the Late Victorian Army', in: Dennis and Grey, (eds.), *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire: The 1999 Chief of Army, Australian War Memorial, Military History Conference* (Canberra, 2000), pp. 33-4; Stephen M. Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain's Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Norman, 2007), pp. 56-76 and 70. On the war's profound impact in Britain more generally see: Stephan Badsay, 'The Boer War as a Media War', in: Peter Dennis and Jeffery Grey, *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, p. 83; Andrew Thompson, 'Publicity, Philanthropy and Commemoration: British Society and the War', in: David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, *The Impact of the South African War* (New York, 2002), pp. 101-13; Bill Nasson, 'Waging Total War in South Africa: Some Centenary Writings on the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (2002), pp. 813-14; Paul Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics: The Case of the General Election of 1900', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Jan., 2001), pp. 107-45.

W. Redway, for example, a Reserve soldier who published two books about the Civil War in 1906 and 1910, wrote angrily that:

The working of the army system in America in the sixties is of practical importance to all English-speaking peoples to-day, and it is to be regretted that there exists no authoritative treatise on the subject: many of the errors in administration which characterised our conduct of the Boer War might have been avoided by timely study of the factors which protracted the War of Secession a generation ago [...]<sup>11</sup>

Redway, who during the war in South Africa took a central role in mobilising soldiers and who thus experienced the difficulties in managing mass forces first hand, had no British precedent from which to draw lessons on this subject. The Americans, by contrast, seemed to him to have confronted these problems half a century earlier. The Boer War was the first concrete sign for Britons that twentieth-century warfare would be different from what they had known.

The change in British images of the future of warfare had led to a change in their understanding of what military lessons should be drawn from the Civil War. Whilst during the Civil War British officers looked primarily to the Confederate Army as a model for military conduct, by the turn of the century both South and Union Army had become legitimate objects for examination. For example, reflecting his dismay regarding the relations between the government and the generals, which were redefined in 1895 in a way that subjected the Commander-in-Chief more firmly to governmental authority, Spenser Wilkinson, a prominent military scholar, wrote admiringly about Lincoln in 1905:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Redway, *The War of Secession, 1861-1862, Bull Run to Malvern Hill* (London, 1910), p. 39. For Redway's 1906 work, see: Redway, *Fredericksburg, A Study in War* (London, 1906).

<sup>12</sup> Keith T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War 1899-1902: Politicians v. Generals* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 6-18.

What a contrast between such a man and the present Prime Minister of England [Balfour], who, at the close of the great struggle in South Africa, thought, or professed to think, that the cause of the difficulties had been not in the political blindness of the government, but in the technical imperfection of a War Office which, after all, had without any breakdown of moment, provided and maintained a force five times as large as it had ever been authorised to contemplate.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, looking soberly to the future, British military thinkers saw the necessity and effectiveness of a war of attrition as executed by the North.<sup>14</sup> Whereas during the Civil War, British observers were appalled by civil-military relations in the North and by its seemingly brutal strategy, by the turn of the century these seemed to be the characteristics of future warfare, and thus relevant and important. That is not to say that Britons ceased to admire the military conduct of the Confederate Army. Lee and Jackson's tendency to concentrate their forces for a decisive assault on the Northern enemy, for example, was in line with contemporary British doctrine and was thus viewed with great esteem. In 1911, for example, Eric Sheppard wrote admiringly of Jackson that:

[...] wherever danger threatened, there he collected all the forces he could lay hands on, and hurled them against the intruders to drive them out. For this he did not fear to weaken to an apparently dangerous degree the rest of his line, in order that he might concentrate all available forces on the one decisive point, and in this he showed the true general's instinct.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, evidence shows that, looking for relevant lessons for the future, British officers studied both North and South.

This view of both North and South as valid sources for lessons was a reflection of a profound revision in British military scholars' view of the United States more generally. From Luvaas's study to recent scholarship, it has been agreed that, in the eyes of pre-1914 British military intellectuals the Confederacy and its

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<sup>13</sup>W. B. Wood and J. E. Edmonds, *A History of the Civil War in the United States, 1861-5* (London, 1905), p. xvi.

<sup>14</sup> Reid, "'A Signpost that was Missed'?", p. 409.

<sup>15</sup> Sheppard, *The Campaign in Virginia and Maryland: Cedar Run, Manassas and Sharpsburg* (London, 1911), p. 149.

generals, mainly Lee and “Stonewall” Jackson, were almost blindly admired.<sup>16</sup> Reflecting upon this tendency, in 1933 Liddell Hart complained that after the Civil War Lee succeeded in what he had hitherto failed to achieve, namely to conquer both the North and Britain.<sup>17</sup> It has been contended that the political and social institutions of the South – mainly Southern social and political hierarchy – appealed to British military thinkers as explanations for the Confederacy’s excellent military conduct. By contrast, Northern institutions – mainly mass-democracy and capitalism – appalled Britons, who saw them as the source of the North’s military weaknesses and failures. These were seen also as the reason for the war’s massive scale and horrific casualties.

However, a close examination reveals that British military-men at the turn of the century praised the political institutions and ideological spirit of both sides. P. H. Dalbiac, a military-man and Conservative MP, wrote in his 1911 book about the campaigns in Chancellorsville and Gettysburg that:

From the first they [the soldiers of both the North and South] showed themselves capable of taking punishment with the penitence and endurance of trained soldiers; and the enormous percentage of losses suffered by both sides without demoralisation teaches us what can be expected from armies of citizen soldiers, when called upon to do their duty in defence of their homes and the belongings which are dear to them.<sup>18</sup>

As Dalbiac’s words showed, a democratic people’s army, as the North had traditionally represented and which appalled British observers in the 1860s, was not always perceived as all bad by the 1910s. Dalbiac did not even ascribe mass democracy and a people’s army to the North, but rather to both armies. Similarly, in his 1906 essay praising Lee, Garnet Wolseley commended also the North. Wolseley, an eminent British admirer of the South in the 1860s, had seen “in the dogged

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<sup>16</sup>Reid, “A Signpost that was Missed”?, p. 410.

<sup>17</sup> LH 10/1933/109-161, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College, London, (henceforth, LHCMA)

<sup>18</sup> Dalbiac, *The American War of Secession, 1863: Chancellorsville and Gettysburg* (London, 1911), p. 6.

determination of the North [...] the spirit for which the men of Britain have always been remarkable.”<sup>19</sup> The North’s war of attrition, vehemently despised by Wolseley in the 1860s, now stood for determination and sacrifice for a noble cause.

Moreover, whilst historians accurately noted that contemporary British military thinkers focused almost solely on the lives and military conduct of Confederate generals, it should not – as has largely been the case thus far – be immediately inferred that British military-men admired the South or Southern ideals. As shown, Wolseley used his essay about Lee also to propel allegedly Northern characteristics and spirit. Moreover, in many cases, Britons portrayed Southern generals as not at all Southern. For Henderson, for example, more than a Southerner, “Stonewall” Jackson was in fact a Westerner, just like Lincoln. Comparing the two, he noted:

Descendants of the pioneers, those hardy borderers, half soldiers and half farmers, who held and reclaimed, through long years of Indian warfare, the valleys and prairies of the West, they inherited the best attributes of a frank and valiant race. Simple yet wise, strong yet gentle, they were gifted with all the qualities which make leaders of men.<sup>20</sup>

That is, of course, not to argue that Southern characteristics were deplored altogether. As Hugh Dubrulle has argued, Henderson and Wolseley showed great admiration for Jackson’s piety, loyalty and aristocratic manners, all of which were traditionally associated with Southern institutions and ideals.<sup>21</sup> However, examined alongside ample evidence of their positive views of both the Northern army and the American Union more generally, it seems that British military-men de- and re-constructed Northern and Southern values and identities – as these had been traditionally viewed since the 1860s – in order to celebrate the United States as opposed to just a specific section of it.

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<sup>19</sup> Wolseley, *General Lee* (Rochester, 1906), p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (London, 1898), I, pp. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Dubrulle, ‘A Military Legacy of the Civil War’, p. 177.

Considering the contemporary dominant representation of the Civil War, the British views of the Southern generals should not be surprising. In the United States, the Civil War generals, even those of the Confederacy (in fact, particularly they), whom the British so deeply admired, had gradually come to symbolise American unity and national sentiments rather than sectionalism. Although this has been recognised by historians studying the American side, it has been overlooked in readings of the British side. As John Neff has shown, more than any other Civil War hero (even more than Lincoln at that time, as discussed in the following chapter), upon his death in 1870 Lee became the foremost emblem of sectional reconciliation in the United States.<sup>22</sup> By the turn of the century, Jackson, and even more so Lee had become as American as they were Southern. Indeed, a closer look at Liddell Hart's words quoted above makes clear that he, too, acknowledged Lee's power over all Americans, Southern and Northern alike. Accordingly, in both the United States and Britain, Southern generals were symbols of reconciliation and thus of the United States rather than solely of the South.

This representation of the Civil War had arrived in British military circles through the works of American military intellectuals. Although often not seen as such, military writings, much like other cultural commodities, served to export other aspects of the Civil War in addition to its military aspects. The works of J. C. Ropes, which had remained a primary source for British military-men through to the interwar period, were one such good example. In an 1895 study of the war, Ropes stressed that his narrative ran "opposite of the one which was held so generally throughout the South", in maintaining that secession was illegal and that it was the Confederacy that initiated the war when Beauregard's forces fired on Fort Sumter.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, however,

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<sup>22</sup> Neff, *Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation* (Lawrence, 2005), pp. 161-2.

<sup>23</sup> Ropes, *The History of the American Civil War* (New York, 1895), I, p. 110.

Ropes' works propelled the sentiments of reconciliation that had begun to gain ground in the United States. In a work on John Pope from 1881, for example, he wrote that, "while the book, is, of course, written from the Federal standpoint, it has been my endeavor to keep in mind that it is now sixteen years after the war, and that the country is, at last, in every sense, at peace."<sup>24</sup> Ropes presented a conciliatory account of the war that portrayed Southerners and Northerners in like colours, as gallant warriors who fought for just causes. "The courage and endurance displayed by both sides", he wrote, "were wonderful indeed."<sup>25</sup> Above all, Ropes maintained that the generals in the war – both Union and Confederate – kept themselves away from political debates and only fought bravely for what they thought was right. No hatred, he noted, ever existed between the generals.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, according to Ropes, all had celebrated the post-war reunion.

This point deserves further elaboration as it remained central to the British reading of the war within but also outside military circles throughout the twentieth century. Of all the aspects of the Civil War, including Lincoln's image, the army and soldiers took the lead in promoting a conciliatory interpretation of the conflict. Soldiers were consensually perceived as a-political and could thus be depicted as non-sectional. As chapter five demonstrates, in films, novels, monuments and other cultural symbols it was perpetuated that the army was ideologically neutral, a mere tragic exponent of politicians and, above all, of extremists on both sides. As such, in the military sphere it was easy to accentuate American unionism and reconciliation. In his seminal biography of Lee from 1934 – which also served British military intellectuals as an essential source of reference – D. S. Freeman wrote admirably about

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<sup>24</sup> Ropes, *The Army Under Pope* (New York, 1881), p. viii.

<sup>25</sup> Ropes, *The History of the Civil War*, I, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Ropes, *The Army Under Pope*, p. viii.

Lee's will to reach out to Northerners, including Grant, in order to promote unity and reconciliation after the war.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, more problematic issues were easily marginalised in military narratives as non-military and thus irrelevant. Ropes, who found ample space in his work for discussion of the principle of states' rights in order to demonstrate Southern patriotism, found no place for slavery. In his four-volume narrative he stressed that "into this subject the scope of our narrative will not allow us to go."<sup>28</sup> In a military narrative, this approach needed little justification. "An inquiry into the causes of the war of secession", he argued, "[...] will not aid us in our examination of its military problems and incidents. It is not necessary in this work to attempt the history of the slavery question."<sup>29</sup> War narratives, more than other means to fashion, project and export representations of the Civil War, were easily harnessed to present the conflict as a unifying event that propelled American patriotism.

The Civil War, then, appealed to *fin de siècle* British military thinkers not only as a source for relevant military lessons, but also as an American symbol. Indeed, these were closely connected. Looking at their contemporary world, British military intellectuals could not have ignored the presence and power – including military power – of the United States. For example, for many Europeans the Spanish-American war of 1898 was a manifestation both of American military force and of increasing American intervention in world affairs.<sup>30</sup> British concessions in Panama in 1901, mentioned in the previous chapter, were more evidence of this sort. At the same time, the Civil War came to account for American patriotism, unity and growing power. Americans thus saw the Spanish-American War as a symbol of sectional unity, which

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<sup>27</sup> Freeman, *R. E. Lee: A Biography* (New York, 1934-1936), pp. 320-32.

<sup>28</sup> Ropes, *The History of the Civil War*, I, p. ii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to World Power: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford, 2008), p. 336.

in turn explained the nation's military power. Britons, too, came to share this view. As late as 1927, Frederick Maurice, a prominent British military intellectual whose works are thoroughly discussed here in the second section, noted that:

The Union of North and South which, as [Charles] Marshall says, was made indissoluble at Appomattox, was dramatically portrayed in the war with Spain, when a son of Colonel Marshall performed for a son of Grant the same functions which from 1862 to 1865 the father had performed for Lee.<sup>31</sup>

Rather than propelling Southern or Northern identities, as had often been the case during the war, the Civil War gradually came to represent and project American unity, which in turn explained the United States' contemporary success and military force.

As a symbol of unity, which in turn broadcast American power, the Civil War was highly appealing to British military intellectuals. With unity and power, British military thinkers could (or wished to) identify. In his aforementioned essay on Lee, Wolseley left little doubt as to why he saw the Civil War as a symbol of American power and why he thought it should be clear to Englishmen that the North was right to raise arms:

[...] of Englishmen who believe that "union is strength" and who are themselves determined that no dismemberment of their own empire shall be allowed, few will find fault with the men of the North for their manly determination, come what might, to resist every effort of their brothers in the South to break up the Union.<sup>32</sup>

The analogy was clear to Leo Amery, too, especially in light of the Boer War. In his influential *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (1900) he noted that, similar to the South in the Civil War, the Boers in Africa were fighting an unjust war of secession to break an unbreakable political union.<sup>33</sup> The post-Civil War United States

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<sup>31</sup> Maurice, *Lee's Aide-de-Camp* (Lincoln, 2000 [1927]), p. xiii.

<sup>32</sup> Wolseley, *General Lee*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902* (London, 1900-1909), I, p. 23.

was for British military-men the ultimate proof that unity was power – both political and military – and as such, they found it relevant and appealing.

Furthermore, other than as an emblem of American – and indeed universal – unity and patriotism, the Civil War also appealed to contemporary British military intellectuals as a modern war and as a symbol for the birth of the modern and thus better United States. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britons were highly conscious of the past and the past was an integral part of their contemporary culture.<sup>34</sup> As Paul Readman has argued, between the 1890s and 1914, Britons had especially emphasised continuity in history.<sup>35</sup> According to what Herbert Butterfield has termed the “Whig interpretation of history”, as late as the 1930s Britons used to look to the future with hope for continuous improvement more than to the past with nostalgia.<sup>36</sup> In the same way, many in Britain viewed the United States as an ever-improving nation, which progressed from a pre-modern to a modern state. As Henderson, previously considered a Southern admirer, noted in his seminal biography of “Stonewall” Jackson:

For more than fifty years after the election of the first President, while as yet the crust of European tradition overlaid the young shoots of democracy, the supremacy, social and political, of the great landowners of the South had been practically undisputed. But when the young Republic began to take its place amongst the nations, men found that the wealth and talents which led it forward belonged as much to the busy cities of New England as to the plantations of Virginia and the Carolinas.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, during this time there is relatively little evidence in British military works for nostalgia for the old American republic. Even the praise for the old South

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<sup>34</sup>Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800-1953* (Oxford, 2006), p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Readman, ‘The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890–1914’, *Past & Present*, Vol. 186, No. 1 (2005), pp. 149-50.

<sup>36</sup> Reba N. Soffer, *History, Historians, and Conservatism in Britain and America: The Great War to Thatcher and Reagan* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 183-186; Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History, and the Making of an English Elite, 1870-1930* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 19-38.

<sup>37</sup>Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*, I, p. 84.

and its romantic – now lost – way of life did not overshadow the admiration for the modern United States.

The British view and adoption of the conciliatory representation of the Civil War showed not only that this narrative was relevant to them, but also that it was more relevant than other Civil War narratives were. The Atlantic sphere accommodated several narratives of the Civil War, which were fashioned and exported from the United States. Alongside the representation that depicted the Civil War as the date of birth of a benign, united and modern United States, the Southern narrative – the Lost Cause – propelled notions of a romantic lost world that was crushed under the feet of the Union army and with the rise of modern America. In a similar way to the conciliatory narrative of the war, the Southern narrative also crossed the Atlantic. For his work on Jackson, for example, Henderson used, *inter alia*, the *Journal of the Southern Historical Society*. It was, he thought, a “perfect mine of wealth to the historical student.”<sup>38</sup> However, whilst for Henderson the North was right to fight against secession and the South “ignored or missed [the Constitution’s] spirit”, the SHS had advanced a different view.<sup>39</sup> In an essay published by the SHS, M. F. Maury, a Navy scientist, wrote “A Vindication of Virginia and the South”, and argued that:

Assuming the attitude of defence, she [Virginia] said to the powers of the North, “Let no hostile foot cross my borders.” Nevertheless they came with fire and sword; battle was joined, victory crowned her banners on many a well-fought field; but she and her sister States, cut off from the outside world by the navy which they had helped to establish for the common defence, battled together against fearful odds at home for four long years, but were at least overpowered by mere numbers, and then came disaster. Her sons who fell died in defence of their country, their homes, their rights, and all that makes native land dear to the hearts of men.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

<sup>39</sup> G. F. R. Henderson, ‘The American Civil War, 1861-1865’, A Lecture to the Aldershot Military Society, Part I, February 9th, 1892, in: Malcolm (ed.), *The Science of War*, p. 231.

<sup>40</sup> Maury, ‘A Vindication of Virginia and the South’, *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 1 (Feb. 1876), p. 61, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2001.05.0001>. Accessed on 11 Feb. 2012.

Henderson chose to present a different legacy in his works, one that alongside praising Southern gallantry emphasised and celebrated the post-war reunion. The Southern representation of the Civil War was less relevant to British military thinkers who looked into the future with hope and to the modern United States as a model. The British ability to choose not only which lessons to draw from the war, but also which representation to assume in order to draw the above lessons coherently, showed the full scale of their independence in receiving and interpreting the conflict and its American representations.

In sum, turn of the century British military intellectuals found the Civil War particularly appealing for two main reasons. First, on a professional level, they believed that the American conflict held the keys to understanding and mastering the future of warfare. Second, from a broader perspective, they saw the Civil War as a key to comprehending American power, which lay in American unity and in American modernity – both of which, they came to believe, were brought about by the Civil War and its aftermath. Underlying this reading was a positive view of both the future and of the United States.

## II

The Civil War continued to occupy a central place in British military thought throughout and beyond the interwar period. As before, British fascination with the war was rooted in the understanding that the historical American conflict was relevant to contemporary British military and non-military affairs. However, the pre-World War views of the Civil War did not go unchallenged. For one, British officers perceived the conflict to offer an arsenal of myriad different military lessons, which came to the fore during the Great War. Additionally, the monolithic view of the Civil

War as a triumphant event that had created the modern United States gave way to a more nuanced and critical interpretation. It remained unchallenged that the Civil War was a watershed in American history. However, in light of the British experience of the Great War as a watershed in Britain's history and in light of America's greater-than-ever proximity, it was no longer consensual that the new United States that had emerged from the Civil War was the benign modern nation to which Britain's eye should be fixed. Finally, when the view of the Great War as a watershed in British history became more dominant, British military thinkers appealed to the Civil War as a similar, until then unfamiliar, socio-political experience in American history.

Subsequently, new strands of interpretation of the Civil War's legacy came to the fore in interwar British military thought. These were, in many ways, conflicting views. Thus during the interwar period the British understanding of the Civil War became both nuanced and contested. Through the works of Frederick Maurice, Basil Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller, the following section draws attention to the differences between the three main interpretations of the Civil War. However, at the same time, it accentuates the common sources of interest in the war shared by these three intellectuals. In so doing, this section presents the interwar British understanding of the Civil War as fragmented and contested, but at the same time definite, monolithic and coherent.

Maurice (1871-1951) was educated at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst and the Staff College, Kimberley, where in 1913 he became an instructor under the command of William Robertson. During the Great War, after a service in France, Maurice was ordered back to London to become director of military operations at the

War Office.<sup>41</sup> Maurice's promising military career was terminated in 1918 after a highly publicised clash with the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, over the government's strategy during the war. This controversy was to have significant influence on Maurice's later work as a military correspondent for the *Daily News* and the *Westminster Gazette*, as well as on his scholarly work, including on the American Civil War. Of the generals of the American conflict, Maurice found Robert E. Lee the most admirable object of study.

Liddell Hart (1895-1970), arguably the foremost military intellectual of the century, wrote prolifically on the Civil War and has left a visible mark on the works of military and non-military writers to this day. With the outbreak of the Great War, despite health problems and his parents' discontent, Liddell Hart volunteered for the armed forces, full of hope and sense of duty. His war experience, however, was short and traumatic, and in 1916 his active service career ended after he was injured in the Battle of the Somme.<sup>42</sup> This experience set him on the path to a rich career as a critic and writer, which soon gained him international reputation.<sup>43</sup> Moderate at first, by the early 1920s Liddell Hart had become a harsh military critic and a zealous believer in the need to revolutionise the army.<sup>44</sup> When questioned regarding his greatest influences by Jay Luvaas in 1950, Liddell Hart answered: William T. Sherman.<sup>45</sup>

Fuller, (1878-1966), was an influential military-man, revolutionary, activist, essayist and journalist.<sup>46</sup> After the First World War, convinced that political and

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<sup>41</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online. Accessed on 31 Aug. 2012. (henceforth cited as DNB).

<sup>42</sup>Alex Danchev, *Alchemist of War: The Life of Basil Liddell Hart* (London, 1999), pp. 49-63.

<sup>43</sup> DNB. Accessed online on 11 Feb. 2012.

<sup>44</sup>Danchev, *Alchemist of War*, pp. 122-38.

<sup>45</sup> See private correspondence between Luvaas and Liddell Hart, 25 August and 7 September, 1950, LH 1/465 Part 1: Liddell Hart – Luvaas Correspondence, 1950-1965, LHCMA.

<sup>46</sup> DNB. Accessed on 11 Feb. 2012.

military omissions had led to unnecessary destruction, Fuller's criticism of the army grew rapidly. As an instructor in the Staff College in the mid 1920s he spoke, for example, for abandoning Henderson's *Jackson* as a principal textbook, which he claimed had generated narrow-thinking soldiers.<sup>47</sup> Upon Fuller's retirement from the army, in 1933, he began what he privately saw as the most interesting phase of his life, when his political stance became more prominent.<sup>48</sup> In 1934 he joined the British Union of Fascists (BUF), whilst the 1930s in general were also an incredibly fertile period in his writing career. One of Fuller's main themes in his works was the American Civil War. His protagonist was Ulysses S. Grant.

Initially, Maurice, Liddell Hart and Fuller all turned to the Civil War for military lessons regarding modern warfare. Common to all three was also their recourse to the conflict for military lessons in light of their understanding of the Great War and their experiences in it and in light of the next war, which they thought would ultimately arrive. Their lessons, however, differed greatly.

Maurice was not amongst the British military intellectuals who took special interest in the Civil War prior to the Great War. Nonetheless, he is known to have found Henderson's book fascinating and influential and his own military lessons presented an exemplary continuum between the two periods.<sup>49</sup> As with predecessors, Maurice saw in the Civil War an affirmation of his strategic view that the most efficient way to overcome a foe was to concentrate massive powers on the principal

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<sup>47</sup>Brian Holden Reid, *War Studies at the Staff College 1890-1930* (Camberley, 1992), pp. 13-20.

<sup>48</sup> A letter from Fuller to William Sloan, 18 Apr. 1962, IV/6/1 – IV/6/48b, LHCMA.

<sup>49</sup> Luvaas, 'G. F. R. Henderson and the American Civil War', p. 139.

front and attack the enemy's main force.<sup>50</sup> Praising Grant for his hammering assaults in the Eastern Theatre, Maurice thus reflected on the Somme:

Certainly Grant had not lost confidence either in himself or in his men. But the heavy tale of casualties had shaken public opinion in the North and had alarmed many of the politicians in Washington; just as the casualties of the Somme had made the people of Great Britain realise, as they not realized before, the terrible nature of modern war, and had convinced certain of the statesmen in Downing Street that that battle had been a ghastly and costly failure. Fortunately for the North, they had in Washington a man who had the courage to look beyond lists of casualties, and the imagination to picture the effect of Grant's methods of exhaustion on the South. Lincoln refused to withdraw his support from Grant, and so made victory possible in 1865.<sup>51</sup>

As Maurice's interpretation of events in Cold Harbor demonstrated, other than promoting a strategy of direct assault, he was concerned also with civil-military-political relations. Maurice continuously argued for politicians' obligation to protect military commanders and their professional decisions from public criticism; for generals' freedom from political intervention in professional affairs; and he was an advocate of conscription, which he thought the government should support. In the Civil War, Maurice found evidence to reinforce all his arguments.

Maurice's account of Cold Harbor, in which his dismay with British conduct in the Battle of the Somme was evident, also demonstrated that his stance was not an easy one to hold in Britain during the Great War. For example, in light of the increasing number of casualties on the Western Front, and facing a growing public unrest, politicians were reluctant to endorse generals Douglas Haig's and William Robertson's demand for more manpower in order to concentrate power in France.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Maurice argued that with Lloyd George's constant intervention in military affairs, division of authority between the military and the government was never

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<sup>50</sup> For Maurice advocacy of concentration of power, for example, see: Maurice, *British Strategy: A Study of the Application of the Principles of War* (London, 1929), pp. 215-18.

<sup>51</sup> Frederick Maurice, *Robert E. Lee: The Soldier* (Boston, 1925), p. 243.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Greenhalgh, 'David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and the 1918 Manpower Crisis', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2007), pp. 397-421, esp. pp. 401-2.

practiced in Britain during the war.<sup>53</sup> Conscription, too, was difficult to market. Traditionally, many Britons believed, conscription stood in opposition to Britain's national character, especially if it was for service abroad.<sup>54</sup> Lord Shaw, for example, voiced a common view when naming the Military Bill of 1916 "essentially un-British."<sup>55</sup>

Maurice had experienced the difficulty of implementing these lessons first hand. In light of the German success on the Western Front in 1918, British politicians – led by Lloyd George and Andrew Bonar Law – accused British generals – primarily Haig and Robertson – of executing an irresponsible and costly strategy in France.<sup>56</sup> A close friend of both generals and like them an adherent of the Western Front strategy, Maurice was not averse to voicing this. On 6 May, he published a letter in which he accused both Lloyd George and Bonar Law of misleading the public and demoralising soldiers.<sup>57</sup> Maurice stated that his motivation for publishing the polemical letter was the belief that the Prime Minister was sacrificing Britain's soldiers and war effort in the name of personal interests. In order to please potential voters, claimed Maurice, Lloyd George sought to avoid decisive battles even at the price of prolonging the war. Maurice further argued that the public was concerned solely with the rising number of casualties and was ignorant of strategic and tactical considerations. Whilst scholars still debate Haig's and Lloyd George's conduct during the war, in the late 1910s it was the

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<sup>53</sup> Nancy Maurice, (ed.), *The Maurice Case: From the Papers of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice* (London, 1972), pp. 191-2.

<sup>54</sup> Adrian Gregory, "You Might As Well Recruit Germans": British Public Opinion and the Decision to Conscript the Irish in 1918', in: Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta, *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite Us All?* (Manchester, 2002), p. 116.

<sup>55</sup> Lord Shaw in a debate in the House of Lords, 25 Jan. 1916, HC Debates, Military Service (No. 2) Bill, Vol. 20 cc970-1022.

<sup>56</sup> George H. Cassar, *Lloyd George at War, 1916-1918* (London, 2009), pp. 262-5.

<sup>57</sup> For the letter see: Maurice (ed.), *The Maurice Case*, pp. 97-8.

latter who held the upper hand.<sup>58</sup> The public clash with Maurice both affirmed the Prime Minister's authority and control over his government, and marked the end of Maurice's military career, leaving the disavowed general with a bitter sense of injustice.<sup>59</sup>

In keeping with the above, and as historians have already noted, Maurice's accounts of the Civil War might be viewed as an indirect criticism.<sup>60</sup> He repeatedly argued that in the notorious clash with Lloyd George he was never truly allowed to defend himself publicly.<sup>61</sup> Comparing events of the Civil War with those taking place in the Great War, Maurice's criticism was vividly lucid, as the analysis of his account of Cold Harbor demonstrated. However, it would be wrong to dismiss Maurice's Civil War writings as merely a semi-disguised criticism. After all, he had expressed his contempt publicly and explicitly well before he turned to the study of the Civil War in the mid 1920s.<sup>62</sup>

It would be helpful instead to notice that Maurice genuinely believed that the military and political circumstances of the Civil War would be akin to those of the future. As such, the American conflict was immensely relevant to him, in that he did not hold that the Great War really "ended all wars". To those who claimed that

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<sup>58</sup> David R. Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men Prior to the German Offensive of 21 March 1918?', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1984), pp. 241-52; Paul Harris and Sanders Marble, 'The "Step-by-Step" Approach: British Military Thought and Operational Method on the Western Front, 1915-1917', *War in History*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2008), pp. 25-8; Nick Lloyd, "'With Faith and Without Fear": Sir Douglas Haig's Command of First Army during 1915', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. (2007), p. 1076; For criticism of Lloyd George's conduct see: Trevor Wilson and Robin Prior, 'British Decision-Making 1917: Lloyd George, the Generals and Passchendaele', in: Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle, (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London, 1996), pp. 93-102; Brock Millman, 'A Counsel of Despair: British Strategy and War Aims, 1917-18', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2001), pp. 241-70.

<sup>59</sup>For Maurice's own account of the events see: Maurice, (ed.), *The Maurice Case*, pp. 91-116.

<sup>60</sup> Reid, *Studies in British Military Thought*, p. 146.

<sup>61</sup> Maurice, (ed.), *The Maurice Case*, pp. 94-107.

<sup>62</sup> In addition to his press releases, Maurice had also expressed his criticism in other ways, such as in the highly commented book *Forty Days in 1914* from 1919, see: Maurice, *Forty Days in 1914* (London, 1919), pp. 195-201.

another great war could not come again, Maurice soberly answered in 1927 in his inaugural lecture at King's College, London:

I hope and trust that this is so, but we have, as a signatory of the covenant of the League of Nations, entered in certain commitments, we have in the pacts of Locarno entered into other commitments more definite and precise. We may again be called to honour our signature in the future as in the past [...]<sup>63</sup>

Maurice understood that if the new international institutions and pacts functioned they might secure peace; he also knew that if they failed, another world war would be more than likely. Accordingly, Maurice stressed that the Civil War was the best war to shed light on contemporary modern warfare and that Britons must draw valid lessons from it, not about the previous European war but about the next one.<sup>64</sup> Whilst acknowledging that technical conditions in future wars would be different, he held that the nature of military-political relations and the role of the public would remain similar to those in America in the 1860s.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, Maurice turned to the Civil War for military lessons because he thought that as a foreign war it would be an apt source, which the Great War could not yet be. In many senses, he believed, Britons were not ready to draw, examine and learn from the Great War in a sufficiently detached way, as it was immersed in bitter conflicts that he knew all too well. Accordingly, in 1926, Maurice opened his account of the Civil War thus:

We are too near to the events of the World War to make it possible to examine dispassionately the relations which existed between statesmen and soldiers in the countries concerned, nor have we yet [...] the material needed to enable us even to begin a judicial examination of questions which bristle with controversy. But some sixty years ago there was fought out a bitter and protracted struggle between two democracies [...] It has seemed to me therefore to be worth while to examine

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<sup>63</sup> Frederick Maurice, 'On the Uses of the Study of War', An Inaugural Lecture Delivered on Friday 14 Jan. 1927, Department of Military Studies, University of London, King's College, p. vi.

<sup>64</sup> Maurice, *Robert E. Lee*, pp. 73-4.

<sup>65</sup> Maurice, *Governments and War: A Study of the Conduct of War* (London, 1926), pp. 154-9.

critically, in the light of our own recent experience, the method of conducting war adopted by the North and South in the years 1861-1865 [...] <sup>66</sup>

Featuring the most up-to-date developments in modern warfare and reflecting a direct British experience, the World War would have been the best precedent from which to draw lessons in order to prepare for the next war. However, being soaked in controversy and emotions, Maurice sought a more distant, non-British conflict that would nevertheless allow him to make relevant arguments.

Maurice was not the only military thinker to draw these lessons from the Civil War. In 1926, a year after Maurice had published his biography of Lee, Colin Ballard drew similar lessons in his account of Lincoln's military leadership.<sup>67</sup> In his *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, Ballard accused Northern generals, such as Hooker at Chancellorsville and Meade at Gettysburg, of hesitation with regards to frontal and direct attacks against the South.<sup>68</sup> Alfred Burne, a decorated officer and a prolific military writer, adhered to similar notions.<sup>69</sup> In his 1938 book on the generals of the Civil War, Burne praised Lee, Hood and Early for their decisiveness, audacity and decisions to attack even when on the defence.<sup>70</sup>

From the same American war, in light of the same world war and equally conscious that another war would ultimately arrive, Liddell Hart drew the opposite conclusions. Like Maurice, Liddell Hart found Sherman and the Civil War appealing

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>67</sup> Not much is written about Ballard. For some details about his career see: BALLARD, Brig.-Gen. Colin Robert, in *Who's Who 2010* and *Who Was Who* online: [http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U222192/BALLARD\\_Brig.-Gen.\\_Colin\\_Robert?index=1&results=QuicksearchResults&query=0](http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U222192/BALLARD_Brig.-Gen._Colin_Robert?index=1&results=QuicksearchResults&query=0).

<sup>68</sup> Ballard, *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln: An Essay by Brigadier-General Colin R. Ballard* (London, 1926). On Hooker see pp. 154-158; and on Meade see pp. 164-96.

<sup>69</sup> For biographical information about Burne see Albert Castel's forward to the new edition of Burne's book: Burne, *Lee, Grant and Sherman: A Study in Leadership in the 1864-65 Campaign* (Lawrence, 2000), pp. ix-x; and obituary in the *Times*, 3 Jun., 1959 in: LH 1/131, 263, LHCMA.

<sup>70</sup> Burne, *Lee, Grant and Sherman: A Study in Leadership in the 1864-65 Campaign* (Aldershot, 1938), pp. 69 and 165-6.

because he thought that the Northern general had best demonstrated the lessons of modern warfare in the first of modern wars. “The army which marched with Sherman from Atlanta to the Atlantic”, he wrote, “was probably the finest army [...] the modern world has seen”.<sup>71</sup>

From Sherman Liddell Hart took the need for mobility, flexibility, self-reliance and speed. He described, for example, how, prior to leaving Atlanta on his march toward the Atlantic, Sherman had reduced the burden carried by his men to a necessary minimum, keeping it mobile and flexible.<sup>72</sup> “Economy of force”, Liddell Hart argued in admiration, “was his ruling law [...]”<sup>73</sup> Additional lessons included the role of economic and psychological warfare, which Liddell Hart saw as pivotal in defeating an enemy army, especially of a modern democratic country. Accordingly, he argued that Sherman’s march through the Carolinas was aimed primarily at spreading despair amongst the Southern population. Following Atlanta and Savannah, he contended, “it only remained to carry that impression into South Carolina and the fate of the Confederacy would be sealed.”<sup>74</sup>

All of the above were the basic building blocks of Liddell Hart’s most cherished trademark – the strategy of the indirect approach.<sup>75</sup> Simply put, this theory stressed that a general must avoid concentrating his power and commencing attacks on the principal front against his enemy’s main force. Instead, the general should search for alternative routes to the enemy’s most vulnerable points.<sup>76</sup> Clearly, then, Liddell

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<sup>71</sup>Basil Liddell Hart, *Sherman: The Genius of the Civil War* (London, 1930), p. 344.

<sup>72</sup> LH 12/1932, LHCMA.

<sup>73</sup>Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 111.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 359.

<sup>75</sup>Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War*, pp. 200-23.

<sup>76</sup> For succinct explanation of the strategy of the indirect approach see: Liddell Hart, ‘Strategy: The Indirect Approach’, in: Thomas G. Mahnken and Joseph A. Maiolo, (eds.), *Strategic Studies: A Reader* (London, 2008), pp. 82-5; for how Liddell Hart saw its implications in other places other than the

Hart and Maurice were diametrically opposite when it came to military strategy. Nonetheless, with the introduction of the rifled musket, and in a conflict where “every battlefield became a network of entrenchments”, it was in the Civil War that Liddell Hart – like Maurice – saw the first evidence for his theory. In the modern era, he deduced from the American conflict, “a frontal attack on an enemy in position became an almost hopeless venture.”<sup>77</sup>

Lessons about modern warfare became immensely relevant to Liddell Hart in the wake of the Great War. Between 1914 and 1918, he argued, the Allies in Europe should have implemented many of the lessons that were demonstrated by Sherman already in the 1860s. He regretted that this had not been done. “If those keys”, he wrote, “had not lain so long neglected in the dusty lumber-room of history, the problem of the world war might have been better understood [...]”<sup>78</sup> From the early 1920s, Liddell Hart grew highly critical of British conduct in the Great War. During the interwar period, as opposed to Maurice, he came to see the Western Front policy as futile and costly, and he supported Lloyd George’s views that an alternative – such as in Gallipoli – should have been sought and pursued.<sup>79</sup> He opposed the strategy of concentration of power and promoted, instead, the abovementioned indirect approach. For Liddell Hart, the Western Front in 1914, much like the Eastern Theatre in 1861, was a deadlock. Facing the same dilemma as the generals of the Civil War – forcing the barrier or seeking a way round – the French and British generals, Liddell Hart regretted, followed Grant and aimlessly tried to hammer their way through. Consequently, the French assault near Arras in May 1915 or the Franco-British

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American Civil War see: Basil Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare* (London, 1932), pp. 19-20 (Napoleon) and pp. 103-4 (Hannibal).

<sup>77</sup> Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 91.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London, 1941), p. 192.

conduct in the Somme in 1916, which he knew all too well, were as fruitless and costly as Grant's 1864 campaign in Virginia against Lee, or Halleck's conduct in Corinth in 1862 when he faced the entrenched forces of Beauregard.<sup>80</sup>

At loggerheads with him professionally, Liddell Hart nonetheless shared Maurice's view of the Civil War as more than a channel to express criticism and bitterness about the past. He, too, was pragmatic and genuinely concerned about the future. Accordingly, he spent the interwar period advancing the implementation of his lessons from Sherman as measures to prepare for the next war. "Any reasonable man must hope that war will have no future", he predicted in 1932, "but experience does not lend encouragement to the hope."<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, the British conduct in the Second World War left Liddell Hart with the same sense of an ignored prophet that he had had during the 1920s and 1930s when he thought that the army was reluctant to adopt the lessons learned from Sherman. In 1961, for example, he wrote bitterly that, whilst the British command did not absorb these lessons:

Thereby, unfortunately, it was left to the Germans to take over the British lead [...] Guderian enthusiastically embraced the idea of deep strategic penetration, and tried out in details the new techniques that had been evolved in Britain. Five years later he commanded the main spearhead which carried out the far-reaching thrust, through the Ardennes to the Channel, that proved decisive against the French Army in 1940. That 1940 campaign [...] was a triumph for the new concept – and with it was completed the chain of causation from Sherman.<sup>82</sup>

In all likelihood, Liddell Hart saw himself as the connecting link in this chain of developments that had stretched from Sherman to Guderian. He only hoped that it would end with a British, rather than a German link. Liddell Hart continued to argue for the relevance of lessons from Sherman's conduct in the 1860s even after the Second World War.

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<sup>80</sup>For Liddell Hart's account of Halleck's conduct in Corinth see: *Sherman*, p. 152-5.

<sup>81</sup>Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare* (London, 1932), p. 7.

<sup>82</sup>Liddell Hart, *From Atlanta to the Sea* (London, 1961), p. 15.

As historians have shown, Liddell Hart's professional reading of the Civil War was far from unproblematic. This, it has been argued compellingly, reflected Liddell Hart's often ill-targeted criticism of the wartime and the post-war British army. For example, although Liddell Hart continuously criticised the British army for not initiating any significant reform after the Great War, the fact was that the army underwent fundamental changes during the interwar period, some even in accord with Liddell Hart's own vision.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, contrary to Liddell Hart's assertions, pre-war military intellectuals drew lessons from the Civil War, and some of these lessons were akin to his. For example, whilst he argued that before the Great War British military intellectuals ignored the Western Theatre and Sherman's crucial role in defeating the Confederacy, in 1905 Wood and Edmonds summarised that:

The military genius of the great Confederate leaders, Lee and Jackson, the unrivalled fighting capacity of the Army of Northern Virginia, and the close proximity of the rival capitals, have caused a disproportionate attention to be concentrated upon the Eastern theatre of war. But it was in the West that the decisive blows were struck. The capture of Vicksburg and Port Hudson in July, 1863, was the real turning-point of the war, and it was the operations of Sherman's Grand Army of the West which really led to the collapse of the Confederacy at Appomattox Court House.<sup>84</sup>

Scholars have correctly pointed at Liddell Hart's omissions and inaccuracies to argue that the British thinker was attempting to promote his own military philosophy, sometimes forcing facts into theory.<sup>85</sup> Adhering to his indirect approach, Liddell Hart downplayed Grant's central role in defeating the Confederacy by hammering Lee's army on the Eastern Front, attributing all the success to Sherman.

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<sup>83</sup> David French, 'Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919-1932', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2001), pp. 497-515; William Philpott, 'Beyond the "Learning Curve": The British Army's Military Transformation in the First World War', on the website of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), Nov. 2009: <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4AF97CF94AC8B>. Accessed on 1 Oct. 2010. For additional criticism on Liddell Hart's thought see: Correlli Barnett, 'Basil Faculty?: Finds Liddell Hart's Influence on Strategic Thinking a Matter of Wonder and Regret', *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 144, No. 2 (1999), p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Wood and Edmonds, *A History of the Civil War in the United States, 1861-5*, p. 527.

<sup>85</sup> For a thorough account of Liddell Hart's omissions and inaccuracies regarding Sherman, see: Castel, 'Liddell Hart's "Sherman"', pp., 405-26.

True as this may be, in Liddell Hart's criticism of the previous generation of British military thinkers, and in his assault on pre-1914 military thinkers' reluctance to learn from the Civil War, something more profound was evident. This casts light on his broader and deeper appeal to the Civil War. At the heart of Liddell Hart's thought lay the sense that the Great War was a historical watershed separating his generation from past generations. Professionally, he constantly argued that, during the Great War, Britain departed from many of its long held traditions. "For the first time in our history", he wrote for example, "we poured the nation into the army."<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Liddell Hart stressed that, unlike past conflicts, during the First World War Britain had abandoned its traditional adherence to both limited liability in Europe (that is, its policy of not committing itself to European alliances) and to its reliance on naval warfare.<sup>87</sup> If Liddell Hart's emphasis on British military departure from tradition was not always accurate, it nonetheless loyally reflected a strong feeling of detachment from the past and a sense of there being a generational gap in his military thought. That is, he felt that what he saw as the horrific outcome of the Great War was the result of the British government's and army's departure from their traditional doctrine. As discussed below, Liddell Hart's sense of detachment from the past exceeded his military thought, as shown in his appeal to Sherman as an old-generation American rather than as a modern general.

Similar to Maurice, Liddell Hart was not alone in drawing these lessons from the Civil War. Eric Sheppard, mentioned in the previous section, had become by the 1930s a follower of Liddell Hart's indirect approach.<sup>88</sup> Like Liddell Hart, he came to condemn the adherence to the Western Front policy in Europe and he severely

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<sup>86</sup>Liddell Hart, *The British Way of Warfare*, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>88</sup> For Sheppard's acknowledgment of Liddell Hart's influence on his thought, see: Sheppard, *The American Civil War* (Aldershot, 1938), pp. xvi-xviii.

criticised the strategy of concentrating power in France. From the Great War Sheppard wanted the prospective student to learn that it was decided not on the Western Front, but rather with the Austrian defeat in Italy and in Macedonia. There, he argued, “[...] the sudden and inexplicable collapse of Bulgaria had opened all the rear of the Central Powers to attack [...]”<sup>89</sup> When he changed his strategic views in light of the Great War, his interpretation of the Civil War changed accordingly. Contrary to his previous interpretation, in the 1930s Sheppard stressed that “it was in the West that the war was lost and won”, and he advised his readers to devote their main attention to Sherman’s operations and to the Western Theatre.<sup>90</sup> Moving from Henderson, Sheppard now sheltered under Liddell Hart’s influence, as he himself noted.<sup>91</sup>

Sheppard also shared with Liddell Hart the view that the British conduct in the Great War showed an ultimately devastating departure from its traditional doctrine. “British policy in the Great War”, he admonished, “differed strikingly from that followed by her in previous conflicts on a similar level in the past.”<sup>92</sup> International agreements, he stressed elsewhere, had tied Britain to Europe and forced it to abandon its traditional doctrine. He thus argued that, in order to avoid a recurrence, no ally of Britain “has the right to lead us in a wrong [direction].”<sup>93</sup> Much like Liddell Hart, Sheppard wanted Britain to return to its traditional military doctrine before the next war.

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<sup>89</sup> Sheppard, *Military History for the Staff College Entrance Examination: A Brief Summary of the Campaigns, with Questions and Answers* (Aldershot, 1933), pp. 63-4.

<sup>90</sup> Sheppard, *The American Civil War*, p. 40.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xvi-xviii.

<sup>92</sup> Sheppard, *Military History for the Staff College Entrance Examination*, p. 66.

<sup>93</sup> Sheppard, ‘Does Defence mean Defeat?’, *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, Vol. 83 (Feb./Nov., 1938), p. 297.

Fuller and Liddell Hart agreed on many aspects of strategy, including vital aspects of the Great War and the Civil War. However, the two prominent thinkers also markedly differed in their understanding of other aspects of both conflicts, and Fuller presented yet another reading of the professional value of the Civil War. As did many of his contemporaries, Maurice and Liddell Hart amongst them, Fuller drew from the Civil War professional lessons he considered relevant to modern warfare. Moreover, like Liddell Hart, he believed that lessons from the American conflict were all the more relevant during this time because they were not previously learnt. In that spirit, he wrote in 1933 that:

The old tactical school learned nothing, the new died with the war; so it happened that the grim lessons of Malvern Hill, Shiloh, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and the Wilderness had to be relearned in every succeeding war right up to the World War of 1914-1918, when they appeared in their most tremendous form; yet soldiers still hesitate to accept them.<sup>94</sup>

In accordance with his passion for technological military innovations, the Civil War served Fuller as a lesson primarily about the impact of new technology on the battlefield. He argued that technologies that were introduced during the Civil War had revolutionised the battlefield in a way that has remained significant since. Above all he emphasised the introduction of the bullet and argued that “in 1861-1865 the rifle bullet was the lord of the battlefield as was the machine gun bullet in 1914-1918.”<sup>95</sup> Fuller acknowledged that technological means change frequently. However, he maintained that their tactical impact was largely constant. Fuller’s main professional lesson from

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<sup>94</sup>J. F. C. Fuller, *Grant & Lee: A Study in Personality and Generalship* (London, 1933), p. 43.

<sup>95</sup>J. F. C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant* (London, 1929), p. 358, and Fuller, ‘The Place of the American Civil War in the Evolution of War’, *The Army Quarterly*, XXVI (1933), pp. 318-20. See also Luvaas’s argument about Fuller and Grant on this subject in: Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War*, pp. 214-5. The rifled musket and the Minié ball were invented earlier in the nineteenth century, and were widely used for the first time during the Crimean War, and even more so in the American Civil War. The new rifled weapons were much more accurate than the previous smoothbore rifles and had reached a greater distance. By the beginning of the Civil War the United States Regular Army was largely equipped with muzzle-loading rifles, see: Thomas Griess, *The American Civil War* (New York, 2002), p. 22.

the Civil War was thus that since that war “the rifle had rendered the defence the stronger form of war.”<sup>96</sup>

This tactical lesson imposed new strategic thought. Fuller argued that when the defence had become the stronger form of warfare, frontal assaults were rendered futile, whilst indirect methods became all the more necessary. Of Grant’s campaign against Lee’s army in 1864 Fuller wrote:

When examining Grant’s tactics, it is generally overlooked that to him physical attack was but one of three forms of attack, the other two being moral and economic (or material) attacks; attacks which were waged against the will and resources of the Confederacy, and not merely against the strength of her armies. The attacks of Sheridan in the valley and of Sherman in Georgia and the Carolinas were in nature moral and economic, whilst his own in Virginia was a physical onslaught so unrelenting and fierce that it shielded these attacks from physical interference.<sup>97</sup>

In 1931, two years after he wrote this about Grant, in his *Lectures on the Field Service Regulations II* (F.S.R.) Fuller applied the same principles to the last and the next wars:

Once a front can neither be turned nor broken, as happened in France from November 1914 to October 1917, the true battle is shifted to the industrial areas; here lie the reserve forces which will ultimately win the war. This is what happened during the last war, and is likely to happen during the next [...]<sup>98</sup>

Even on the tank – his obsession – he wrote that it was “a psychological, more so than a material weapon.”<sup>99</sup> Clearly, then, Fuller thought that the Civil War carried important lessons allowing for better understating of the Great War and for better preparation for Britain’s next conflict. Furthermore, as his words above demonstrated, in many places throughout his work Fuller seemed to echo Liddell Hart’s strategy of indirect approach. Liddell Hart himself, reviewing Fuller’s *Lectures on the F.S.R. III* (1932), noted that the latter’s contentions were “similar to my 1928 argument on the

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<sup>96</sup>Fuller, *Grant & Lee*, p. 45.

<sup>97</sup>Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, p. 364.

<sup>98</sup>Fuller, *Lectures on F. S. R. II* (London, 1931), p. 126.

<sup>99</sup>Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789-1961: A Study of the Impact of the French, Industrial and Russian Revolutions on War and its Conduct* (London, 1972), pp. 176-7.

strategy of indirect approach”, and added that “Fuller’s adoption of it is a most valuable reinforcement.”<sup>100</sup> On British strategy, Fuller and Liddell Hart were in the same camp, standing in opposition to Maurice.

Such an approach should have put Fuller in a problematic position. Largely owing to Liddell Hart’s influence, Grant’s generalship in 1930s Britain became notoriously associated with frontal, bloody and fruitless strategy as opposed to Sherman’s economical conduct. Reviewing Fuller’s *Grant and Lee* (1933) in the *English Review*, Liddell Hart was pleased with the author’s criticism of Lee but disappointedly concluded: “if only he could analyse Grant in the same way [...]”<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, in his *Lectures on the F.S.R. II*, Fuller seemed to have endorsed Liddell Hart’s views:

The Germans were of opinion that numerical superiority was the decisive factor [...] The German plan nearly succeeded not because it was a sound plan, it was not, for the entire forces of the empire were put into the front line, and all flexibility was lost [...] In spite of the then recent lessons of the Russo-Japanese war, its controlling idea was frontal attack of all armies on the battle of Cold Harbor pattern tried out by General Grant with disastrous results in 1864!<sup>102</sup>

In what sense, then, were Fuller’s arguments so fundamentally different from those of Liddell Hart’s that their close friendship nearly ended in the late 1920s because of their views on Grant and Sherman? How may Fuller’s inconsistency in his military thought be understood? And why did Fuller choose Grant as a protagonist if the American general embodied a strategy that he did not endorse? The answer was that Fuller was not interested solely in Grant’s tactics but also in his cause.

Failing to grasp the significance of new technological developments, according to Fuller all the generals in the Civil War – including Grant – executed futile frontal

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<sup>100</sup> LH 11/1932/49, LHCMA.

<sup>101</sup> LH 10/1933/109-161, LHCMA.

<sup>102</sup> Fuller, *Lectures on F. S. R. II*, p. 26.

attacks.<sup>103</sup> However, he argued, of all Civil War generals, Grant was singular in understanding and following Carl von Clausewitz's maxim that "war is the continuation of politics by other means."<sup>104</sup> To Fuller, that was the essential difference. The British intellectual emphasised that Grant's conduct during the war – as opposed to Lee's – was always guided by higher policy. Thus, Fuller exempted Grant from being a "callous butcher" by emphasising that political constraints had left him with little choice:

In reviewing Grant's generalship during the last year of the war, it is all important to keep his object clearly in mind, and especially so because those who criticize his strategy and tactics frequently overlook it. It was to establish unity of strategical direction and to end the war in the shortest possible time, because, as we have seen, the political condition of the North brooked no delay.<sup>105</sup>

With the 1864 election approaching and Lincoln's re-election far from secured, Fuller argued that Grant had no choice but to act directly and forcefully in order to provide the President with military achievements, which would in turn be translated into political capital.

That, like other lessons from the Civil War, became highly relevant to Fuller in light of the Great War. Fuller regretted that during the war, the Allies' political leadership did not emulate Lincoln's coherent policy. Whilst maintaining that a general must know what his superiors, i.e. the government, aim at achieving by way of war, and act accordingly as the head of the armed forces, Fuller also stressed that the government was responsible for conceiving a definite policy and political end to a war. Without coherent policy a war is nothing but a horrific chaos that leads to more chaos. Of the Great War Fuller wrote: "[...] in August 1914, there was no Anglo-French political point of view, therefore the military point of view was subordinated

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<sup>103</sup> Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, p. 359

<sup>104</sup> On Fuller's view of war as political instrument see for example: Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p. 63.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

to a vacuum, which at once filled to become the sole point of view: in other words, the means monopolized the end.”<sup>106</sup> Fuller concluded his account of the war with a single sentence: “Thus chaos was planted in Europe”.<sup>107</sup> Lincoln, on the other hand, had a policy – one that put reunion as the main goal – and he directed Grant to advance it. As shown below, the roots of Fuller’s appeal to Grant reached deeper and stemmed from his admiration and identification with the North’s cause off the battlefield as well.

Whilst from the Civil War Maurice, Liddell Hart and Fuller drew different, indeed sometimes opposing military lessons, all three reflected the same sense of disappointment in British conduct throughout the Great War. Clearly, they disagreed about what went wrong during the war. Maurice thought that the government did not allocate enough resources to the Western Front; Liddell Hart and Fuller thought that the generals had forced the government to concentrate too much on that front. However, they all shared the view that after the Great War, British military doctrine had to be revised. Despite the differences between them, the Civil War allowed all three to draw relevant lessons and advance their critical view of the Great War. Moreover, revision of doctrine gained a sense of urgency from the perception that another war similar to the Great War was imminent. This sense of urgency was also common to all three military thinkers.

Maurice, Liddell Hart and Fuller commonly turned to the Civil War also because it explained the contemporary United States, which they came to see as relevant as were the military lessons from the Civil War and from the Great War. Never before the First World War were Americans so close to Britain. Never before

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<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 182.

the interwar period was American influence on Britain as powerful. Whilst Maurice, Liddell Hart and Fuller, again, differed in their view of the United States, they all seemed to have felt compelled to comment on it. As an American symbol that explained the rise of their contemporary United States, the Civil War was a point of access through which this could be done.

Maurice viewed the United States much as his predecessors did, as a country that in the Civil War was reborn a stronger, modernised unified nation. It was that war, he argued, drawing from one of the war's consensual representations, which had created the modern United States. Although he wrote a biography of Lee that portrayed the Southern general in a positive light, Maurice was not an admirer of the South. Certainly, his work showed that he held Southern chivalry in high esteem. "The free life and independent means of the gentlemen in Virginia", he noted, "[and] the management of large estates [...] produced men with a natural aptitude for government, men who in their day rendered great service."<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, Maurice saw the Civil War as a mark of the old South's demise. On the heyday of Virginia, he wrote that, "during the boyhood and manhood of Robert E. Lee, they reached and passed the zenith of their power. New forces [...] were at work."<sup>109</sup> However, to Maurice, if the war saw the demise of a romantic old world, it gave rise to an admirable modern world. "[...] history has shown that he [Lee] was wrong and Lincoln right", Maurice wrote, "that the future of this great country depended upon the development of the Union [...]."<sup>110</sup> The South, Maurice ultimately determined, referring to secession, fought for a cause that history deemed wrong. Yet in the war's aftermath, the South too, joined the mission of reunion. "After the war", Maurice

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<sup>108</sup>Maurice, *Robert E. Lee*, p. 18.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

noted, “[Lee] devoted himself to the task of reconciliation.”<sup>111</sup> In this, Lee followed Lincoln’s aim to reunite the country and lead it to world prominence. Similar to the pre-1914 generation of British military thinkers, Maurice rejected one Civil War representation – that of the South – and appealed to another – that of reconciliation. Through the latter, he looked with admiration on the modern United States.

Maurice’s view of the United States was shaped by pragmatic considerations. In the Great War he found the proof that the modern United States had to be understood and approached. Throughout his career Maurice consistently argued that in order to protect itself, Britain must abandon isolationism – which had characterised its late nineteenth-century foreign policy – and acquire allies that shared its interests. At the end of the nineteenth century, he believed that it should have been Austria, Germany and Italy.<sup>112</sup> After the Great War, in which “the situation had indeed become dark, and was relieved only by America’s entry in the war”, Maurice had turned his attention to the United States.<sup>113</sup> Involved in the post-war negotiations with the Americans about disarmament, he also saw the major bone of contention between Britain and the United States and the necessity to overcome it:

I suggest that the first step towards coming to an arrangement with the United States is to make a serious effort to get the old vexed question of neutral rights at sea settled [...] It is difficult for an Englishman who has not done what I had to do last year, to sit for a month discussing this question of the limitation of armaments round a table with American sailors, soldiers, and international jurists, to grasp how strongly Americans feel on this question.<sup>114</sup>

“Any arrangement”, he then added, “by which American influence would be on our side [...] must surely on balance be to our advantage even if we sacrifice some power

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<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>112</sup>Jay Luvaas, *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought, 1815-1940* (London, 1965), p. 205.

<sup>113</sup>Maurice, (ed.), *The Maurice Case*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>114</sup>Frederick Maurice, ‘Disarmament’, *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1926), p. 129.

of blockade [...].”<sup>115</sup> Whilst clearly present before 1914, American power became strikingly evident for Maurice during and after the Great War, as it became apparent to all Britons. Never before the Great War – when over a million American soldiers had passed through their country – did Britons have the Americans so close to home.<sup>116</sup> Maurice also did not fail to appreciate the United States’ crucial role in the war. Accordingly, as noted, American power was to Maurice an important insurance of Britain’s safety. However, as his words above showed – and as was evident in Liddell Hart’s and even more so in Fuller’s thought, discussed below – Britons did not always experience the proximity of American power positively. Some, to whom Maurice’s words were directed, saw it as undermining the place of their own country.

Liddell Hart was much more critical of the contemporary United States. Although he rarely expressed his views of interwar America or of Anglo-American relations, it is clear in his account of Sherman that it occupied a place in his thought.<sup>117</sup> Sherman was more than one of Liddell Hart’s military heroes and in writing his biography the British intellectual developed arguments additional to the merely professional. As he repeatedly noted, Liddell Hart saw in the Northern general also a cultural and political role model and he emphasised time and again that Sherman was not only a brilliant commander but also an embodiment of American identity and culture. “The man is William Tecumseh Sherman”, he wrote, “who, by the general recognition of all who met him was the most original genius of the American Civil War; and who, in the same breath, is often described as ‘the typical

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<sup>115</sup>*Ibid*, p. 139.

<sup>116</sup>David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (London, 1995), p. 3-5.

<sup>117</sup> In his memoirs, he referred to the U.S. as a strategically important ally of Britain. See: Basil Liddell Hart, *The memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart* (London, 1965), I, p. 248 and p. 357.

American”<sup>118</sup> Sherman attracted and was relevant to Liddell Hart as an American as much as he was as a general. As Liddell Hart stressed, a pressing reason for him to write a biography of Sherman was “[...] to give the European reader a clue to the better understanding of the American character as it has evolved from its ‘prototype’.”<sup>119</sup> The biography, then, was also Liddell Hart’s guidebook to the United States.

In Sherman’s biography, and in various other publications, Liddell Hart pointed at what it was that had made Sherman “the typical American.” He was rough and stubborn, nonconformist, unsentimental and realistic; he lacked any rituality; he talked fast and smoked excessively; he attached no importance to appearance and had unkempt hair and beard; he believed in hard work as a key to success; and he had a businessman’s point-of-view on every aspect of life.<sup>120</sup> Such characteristics for a hero were not trivial in Britain, where both Southern generals and Southern values were highly esteemed (even if, as shown before, as part a narrative of reconciliation and not in a way that suppressed the admiration for the American Union more generally). Liddell Hart allegedly departed from such perceptions. He chose a Northern general as his protagonist and took every opportunity to attack the Southern way of life, describing it, for example, as lazy, slave-based and lacking in self-discipline.<sup>121</sup>

However, like pre-Great War British military intellectuals, Liddell Hart, too, saw the familiar values of North and South as fluid and adaptable. Thus, through

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<sup>118</sup>Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 9. A further illustration to this point is the title of the book in America, published three months prior to the British version and was called *Sherman: Soldier, Realist, American*.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> On Sherman as a stubborn non-conformist and non-sentimental see: Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, pp. 15-20; on his believe in hard work see pp. 38-9 and 65; on Sherman as a businessman see p. 75 and pp. 70-71; on Sherman as a modern general see p. 9; and on his smoking habits and unkempt appearance see: Liddell Hart in an outline for a lecture in The Schools of Engineering, Chatham from Nov. 1932, in: LH 12/1932/4b, LHCMA.

<sup>121</sup>Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 65.

Sherman's image he attributed traditional Northern characteristics, such as unchecked democracy and mob-rule, aggressive capitalism, and empty enthusiasm about war, to the South. "Despite the tempestuousness of his speech and manner", Liddell Hart wrote, "Sherman was no ardent cavalier, to be swept away in a surge of martial enthusiasm and popular excitement to a gallant but useless sacrifice."<sup>122</sup> At the same time, Liddell Hart characterised his Northern hero with what were traditionally seen as Southern features. Sherman, he stressed, ran his business under strict and coherent moral rule, and the British biographer cited him saying: "I know this is not modern banking but better be honest."<sup>123</sup> Indeed, there is no reason to assume that Liddell Hart sought in Sherman a channel to express his pro-Northern sentiments. Although it never materialised, Liddell Hart's private papers disclose that in the early 1930s, not long after he published his biography of Sherman, he contemplated a project on Confederate general John C. Pemberton, whose life and conduct in the war he found fascinating.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, a closer look at Liddell Hart's Sherman reveals how traditional and un-revolutionary his "typical American" actually was. The question thus arises: of which America was this Sherman a typical symbol?

Liddell Hart's Sherman was, in fact, a symbol of the early republic that was lost in the Civil War. To show this connection, Liddell Hart depicted Sherman as the saviour of the country that his familial ancestors had created almost a century prior to the Civil War when they signed the Declaration of Independence.<sup>125</sup> As opposed to pre-Great War British military thinkers, distancing Sherman from the United States of his time enabled Liddell Hart to look critically upon the post-Civil War United States. In the preface to his biography Liddell Hart asserted that other than to explain the

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<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>124</sup> LH 15/1/39, LHCMA.

<sup>125</sup>Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 11.

United States to the European reader, Sherman's story will "[...] give the American reader the opportunity of testing, by the acid of Sherman, the purity of the present product and how far reality corresponds with the ideal set up by the most realistic of idealists."<sup>126</sup> Contemporary Americans, Liddell Hart maintained, could look through Sherman into their past and, importantly, see how far they had drifted from this ideal United States. Sherman was thus important to Liddell Hart not because he represented contemporary America or the future of the United States. Rather Liddell Hart appealed to Sherman because to him he represented an America that was lost in the aftermath of the Civil War and with the coming of a new America.

How critical Liddell Hart was of the modern United States and what he thought were its major defects can be seen in the way he described Sherman's constant clashes with his environment in the North. According to Liddell Hart, Sherman failed miserably in two areas in particular that had reflected the latter's foreignness in his own country and time: in his relations with Northern politicians, and in his relations with the public. Liddell Hart repeatedly emphasised how Sherman's superiors had unjustly deplored him because of his scorn and inability to cope with their ignorance and populism (including Lincoln's at the early stages of the war).<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, the Northern general's hatred of the mob, his inability and reluctance to cooperate with the press, and his failure to manipulate the masses meant that he was under constant attack from below as well. Sherman's "'Press complex' ousted his reason", Liddell Hart wrote, "thus it is not surprising that he soon suffered a counter-blast [...]."<sup>128</sup> In Liddell Hart's view, the Civil War had raised mediocre politicians in the United States and gave the public exaggerated political power

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<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 77-8.

<sup>128</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 160-1.

through the practice of mass-democracy. Looking through the prism of the Civil War's representation that portrayed it as the birth of the modern United States, in accordance with his predecessors, Liddell Hart nevertheless did not share their celebration of the new nation.

By the 1930s, Liddell Hart was not the only military thinker to search for the old United States through the story of the Civil War. Sheppard, for example, presented a similar view of the United States and its romantic past in his Civil War writing. Sheppard, however, turned to the South rather than to the old republic to express his views, as his 1930 biography of Nathan Bedford Forrest indicated. Forrest was not an obvious choice for a British military scholar as a subject for a biography, even one interested in the cavalry as Sheppard was. Although he was praised as a cavalry commander, and even Wolseley had been known to admire him, Forrest had not led a single decisive battle in the war and his fame in both Britain and the United States was not nearly as great as that of Lee, Jackson, Grant or Sherman. Indeed, as a follower of Liddell Hart, Sheppard could have been expected to devote his attention to the latter.

However, Sheppard did not choose Forrest for military reasons. As opposed to all his other writings about the Civil War, in Forrest's biography Sheppard stated that he had "no novel theories as to how the Civil War was won or lost, nor any as to how the next great war will be decided; and I am in any case unwilling to deduce from Forrest's career any profound lessons of strategy or tactics [...]."<sup>129</sup> More than depicting a general, Sheppard's biography was chiefly a story of a Southerner in his quest to defend his familiar world from the forces of change as embodied in the war

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<sup>129</sup>Eric Sheppard, *Bedford Forrest: The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman* (London, 1930), p. 7.

and in the Union Army. Throughout the biography, Sheppard presented Forrest as a chivalrous rider who had saved white Southern women from either brutal “Yankees” or “burly niggers”. Arriving on the scene just after Northern soldiers had abused a few southern women, Forrest, according to Sheppard, tried to calm them: “Don’t be alarmed, ladies”, he said, “I’m General Forrest; we’ll look after you and see you safe. Where are the Yankees?”<sup>130</sup> Sheppard’s biography of Forrest was a pure burst of nostalgia for a now lost American world. Unlike Lee, Jackson, Grant and Sherman, Forrest was a true old Southerner, not a symbol of modernity or of reconciliation.

Fuller’s view of the United States was different from both that of Maurice and Liddell Hart, and from that of their followers. On the one hand, Fuller was immensely critical of the contemporary United States. Arguably, he was more critical of America than Liddell Hart was. Certainly he was more clear and vocal about it. In his *Empire Unity and Defence* (1934), for example, he criticised the United States for undermining Britain’s naval power, for its isolationist policy and for its closed financial system.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, he saw in the United States a great hope for western civilization. To comprehend the place of the United States in Fuller’s thought and its bearing on his appeal to the Civil War, a deeper understanding of his historical and ideological positions is required.

Influenced by trends of fascist thought and a Hegelian interpretation of history, Fuller saw civilisation as dialectically progressing from one stage to the next.<sup>132</sup> According to this theory, each phase of development was better than the

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<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>131</sup> Fuller, *Empire Unity and Defence* (Bristol, 1934). For his criticism on U.S. financial policy see, pp. 286-287; for the U.S. undermining British naval power see, pp. 157-165.

<sup>132</sup>Azar Gat, *Fascist and Liberal Visions of War: Fuller, Liddell Hart, Douhet, and Other Modernists* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 31-33. About British fascism in the interwar period and its origins see: Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-1985* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 1-13; Alan Sykes, *The Radical*

previous one and yet still largely defective and thus doomed to create the forces that would ultimately undermine and destroy it. War, Fuller argued, was a principal apparatus by which progress from one ill stage to the next has been historically made.<sup>133</sup> Observing his contemporary world, Fuller claimed that the French and the Industrial Revolutions were the major turning points in history that had carried civilization from its pre-national to its current national stage. Accordingly, the ills of this stage were nationalism and its by-product, mass-democracy. Fuller despised both and often saw them as interchangeable.<sup>134</sup> Thus he eagerly anticipated what he thought would be the next phase of civilization's development – the international era – and he believed he foresaw the war that would bring it about.

Fuller argued that in order to pass from the national to the international phase, Europe would have to undergo an international war, or, as he once called the Great War, a “European Civil War.”<sup>135</sup> However, Fuller frequently asserted, with the Treaty of Versailles demolishing any chance of German reconstruction, and with the war creating new nations instead of abolishing the existing ones, a greater European union was, if anything, more out of reach in 1919 than it had been in 1914.<sup>136</sup> Under the subtitle *The Apotheosis of Nationalism*, Fuller wrote disappointedly in 1932 that, “in the name of national liberty the war was declared, and in the name of the self-determination of nations it was concluded.”<sup>137</sup> Failing in its civil war, Fuller asserted, Europe was destined to undergo another such war. By contrast, looking across the

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*Right in Britain: Social Imperialism to the BNP* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 56-64; About British fascism and dialectic thought see: *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56; and Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 96-7.

<sup>133</sup> See for example a letter from Fuller to William Sloane in which Fuller has expressed such ideas, Fuller IV/6/1 – IV/6/48b, LHCMA.

<sup>134</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *War and Western Civilization, 1832-1932: A Study of War as a Political Instrument and the Expression of Mass Democracy* (London, 1932), p. 26.

<sup>135</sup> See for example: Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, preface.

<sup>136</sup> See for example: Fuller, *War and Western Civilization*, p. 241.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 241-5.

Atlantic he saw a model and a source for vital lessons. The United States, he hoped, was since its Civil War and the victory of the Union Army, on the right track.

Fuller first presented his views of the United States in *Atlantis: America and the Future*, an essay he published upon his return from his first visit there in 1924.<sup>138</sup> This visit, Fuller testified, was the source of his interest in the American Civil War.<sup>139</sup> Although almost unstudied, Fuller's *Atlantis* is a key to understanding his views of the United States and his interest in its Civil War, and the connection between them.

In *Atlantis* Fuller launched a multi-pronged assault on his contemporary United States, depicting the typical American as brutal, grotesque and despicable. In accordance with his fascist criticism of materialism, Fuller argued, for example, that Americans were big people with big wallets but with small brains, and that morals, values and beauty were meaningless to the American, who cared only for property, ownership and material goods.<sup>140</sup> All of America's notorious characteristics, Fuller further argued, were by-products of nationalism and industrialisation of which the United States was not only a result, but also the generator. In *Atlantis* he wrote of the United States that, "her birth as a nation does not date from 1776, but from 1769, the date when James Watt produced his first pumping engine."<sup>141</sup> In similar vein, he noted in 1932 that the birth of the spirit of nationalism dated "even more truly from the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, than from the storming of the Bastille on July 14, thirteen years later."<sup>142</sup> Breaking away from the British Empire, the thirteen colonies contributed to the motion that Fuller so vehemently

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<sup>138</sup>First published as an article in *The National Review* on January 1925 under the title 'The Americans'. For the book version see: J. F. C. Fuller, *Atlantis: America and the Future* (London, 1926).

<sup>139</sup>DNB, Accessed on 11 Feb. 2012.

<sup>140</sup>Fuller, *Atlantis*, p. 14 and 29-30.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>142</sup>Fuller, *War and Western Civilization*, p. 84.

despised of imperial fragmentation and nationalism. Interwar America had a vile place in Fuller's historical worldview as the embodiment of materialism, immorality, mob-rule and mediocrity, or in other words as the generator and emblem of the nationalistic era.

Yet despite his contempt for the United States, in 1924 Fuller saw in it also a source of great hope for western civilization. Scorning it throughout, Fuller nonetheless concluded *Atlantis* by noting that, "[...] what Rome did produce was a great heroic race. To-day I believe that the germs of such race lie embedded in the materialism of America."<sup>143</sup> In accordance with his belief in Hegelian dialectics, Fuller saw the possibility that out of the American materialism, anarchy and lawlessness would one day emerge a great and united people that would constitute a new global empire. Empowered by the forces of youth and discontent, which he admired, Fuller thought in 1924 that in the near future the "Atlantides will vanish and become true Americans."<sup>144</sup> That is, Fuller hoped to see the United States becoming a world power that would propel universal unity and an ever-increasing integration. He thought that this was what the true American spirit stood for; and he thought that by the 1920s, the United States had become strong enough to fulfil this destiny.

Based on this prediction Fuller fashioned his understanding of the Civil War. In that war he saw the "true Americans" triumph, demonstrating the true spirit of the United States. Unlike Liddell Hart, Fuller was enchanted by the American republic of the future rather than by the republic of the past. As opposed to Liddell Hart, Fuller despised the old, pre-Civil War United States. Of Lee he thus wrote scornfully that "he

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<sup>143</sup>Fuller, *Atlantis*, pp. 91-2.

<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84. On Fuller's admiration of youthful and revolutionary spirit, see: Brian Holden Reid, "'Young Turks, or Not So Young?': The Frustrated Quest of Major General J. F. C. Fuller and Captain B. H. Liddell Hart', *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (2009), p. 149.

belonged to the eighteenth century – to the agricultural age of history.”<sup>145</sup> What Liddell Hart saw as the romantic era of the Declaration of Independence, the idealised era of Sherman’s ancestors, Fuller saw as an age destined for the junkyard of history. Furthermore, unlike Liddell Hart, Fuller endorsed Northern generals without challenging the view that they were symbols of modernism, brutality and democracy. It was precisely for this reason that he admired them. For example, for him, too, as for Liddell Hart, Sherman was the face of the United States. This was not, however, for representing its past, but rather because he was:

[...] out-and-out typical of the new America at this time emerging from out of the chrysalis of the old. This, as we shall see, is true, because he broke away from all the conventions of nineteenth-century warfare, took the public into his confidence, at heart despised the people, and, above all, the popular press, and with steel waged war as ruthless as Calvin had done with word.<sup>146</sup>

It is important to notice that, whilst rejecting romantic views of the American past of the kind that Liddell Hart had held, Fuller did not share Maurice’s views of the present United States either. As seen, he deplored the nation that had emerged from the Civil War and he anticipated its dialectic demise. This also distinguished Fuller from the pre-1914 generation of military thinkers, who focused their – usually admiring – observations on the present-day United States. In contrast with such views, it was in Grant and the Civil War that Fuller saw the true American spirit that was to build the new America out of the ruins of his contemporary one.

During and after the Great War, the United States became part of the British life as never before. Military cooperation during the war and British dependence on American military force, coupled with greater financial, social and cultural interaction turned the United States into a part of the context within which Britons understood

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<sup>145</sup> Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, p. 107.

<sup>146</sup>J. F. C. Fuller, *The Decisive Battles of the United States* (London, 1942), p. 206.

their world. Furthermore, as Fuller's work perhaps best reflected, the place of the United States on the world stage had become significantly more central. Subsequently, from a faraway model – to be observed and studied – the United States and American power became a tangible, quotidian reality. Whilst the works of all military thinkers dealing with the Civil War reflected their understanding of the new position of the United States, they differed in their interpretation of it. Maurice observed America with pragmatic esteem; Liddell Hart was critical of it; and Fuller viewed the United States with resentment intermingled with hope.

Finally, Liddell Hart and Fuller (although less so Maurice) turned to the Civil War because it seemed to them to represent the impact of modern war of such a scale upon the continuation of national identity and historical tradition. From their perspective of the Great War as a watershed in British and European history, the Civil War seemed to them as a canvas upon which they could project their views of the old and new British and European identity. As they held different views about their new, post-Great War world, so their interpretations of the Civil War were different as well.

That Liddell Hart saw the Civil War as a watershed in America's history and identity, made it immensely relevant to him. He felt the same about the Great War and Britain. Other than on military affairs, as discussed above, Liddell Hart saw post-war Britain as a nation that also deviated sharply from its political and ideological tradition during, after and above all because of the Great War. He thought, for example, that the war gave rise to un-British ideas of democracy and liberalism, which were based upon 'the masses', on equalitarianism and on statism. By contrast, he argued in 1939, British democracy "is far from attaining equality for its individual members. At the same time, it embodies ideas which go much further, and mean

much more [...] our nation's identity is based on individual freedom and volunteering."<sup>147</sup> Like many in post-war Britain, Liddell Hart felt that he was living in a new world that was created by the war. Sheppard, for example, once romantically stressed that the world before the French Revolution was a "civilized and reasonable age."<sup>148</sup> In the minds of many, the World War generated an historical consciousness of a gap between an old, quiet and stable world and a chaotic, modern one.<sup>149</sup> As opposed to their Edwardian predecessors, many interwar military intellectuals – and British intellectuals more generally – no longer felt that they lived with their history and were part of it, but rather that they were torn away from it. For Liddell Hart the Great War divided British history in two in the same way and along the same lines as the Civil War divided America's history between Sherman's United States and the modern United States.

In this light, not only Liddell Hart's appeal to the Civil War is more fully understood, but also his appeal to and portrayal of Sherman. Bridging the gap between old and new Britain, Liddell Hart's choice between the two was clear. In his work and public statements, Liddell Hart repeatedly called Britons to turn to their own special tradition of freedom, inspiration and creativity, because "this has been the source of our national vitality."<sup>150</sup> Liddell Hart did not want to look to the future, but to the lost past, that of old Britain and old America. Indeed, Liddell Hart felt, much like his portrayal of Sherman, that he was a defender of the British tradition in a changing world. In a similar way to his Sherman, Liddell Hart felt that he was losing the battle. In an open letter from 1932, for example, he movingly asked: "Why do you

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<sup>147</sup> An extract from the transcript of the show 'Questions in the Air' by the BBC Radio, aired on 18 Apr. 1939, in: LH 12/1939, LHCMA.

<sup>148</sup> Eric Sheppard, 'How Wars End', *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, Vol. 84 (Feb./Nov., 1939), p. 529.

<sup>149</sup> Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (London, 1992), p. xi.

<sup>150</sup> Liddell Hart, *Freedom and Defence*, 1939, LH 12/1939, LHCMA.

say that my book is ‘running down everything British’?’,<sup>151</sup> and in 1951, he confessed to Luvaas that after 1940 he felt that he lived in a country that did not understand him.<sup>152</sup>

Liddell Hart’s views of the Civil War are thus revealed as a reflection of his view of the contemporary world. Professionally, Liddell Hart was a reformer who had sometimes even held revolutionary stances. As such, Sherman and the Civil War were relevant to him as emblems of future warfare. By contrast, his political and social vision saw Liddell Hart as a traditionalist who perceived his nation to be lost as an outcome of the Great War. In this respect, the Civil War was relevant to him as a conflict that destroyed an old nation and its identity and constructed new ones in their place. For Liddell Hart, in striking opposition to Fuller, progress could not be carried through radicalism and warfare. Mirroring this, he wrote about Sherman that:

His hatred of anarchy was not inspired by an abstract motive, but by the essentially practical one that only in a state of order are prosperity and progress possible. Order was merely the means to the end – progress. For Sherman consistency was not a static conservatism, but a progress through order to a better order.<sup>153</sup>

Liddell Hart’s Sherman stood on the border between the old world and the new, looking both forward and backward; as did Liddell Hart himself.

Fuller held a different view of his post-Great War world, and accordingly a different understanding of why the Civil War was a valuable source for lessons. As seen, in complete opposition to Liddell Hart, Fuller argued that the demise of the old American world was one of the war’s greatest achievements and he hoped that the Great War would play the same role in the development of Europe. It was in this

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<sup>151</sup> Liddell Hart, ‘A Letter to General X’, *The Military, Navy and Air-Force Gazette*, 1932, LH 6/1927-38, LHCMA.

<sup>152</sup> A letter from Liddell Hart to Jay Luvaas from 3 September 1951, LH 1/465 Part 1, LHCMA.

<sup>153</sup> Liddell Hart, *Sherman*, p. 440.

sense that Fuller found the Civil War appealing and saw it as relevant to contemporary Britons, indeed to western civilization. “What this war was to America”, he stressed in 1929:

[...] the World War will one day be to Europe. Both were creative impulses shattering what was obsolete and releasing things new [...] Such are the two great stepping-stones of our age, and unless we set our feet firmly on the one we may slip on the other as we step forward to the conquest of destiny – the unity of the world.<sup>154</sup>

The Civil War was relevant to Fuller as it symbolised the demise of an old world and the constitution of a new one on its ruins. That is also how he saw the First World War, or, more accurately, what he wished it to be. With the Great War, he thought, Europe underwent what the United States had undergone in the Civil War. With the Great War, Europeans came to share the American experience of destroying the old world in order to build a new one. In this, Fuller shared his contemporaries’ sense that their world of yesterday was lost. Yet, rather than holding a romantic view of the past or being content with the present, in the 1920s and early 1930s Fuller looked hopefully to the future. In his eyes, Europe had not yet exploited the Great War as a catalyst for greater unity; and the United States had yet to progress from its current stage towards an even greater empire and unifying world power.

The Great War led Britons to re-evaluate the world in which they were living. As Janet Watson has observed, at the centre of the process of constructing an image of the World War lays a struggle to erect a meaningful past and coherent national identity.<sup>155</sup> To many, it seemed a world very different from the one they used to live in. Some, like Maurice, looked at the post-war world as a continuation of the last. By the 1930s, however, many came to see the Great War as a watershed in British and

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<sup>154</sup> Fuller, *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant*, p. 29.

<sup>155</sup> Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 3-8.

world history and sought to make sense of it, of the past and of the future. Liddell Hart looked yearningly to the past; Fuller with hope to the future. The Civil War was a precedent and a model for such an event in the United States and supplied all three with evidence to buttress their understanding of their world. Unlike their pre-1914 antecedents, interwar military thinkers such as Liddell Hart, Sheppard and Fuller felt that they now shared this American experience and they appealed to the Civil War as a lens through which to seek answers and guidance.

### III

In 1938, Alfred Burne opened his book on the generals of the Civil War with a clear aim in mind:

The title of this book was suggested by the fact that three notable books [...] have recently been published in England on Lee, Grant, and Sherman. I refer to Robert E. Lee, *The Soldier*, by General Sir Frederick Maurice, Grant and Lee, by General J. F. C. Fuller, and Sherman, by Captain Liddell Hart. Each general in turn is held up to our admiration, yet obviously all three cannot be equally admired, and it is the aim of this book to try and strike balance between the rival protagonists.<sup>156</sup>

Burne's determination finally to decide, through the images of the Civil War's generals, which interpretation of the war was correct, was not uncalled for, since it seems that in too many aspects they could not be held together. Interwar British military thinkers drew a variety of lessons from the Civil War. Some of these seemed to be mutually exclusive. Maurice's lessons about direct assaults on the enemy's main force stood in clear opposition to Liddell Hart's lessons about the indirect approach. In a similar way, Fuller's positive judgment of Grant contrasted with Liddell Hart's severe criticism of the Northern general. Maurice must have disagreed with Liddell Hart and Fuller's negative view of Lee. Their critical reception of each other's works indeed reflected the incompatibility of their readings of the Civil War.

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<sup>156</sup>Burne, *Lee, Grant and Sherman*, pp. v-vi.

However, whereas each military writer drew his own lessons from the Civil War and fashioned a different view of it, some similarities in the reasons and ways in which they appealed to the war are apparent. In the first place, all military thinkers saw in the conflict a source of military lessons concerning both the Great War and future wars. As shown, pre-1914 military-men saw relevant lessons in the Civil War as well. Some of those were similar to the lessons that came to the fore during the interwar period. Pre-war thinkers, too, saw the Civil War as a case study for democracy at war, armies of untrained civilians and volunteers, battles of attrition and military-politics relations. However, in many ways, these lessons still lay in the future for the pre-1914 British strategist. After the Great War, trench warfare, stalemates, mass casualties, untrained soldiers and the broad impact of modern warfare on society became much more familiar and relevant to British military scholars. Moreover, unlike many contemporaries, Maurice, Liddell Hart and Fuller were not captives to the perception that another war of this kind would not come in their time. Maurice raised this option as early as 1927 and possibility even earlier. The Civil War thus received additional relevance and even urgency.

Moreover, in the Civil War British military intellectuals saw lessons about the impact of a colossal modern war on society. Above all, they examined the impact of such a war on the continuation of national history and identity. The Civil War was represented as the conflict in which a new United States rose from the ashes of an old United States. Put differently, it was portrayed as a watershed in American history and national identity. Pre-1914 military thinkers did not miss this aspect of the war. However, like many of the war's professional lessons, for them, this experience still lay in the future. By contrast, as was clear in the case of Liddell Hart, Fuller and Sheppard (although less so in the case of Maurice), this made the Civil War an

immensely relevant event after the experience of the Great War. In the wake of the First World War, they too, felt as if they were torn from their past by a massive conflict. Whereas Fuller and Liddell Hart responded differently to this sense of detachment from the past – the former blessing it, the latter condemning it – both thought that between 1914 and 1918 Britain underwent the same experience as the United States between 1861 and 1865.

Interwar military thinkers also turned to the Civil War because they thought that it explained the contemporary United States, which was relevant to their world. During and after the Great War, the United States became part of world affairs and of British life as never before. Through their respective heroes, each intellectual reflected on the United States and expressed his opinion on what it was before and after the Civil War. As the cases of Maurice and Fuller demonstrated most clearly, being a world power, the United States was as relevant to their understanding of the world and of world affairs as were the military lessons from the Civil War. As such, they sought to understand the United States and in Maurice's case to align Britain's interests with it as well. Although the way in which Liddell Hart saw America's relevance was less visible, in his aspiration to understand it his case was as clear as those of Maurice and Fuller. Through the character of Sherman, Liddell Hart reflected on the identity of America and wished to convey lessons about the United States to both his American and British readers.

Interwar British military thinkers turned to the Civil War for these reasons because all of these subjects were unclear and debateable but at the same time more urgent following the First World War and in light of another coming conflict. There was no agreement amongst intellectuals as to the British military doctrine; there was

no consensus about post-war British identity; and there was a variety of views as to the nature of American influence on Britain and whether this influence was positive or negative. It was clear, however, that answers to these issues were required. Interwar military thinkers could thus be defined as a group who addressed these issues with a similar sense of familiarity and urgency, whilst their ambivalence on these issues generated diverse, even contradictory, views on military lessons, on British society and on the United States.

It thus becomes clear why the Civil War was central to British military thought. For one thing, the American conflict was multifaceted and could convey a wide range of relevant military lessons. Maurice could use it to advocate direct assaults, whilst Liddell Hart could advance the opposite course of action. Both would be correct, depending through the eyes of which side in the war one would look and at which stage of the war. Therefore the Civil War was relevant and useful to British thinkers regardless of which strategic view they held. Sheppard's works on the Civil War perhaps best demonstrated this point. As seen, in 1911 he used the war to teach a lesson about the efficiency of direct assaults. By contrast, in 1933 he used the same war for the opposite lesson. Later in life, when he altered his strategic views yet again, he still found the Civil War relevant. In a revised edition to his interwar guidebook, he concluded his Civil War chapter in 1952 by arguing that in light of the two world wars, "[...] the only really effective weapon against a brave and determined people in arms is the slow but sure process of attrition, which in the end, costly and bitter as it must be, reduces its powers of resistance below what [is] necessary for the continuance of the struggle."<sup>157</sup> Sheppard kept his views on the Western Theatre as an important front in the Civil War. However, he no longer argued against the

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<sup>157</sup> Sheppard, *The Study of Military History* (Aldershot, 1952 [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), p. 35.

concentration of power on the principal front. In all stages of his intellectual path, the Civil War provided useful and relevant strategic lessons.

The Civil War also allowed for diverse lessons about the impact of war on society. Viewed through its Northern or reconciliatory representations, the Civil War seemed to have established a great Union and a powerful modern nation. Pre-1914 military intellectuals largely followed this narrative. After the Great War, Fuller represented this line of thought most lucidly and hoped that the First World War would have a similar effect on Europe. By contrast, the Civil War also allowed for a romantic lost past, now devastated in the conflict. During the interwar period, Liddell Hart emphasised that this was what had happened to the United States in the Civil War and to Britain during and after the Great War. Sheppard, adhering to the narrative of the Lost Cause, expressed similar sentiments through the story of Nathan Bedford Forrest, whom he represented as the embodiment of the genteel and romantic lost South. The different representations of the Civil War made it always relevant to British military thinkers when they wanted to reflect on the change that they thought the Great War had visited upon Britain.

Finally, the war was multifaceted also as a symbol of the United States and as a prism through which to observe it. It allowed British military thinkers to express a variety of opinions on the United States. Liddell Hart was evidently critical of his contemporary America. Through the eyes of Sherman he asked his readers – British and Americans alike – to observe how the United States had drifted from its romantic origins. Fuller, by contrast, used Grant – and Sherman – to express his delight at the death of Lee's agrarian America and the rise of the modern United States. As in their strategic views, military thinkers differed in their opinion on the United States.

Maurice saw it pragmatically as an important ally; Liddell Hart criticised it for its brutality in comparison to its past; and Fuller criticised its vulgarity, which he hoped was temporary. Through the Civil War, the United States could have been viewed romantically, critically or anywhere in between.

In 1911, Sheppard argued that the second battle of Bull Run could not demonstrate leadership as could the Battle of Austerlitz. “For the pure art of the leader”, he stressed, “Austerlitz has never yet been rivalled.”<sup>158</sup> However, in his 1933 book the Civil War was to receive a full chapter. Austerlitz was not mentioned.<sup>159</sup> British military thinkers were interested in other wars, of course. Nevertheless, the Civil War – and no other war – seemed to them to be the origin of modern warfare, a source for ever-changing and ever-relevant lessons, a conflict that tore past from present and a war that could explain the United States in a variety of ways.

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<sup>158</sup> Sheppard, *The Campaign in Virginia and Maryland*, p. 155.

<sup>159</sup> Sheppard, *Military History for the Staff College Entrance Examination*.

### Chapter Three – British Intellectuals and Abraham Lincoln

In 1974, Hugh Brogan, a scholar and son of the eminent British historian Denis Brogan, presented his views on Lincoln in a preface to a new edition of his father's 1935 biography of the President. Lincoln, the younger Brogan explained, had been a strong nationalistic war president who had raised arms against the secessionist and pro-slavery Confederacy and who had gradually adopted a more radical stance on the issues of racism and Reconstruction.<sup>1</sup> To contemporary intellectuals, young Brogan's views required little elucidation. Reviewing the book, Philip Toynbee, a novelist and son of the prominent world historian Arnold Toynbee, stressed that an older, opposite view – that the Civil War should have been avoided by Lincolnite compromises and that Reconstruction was a un-Lincolnist vengeful endeavour to demolish the South – was “conventional, but now deeply disputed.”<sup>2</sup> This generation of Brogans and Toynbees loyally represents the way in which Lincoln has been viewed within British intellectual circles since the late 1950s.

Of course, that was not always the case. Indeed, in his preface, Hugh Brogan criticised his father for depicting Lincoln as a peace advocate and adherent of moderate Reconstruction. However the worn maxim that “every history is contemporary history” is not the concern of this chapter. Instead, the changing representation of Lincoln by British intellectuals serves here as a means to explore why the American President occupied these intellectuals' minds in the first place and what use they made of his image. The investigation of British interest in and use of the figure of Lincoln is but a means to the end of inquiring into the appeal of the Civil War in general to British intellectuals.

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<sup>1</sup>Denis Brogan, *Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1974, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), p. x.

<sup>2</sup>Toynbee, ‘Man of the People’, *Observer*, 22 Sep., 1974, p. 29.

The most compelling answer to the question of Lincoln's centrality in British thought has recently been put forward by Adam I. P. Smith. According to Smith, when Anglo-Saxon sentiments had reached their zenith, Britons turned to Lincoln because he was able to represent a plurality of 'democracies' – from radical through liberal and on to conservative – to which they could relate. Focusing on the heyday of British appeals to Lincoln during and between the two world wars Smith has also shown how Britons used Lincoln as an American symbol at a time when growing American power needed to be understood and aligned. Smith has concluded that Lincoln's disappearance from the British public sphere after the Second World War was due to the fact that, in a sense, Churchill's memory took Lincoln's place as the iconic nationalistic democratic war leader and because of the decline in Anglo-Saxon sentiments.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst Smith's, and others', studies have provided a comprehensive answer as to the British fascination with Lincoln, they have tended to overlook the more critical elements of this relationship. Historians have focused mainly on the British enthusiasm for Lincoln and have downplayed the more turbulent qualities of this appropriation. Smith, for example, has argued that the controversy around the Lincoln statues in the 1910s, elaborated upon below, should not "obscure the more important point, which was that both statues were embraced [...] as the embodiment of the Anglo-American union."<sup>4</sup> This point was indeed important. However, this chapter argues, the discord was as significant as the concord. During the darkest hour of the Great War, when Britons starved for American aid and sympathy, they nonetheless

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<sup>3</sup>Adam I. P. Smith, "The stuff our dreams are made of": Lincoln in the British Imagination', in: Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 123-38; Smith, 'The "Cult" of Abraham Lincoln and the Strange Survival of Liberal England in the Era of the World Wars', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (July 2010), pp. 1-24.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid*, p. 12.

preferred to have no Lincoln at all to having one that they no less than abhorred. It was the British Office of Works that in 1917 asked the Americans not to send the Lincoln statues. Moreover, by focusing on Lincoln's appeal to radicals and liberals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historians have downplayed the fact that amongst most British intellectuals of the period Lincoln had no appeal at all. In order to understand more fully the place of Lincoln in British thought, this chapter asks not only what made his representation appealing to British intellectuals but also what rendered it problematic.

Another question to be addressed is the continuous fascination with Lincoln amongst British intellectuals in the late 1950s and 1960s, well after the zenith of Anglo-Saxon sentiments in the Atlantic sphere. Prominent historians, such as Jack Pole, H. C. Allen and Denis Brogan continuously referred to the Civil War and to Lincoln's life.<sup>5</sup> This begs a further question: whilst it is clear in which ways Churchill could have replaced Lincoln as a symbol of a fighting democratic leadership, it remains to be explored what aspects of Lincoln made the American President irreplaceable. Reversing the question posed for the interwar period, this chapter asks why Lincoln was not forgotten during the post-Second World War era.

A final issue central to this chapter is the British interest in Lincoln as part of the interest in the Civil War more broadly. Whereas Lincoln's heritage assumed an independent stature in Britain, this heritage and stature should not be examined only in isolation from the British fascination with the Civil War, as has been done thus far. In the 1930s, for example, the decline of Lincoln's image as a war leader could only be understood in full when set against the background of the representation of the Civil War as a futile conflict. Equally, the British appeal to Lincoln is more

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<sup>5</sup> Full references to the works of these scholars are given as they are examined in the chapter.

comprehensible when examined alongside the British response to the Civil War as a whole. Uncharacteristically for a biography of Lincoln, Lord Charnwood, for example, devoted a special sub-section to this subject in his work. Therefore, to understand the place of Lincoln in British thought, this chapter also examines the early historiography on the British reaction to the war.

This chapter focuses on the questions of Lincoln's problematic legacy in Britain, of his appeal to the British after the Second World War and of Britons' interest in Lincoln as part of their interest in the Civil War. It argues that British intellectuals appealed to Lincoln because they found him and his representations applicable within a British context and in relation to contemporary British affairs. This chapter argues further that within this context, Lincoln was appealing because he became an American symbol when the United States became relevant to British life more than ever before. Accordingly, the chapter follows the British translation of the values that were embedded in Lincoln's legacy in light of local intellectuals' views of British affairs, of the United States and of Anglo-American relations. Special emphasis is given here to aspects of freedom, racism and slavery in Lincoln's heritage and to their transformation in Britain, a phenomenon that has not yet been fully explained.

This chapter takes a broad definition of the term "intellectuals" in order to characterise its protagonists. These include university academics, journalists in the printed media, politicians who turned also to scholarly writing and other "persons of letters". Often, the terms "educated elite" and "intellectuals" are here interchangeable. Within this group, the emphasis is on those intellectuals whose works on Lincoln and on the Civil War resonated within the academic and educated community in Britain.

Thus, for example, Charnwood's work receives much attention because, although he was not a professional academic, he was an Oxford alumnus and his account of Lincoln's life received an authoritative status amongst academics.

In order to reconstruct British intellectuals' motivation for appealing to Lincoln this chapter applies a historiographical-contextual analysis. That is, it deduces these intellectuals' reasons for appealing to Lincoln mainly from their published writings about him and from the historical context within which they worked. This method is not without limitations. Personal thoughts, for example, remain concealed. However, private papers from which such information could be recovered were unavailable for many of the protagonists of this chapter, especially private documents referring to their works on Lincoln. Therefore, this chapter refrains from speculating insubstantially on these intellectuals' private thoughts and ideology, and the connection of these to their views of Lincoln and the conflict. Instead, it is shown how these intellectuals acted in a diverse and changing transatlantic historical context and how this context influenced their understanding of Lincoln and the war. This raises another difficulty. Using the historical context as an explanatory frame risks losing the independent agency of the historical figures who acted within it. Therefore, this chapter is sensitive to the autonomy of its protagonists. It acknowledges (and shows), for example, that in addition to reflecting the spirit of their time in their works, intellectuals also shaped their historical context through their writings. Additionally, it is assumed that as autonomous individuals, intellectuals – for the merit and nature of their vocation if for nothing else – turned to the war and to Lincoln also out of pure academic interest. This is especially true for the analysis of the post-Second World War period, when the emphasis focuses more on professional historians than on intellectuals more broadly.

The chapter identifies three periods of transition in the representations of Lincoln in British educated circles. The first is when Lincoln became relevant to intellectuals outside radical groups in the late 1910s. During this time, Lincoln was represented mainly as a democratic war leader. The second point of transition is the challenge to this representation in the late 1920s and 1930s, and its return to prominence during and after the Second World War. The third period is the late 1950s and 1960s when Lincoln's stance towards race, racism and slavery became central in his representations.

## I

Lincoln's rise to prominence in the British mind was a sharp one. During the Civil War, as Lawrence Goldman has recently shown, Britons largely misunderstood the President's policies, a misunderstanding that often resulted in contempt.<sup>6</sup> For example, many saw in Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* an act of despotism. What is more, the Emancipation Proclamation, rather than a moral impetus, was often seen as a mere cynical attempt to manipulate public opinion in America and abroad.<sup>7</sup> With the United States on the verge of destruction and the President so perceived, it is of little wonder that British intellectuals did not find Lincoln appealing. The views of those, especially within radical and nonconformist circles, who saw Lincoln in a positive light complicated the British image of the President, but did not generate a profound challenge to the common view held in Britain. The assassination of Lincoln simplified this picture dramatically. Almost overnight and with only marginal dissenting voices, Lincoln became a hero in Britain.<sup>8</sup> The President's benign image

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<sup>6</sup> Goldman, "'A Total Misconception': Lincoln, The Civil War, and the British, 1860-1865", in Carwardine and Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln*, pp. 107-22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113; see also Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London, 2003), pp. 124-33.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, 'The stuff our dreams are made of', pp. 125-6.

became the consensus amongst Britons and he now stood for reconciliation and forgiveness alongside firmness and morality; for compassion as well as for fierceness; for a people's democracy alongside strong lofty leadership. This, in turn, opened the way for his legacy to enter British intellectual circles.

The debate about democratic reforms in the late 1860s presented an early opportunity for British intellectuals outside radical circles to adopt Lincoln's legacy. Indeed, for British radicals the case for appealing to Lincoln was clear. As Richard Blackett has shown, in the late 1860s radicals had linked their struggle for extending suffrage in Britain to Lincoln's democratic legacy, and they harnessed his image and their support of the North during the war to elevate the reputation of the British worker as a politically and socially responsible self-made-man.<sup>9</sup> The British worker, the argument ran in the late 1860s, showed supreme moral characteristics when he (the proposed reform did not include women) supported Lincoln and the North and thus proved his capacity to responsibly take active part in British politics. Amongst the leaders of the workers, Lincoln's memory was often evoked in support of their cause. In many internal debates the image of the late Richard Cobden, for example, who also died in 1865, was associated with that of Lincoln.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, then, the debate about democratic reforms made the values for which Lincoln now stood relevant in the eyes of those who already saw in the United States a successful, enduring political model.

However, whilst the debates on reform marked the entrance of Lincoln into the historical consciousness of British radicals, the President's heritage still lacked the

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<sup>9</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2001), pp. 237-42. See also Philip Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York, 1981), pp. 90-5.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*, p. 241. On the Reform Act of 1867 and the legacy of the Civil War see also: Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War*, pp. 91-92.

power to enter British intellectual circles more broadly. For many, if Lincoln was now admired he still represented a poor political system.<sup>11</sup> As Blackett has shown, for example, some condemned Lincoln's assassination without diminishing their support of the Confederacy and their criticism of American political institutions.<sup>12</sup> During the debates in 1866 and 1867, even Liberals such as John Bright, a great admirer of Lincoln and the North, saw American democracy as a mediocre system that had historically been putting the reins of power in the hands of unworthy Presidents.<sup>13</sup> Conservatives, too, praised Lincoln but not the American political system.<sup>14</sup> Promoting reform, significant efforts had been made by both conservatives and liberals to avoid turning the British political system into anything that resembled that of the United States.<sup>15</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, the United States was struggling to recover from the conflict and destruction and many in Britain could not foresee a real reunion between North and South. They certainly could not predict the rise of the United States to global power. If, as Jay Sexton has argued, the power of Lincoln's legacy stemmed from the symbolic representation of a powerful United States, then in the late 1860s and 1870s this powerful United States was still beyond the sight of many Britons.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, whilst British intellectuals had in fact little reason to adopt Lincoln's legacy, the Americans were also reluctant to let them have use of it. In a speech in Congress in honour of Lincoln's birthday in 1866, eminent American

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<sup>11</sup> For the British intellectuals' criticism of the American democracy see for example: Frank Prochaska, *Eminent Victorians on American Democracy: The View from Albion* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 47-71; Brent E. Kinsler, *The American Civil War in the Shaping of British Democracy* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 13-51.

<sup>12</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, pp. 219-20.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British politics, 1848-1867* (Cornwall, 2011), pp. 144-51.

<sup>14</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 221.

<sup>15</sup> Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British politics*, pp. 158-9.

<sup>16</sup> Sexton, 'Projecting Lincoln, Projecting America', in: Carwardine and Sexton (eds.), *The Global Lincoln*, pp. 292-5.

historian George Bancroft made every effort to distinguish between the martyred President and the recently deceased British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston. Before both houses of Congress, and in the presence of British delegates, Bancroft stressed for example that, “Palmerston, from his narrowness as an Englishman, did not endear his country to any one court or to any one nation, but rather caused general uneasiness and dislike; Lincoln left America more beloved than ever by all the peoples of Europe.”<sup>17</sup> The differences between the two leaders were discussed at length. In addition, Bancroft charged the British elite for what he saw as its support of the Confederacy during the war, and he used Lincoln to draw a sharp divide between the United States and Britain. Bancroft was prejudiced and he constructed biased images of Palmerston. The latter, for example, was immensely popular in Britain, he was a friend of Italian nationalism and he was an ardent adversary of slavery. However, Bancroft spoke within an acceptable narrative. As noted in chapter one, by the late 1860s, a representation of the Civil War had begun to gain ground according to which the British social and ruling elite supported the Confederacy and endeavoured to advance the breaking of the American Union.<sup>18</sup> At home, radicals such as Bright and Cobden helped cement this memory in an effort to both align British radicalism with American democracy and distinguish it from British conservatism.<sup>19</sup> Thus in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War the conflict and its then iconic President were often used to highlight the divide between the British elite and the American people.

The coming years saw a shift in the British perception of the United States, of the Civil War and accordingly also of Lincoln’s place in British thought. In 1888, James Bryce could write that:

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<sup>17</sup> Bancroft, *Abraham Lincoln: A Tribute* (New York, 1908), p. 73. For a discussion of Bancroft’s oration see: Merrill Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York, 1994), pp. 37-8.

<sup>18</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 142-3.

<sup>19</sup> Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British politics*, pp. 151-2.

from Jackson till the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the Presidents [...] were intellectual pigmies beside the real leaders of that generation – Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. A new series begins with Lincoln in 1861. He and General Grant his successor, who cover sixteen years between them, belong to the history of the world.<sup>20</sup>

During the last decades of the century, the United States had become a significant power. This, in turn, had made the Civil War more appealing than before since it was no longer a symbol of a decaying country but of a rising one. Furthermore, as Bryce's words showed, the Civil War now became a key, an explanation to the rising of America because it marked the birth of the modern and powerful United States. Glossing over Andrew Johnson, considered by Britons outside radical circles a mediocre and weak President who could not rule his Congress, Bryce connected the Civil War with the rise of a potent American leadership.<sup>21</sup> Lincoln, accordingly, became the harbinger of American leaders, who, no longer "intellectual pigmies", stood as the heads of an increasingly powerful democratic nation.

In addition, starting from the latter part of the century, Lincoln gradually became a consensual figure and national emblem in the United States as never before. In his 1866 *The History of Abraham Lincoln and the Overthrow of Slavery*, Isaac Arnold presented the martyred President as a fervent abolitionist and called on Congress to realise radical Reconstruction, which he saw as part of Lincoln's legacy. Many pages were dedicated to African Americans who fought in the war for their freedom, and the narrative praised Lincoln and the Congress for having "put the sword into the hand of the slave."<sup>22</sup> As Merrill Peterson has shown, such a Lincoln was resented in the South and Lincoln thus remained a sectional icon. Arnold's biography of Lincoln from 1884, however, was titled *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* and was far

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<sup>20</sup> Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London, 1888), p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Within radical circles, Johnson was seen – or was hoped to be – the successor of Lincoln's policies, as a man of the people and a President committed to emancipation. See Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, pp. 242-3.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold, *Abraham Lincoln and the overthrow of Slavery* (Chicago, 1866), p. iv.

less combative and sectionalist. According to Elihu Washburne who wrote the introduction for the new edition, what Arnold, who had just died, really intended to write was a story of Lincoln's life "disconnected with the history of the overthrow of slavery."<sup>23</sup> Far more acceptable in the South since the end of Reconstruction and the rise of the narrative of reconciliation, and overtaking George Washington as the archetypical American symbol, around the turn of the century Lincoln came to represent the United States officially and more frequently.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Lincoln was now more closely associated with the United States directly, not only circumspectly through the Civil War.

Finally, it was during this period that Lincoln's image began crossing the Atlantic with greater frequency and to a far better reception. In 1881, Isaac Arnold, then president of the Chicago Historical Society, presented a paper on Lincoln in London, giving most attendees, members of the Royal Historical Society, a first glance into the life of the President.<sup>25</sup> Avoiding many contentious aspects of the British attitude towards Lincoln during the war, Arnold emphasised the British "sympathy [...] most eloquently expressed by all" upon Lincoln's death:

It came from Windsor Castle to the White House; from England's widowed Queen to the stricken and distracted widow at Washington. From Parliament to Congress, from the people of all this magnificent Empire, as it stretches round the world. From England to India, from Canada to Australia, came words of deep feeling, and they were received by the American people, in their sore bereavement, as the expression of a kindred race.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago, 1884, [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]), p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>For Lincoln in the South see: Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, pp. 48-50. For Lincoln becoming an agreed upon American emblem see: Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago, 2008), p. 14; and Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991), pp. 128-9.

<sup>25</sup> Arnold, *Abraham Lincoln: A Paper Read Before the Royal Historical Society*, 14 May, 1881.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

At the same time as sentiment changed, helping it as well as being reinforced by it, biographies and primary sources became available to the British reader on a hitherto unprecedented scale, around the turn of the century. For example, in his 1907 biography of Lincoln, Henry Binns acknowledged his debt to the seminal work on Lincoln by John George Nicolay and John Hay, which had only recently arrived in Britain. “Lincoln’s speeches”, Binns celebrated, “are thus at last accessible to the general public on this side of the Atlantic.”<sup>27</sup> An accessible and independent symbol of a powerful nation, Lincoln became increasingly relevant and attractive to British intellectuals.

Subsequently, British persons of letters started to show particular interest in the martyred President in their accounts of his life, as shown in Henry Bryan Binns’ work. Not much is known about Binns (1873-1923), a Quaker, poet and moderate Edwardian social reformer.<sup>28</sup> Little has been said, too, about his account of Lincoln.<sup>29</sup> Overshadowed by Charnwood’s monumental biography of Lincoln, Binns’ work is a remarkable, though rarely remarked upon, and telling historical document. Other than being the first British biography of the American President, the significance of Binns’ account of Lincoln’s life was threefold. First, in this work Lincoln was for the first time consciously detached from the story of the Civil War and assumed an independent status in British writing. Second, it demonstrated how, upon reaching Britain, American values that were embedded in Lincoln’s representations were translated in order to make them relevant to the British locale. Third, being carried out by a liberal and based on the historic connection between radicals and Lincoln, it

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<sup>27</sup>Henry Bryan Binns, *Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1907), p. ix.

<sup>28</sup> Not a lot is written about Binns and some biographical details with more references can be found in Jarome Loving, ‘The Binns Biography’, in: Ed Folsom, *Walt Whitman: The Centennial Essays* (Iowa City, 1994), pp. 10-19.

<sup>29</sup> To the best of the author’s knowledge, Smith is thus far the only scholar who paid attention to Binns’ work on Lincoln. See: Smith, ‘The “Cult” of Abraham Lincoln’, p. 7.

marked a first attempt to break the monopoly of British liberals, radicals and nonconformists over Lincoln in Britain. That is to say, Binns tried to appropriate Lincoln not only as the liberal that he was, but also as a Briton.

Binns did not want to write about the American Civil War. “Even an outline of the complex action of the Civil War”, he opened his work, “would only, as I think, have confused the picture of the man which I have tried to draw.”<sup>30</sup> For Binns, Lincoln’s life was of independent value. He thus used only two books that were not Lincoln biographies, and these were concerned with American and Illinois history and not with the Civil War. American biographies made Lincoln’s life a legitimate, accessible and independent subject of inquiry at a time when Lincoln became an American icon. Following the American practice and building on a vast number of American biographies, Binns detached Lincoln from the broader story of the Civil War and presented the independent hero upon which further generations of British intellectuals would project their stances on a variety of themes.

Binns was not different from his successors in projecting his world-view onto Lincoln’s life. An Edwardian social reformer, Binns’ Lincoln was as socially conscious as he was. The American President, he argued, “belonged to the same great school of Mill and Mazzini, and like theirs his vigorous individualism was balanced by the feeling for solidarity.”<sup>31</sup> Binns explicitly focused on Lincoln the self-made-man and advanced an image of the President as the patron of the worker. “The life of the workers”, he noted, “always remained his own life.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, in Binns’ biography, Lincoln’s social consciousness was rooted in the latter’s religious beliefs. Again like Binns, Lincoln, too, came near “what may best be described as the Quaker

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<sup>30</sup>Binns, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. ix.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid*, p. 352.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid*.

position in religious matters.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, Binns’ Lincoln was a nationalist. “By temperament”, Binns asserted, “he was a constitutionalist. And this applied to his religious life.”<sup>34</sup> In short, Binns’ Lincoln was the embodiment of a pious nationalistic leader with strong social consciousness, just as was Binns himself.

To portray Lincoln in that way, Binns drew upon two intertwined portrayals, which nonetheless reflected two distinct representations of Lincoln. One was the representation of Lincoln as an American social reformer, which became central in the United States during the Progressive Era.<sup>35</sup> Progressive ideas had been freely distributed within the Atlantic sphere at the time, and Binns was aware of this American view of Lincoln.<sup>36</sup> In the same vein, using slavery in America in the 1860s to criticise labour conditions in the Gilded Age United States, Binns noted that, “where Cotton once was King now the Corporation rules; and the black slavery of the plantation has given partial place to the industrial white slavery of men, women and little children, both North and South.”<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Binns drew from the then half-a-century-old British representation of Lincoln as an ally of local radicals, liberals and nonconformists. For him, too, as for his predecessors, Lincoln, Bright and Cobden had shared a common world-view.<sup>38</sup> Binns used both these representations, which placed emphasis on social justice and reform in the United States and Britain respectively, to construct his own image of Lincoln.

Drawing on the above representations, Binns’ was a selective reading of Lincoln’s life. For one thing, the Progressive Lincoln was not the only available

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<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>35</sup> Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of American Memory* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 107-42.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), pp. 33-75.

<sup>37</sup>Binns, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 354.

<sup>38</sup> See for example, *Ibid.*, p. 349.

Lincoln in the Atlantic sphere. Rather than any special sensitivity for social justice, J. T. Morse, for example, whose biography of Lincoln Binns especially recommended, noted that Lincoln's "chief trait all his life long was honesty."<sup>39</sup> Although representing his life within a rags-to-riches narrative, Morse, as opposed to Binns, did not in any way refer to Lincoln as a worker patron, and he did not view slavery and emancipation through the prism of labour relations. Binns' independent representation of Lincoln was evident also in his particular use of the rags-to-riches narrative. As Eyal Naveh has noted, Lincoln's story of rising from poverty to prominence – which Binns used in order to present the roots of Lincoln's social consciousness – was used also to justify the capitalist ideology of the Gilded Age, which Binns so vehemently scorned.<sup>40</sup> Binns further glossed over Lincoln's nationalistic and protective economic stances, which often differed sharply from those held by British radicals like Cobden and Bright and from the open market ideology of the Manchester School.<sup>41</sup> Finally, on Lincoln's religiosity: Binns, a Quaker, ascribed to Lincoln beliefs that the historical evidence does not necessarily support. As Stewart Winger has shown, whilst religion had played a vital role in shaping Lincoln's views and political life, he was not a Quaker and his religiosity was firmly rooted in contemporary American spiritual developments.<sup>42</sup> Binns adjusted and interpreted Lincoln's legacy to fit in with his own views.

Additionally, Binns built upon British liberal representation of Lincoln in order to tie Lincoln to British intellectual tradition more generally. As Smith has shown, a main theme in Binns' work was Lincoln's British pedigree and his close connection to

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<sup>39</sup> Morse, *Abraham Lincoln* (Boston, 1897), I, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Naveh, *Crown of Thorn: Political Martyrdom in America from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New-York, 1990), pp. 69-70.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony Hutchison, "'All the Men of Great Affairs': The Barnard Statue, Manchester Liberalism, and Lincoln Intellectual History", *American Literary History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2009), pp. 8-10.

<sup>42</sup> Stewart Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics* (DeKalb, 2003), pp. 160-78. In 1920, William Barton explicitly accused Binns for making Lincoln a Quaker, despite his true religious views. See: Barton, *The Soul of Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana, 2005 [1920]), pp. 236-7. On Lincoln religious beliefs see also: Richard Carwardine, *Lincoln* (Harlow, 2003), pp. 28-39.

British life, history and institutions.<sup>43</sup> Smith has compellingly inferred that in this, Binns' work was part of a broader British attempt to align the United States, evidently a rising power, to Britain by way of drawing parallels and ideological analogies. Lincoln's legacy, however, posed some difficulties that have thus far not been discussed and of which Binns – as shown below – was well aware. Binns knew that for Lincoln to symbolise an Anglo-American connection, the prevailing legacy of British antagonism towards the martyred President in the 1860s had to be bypassed.

Drawing upon the legacy of the alliance between British radicals and Lincoln, Binns found in the workers of Lancashire of the 1860s the evidence that, regardless of other differences, Britain and the United States were ideologically deeply linked. During Lincoln's presidency, Binns wrote:

[T]he relations between the two countries were severely strained by the incidence of a war which proved disastrous to one of the principal branches of English industry. But it was at this period, when thousands of the men of Lancashire were thrown out of employment, and with their wives and children to the number of half a million were cast upon charity by the blockading of the cotton ports, that our northern artisans proclaimed their faith in Lincoln, and their recognition of the fact that it was their battle he was fighting across the sea.<sup>44</sup>

Binns did not refute the accepted view that the British elite supported the Confederacy, but he did highlight the strong support that Lincoln and the Union received in Britain. This was central to his argument for a broader and deeper connection between Lincoln and the British people. "Essentially", Binns summarised, "in temper and sentiment, [Lincoln] is unmistakably a Briton."<sup>45</sup> From a standpoint from which Edwardian Britain seemed to have been progressing towards what Binns saw as a more just social order, the British poet and moderate reformer could draw broad parallels between the views that he ascribed to both Lincoln and nineteenth-century British radicals and his

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, 'The "Cult" of Abraham Lincoln', p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Binns, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

contemporary Britain. In this way, Binns tried to represent Lincoln as an ally of all Britons, not merely radicals.

Binns' biography was a work of constant selection, translation and adaptation, put forth in order to appropriate Lincoln and associate him with the author's own views and country. Its significance lay in that it was a work of transition. It was the first British account of Lincoln as an independent icon, and the first attempt to break the exclusive link between Lincoln and British radicals, workers and nonconformists. It showed that Lincoln had become an available independent icon whose life and legacy were multifaceted, flexible and attractive enough to detach themselves from the margins, moving more firmly into the mainstream of public consciousness.

Finally, the significance of Binns' biography was, paradoxically, that it sank into oblivion. After its publication in 1916, it was the biography written by Lord Charnwood (1864-1945), an Oxford educated Liberal member of the House of Lords, which came to be regarded as the first British account of Lincoln's life.<sup>46</sup> The replacement of Binns' Lincoln by that of Charnwood as the first and archetypal British view of the American President revealed much about the power of the latter, arguably more than it told about the irrelevance or weakness of the former. In fact, the transition from Binns' radical-nonconformist Lincoln to Charnwood's more elitist, even conservative, Lincoln was both arduous and, ultimately, incomplete. It required, on the one hand, overcoming the Civil War's heritage perpetuating the resentment of the British elite against Lincoln and the North, whilst on the other hand suppressing the radical-nonconformist heritage of Lincoln, already established on both sides of the Atlantic. Eventually, however, Charnwood's biography – like the landmark study of E. D. Adams from 1925 – marked a new beginning for the understanding of the British

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<sup>46</sup> DNB. Accessed on 23 Feb. 2012.

response to Lincoln and to the Civil War. This, in turn, rendered the conflict a fitting cultural instrument with which to celebrate a special historical connection between Britain and the United States.

Reviewing Charnwood's 1916 biography of Lincoln, S. K. Ratcliffe, a British journalist and scholar, noted in the same year that: "Certain periods, certain commanding individuals [...] have a more direct significance than others for the immediate present [...]. The words and policy of Abraham Lincoln have been more closely studied among us during the past two years than ever before."<sup>47</sup> The Great War made Lincoln relevant and attractive to British intellectuals and many turned to the life of the American war-President, which, as Ratcliffe's words illustrated, was by then widely available to the British reader. Naturally, it was no longer the labour patron that Britons sought. As historians have shown, British intellectuals appealed to Lincoln during the Great War as a nationalistic war-President and symbol of a fighting liberal democracy.<sup>48</sup> Charnwood was well aware of this aspect of Lincoln's heritage in the United States when he set out to write his account of the President. Indeed, it was always there. When drawing upon Hay, for example, Charnwood could not have missed the argument underpinning the narrative, that Lincoln's life in the west had "qualif[ied] him for the duties and responsibilities of leadership and government."<sup>49</sup> When the First World War neared the United States in 1917 and 1918, this representation of Lincoln largely replaced that of the Progressive period and ultimately came to dominate the American as well as the British spheres.<sup>50</sup> Charnwood could have interpreted Lincoln's life differently, as Binns had done. After all, both drew

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<sup>47</sup> Ratcliffe, 'Abraham Lincoln by Lord Charnwood', the *Observer*, 3 Sep. 1916, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, Smith, 'The Stuff our Dreams are made of', pp. 129-30.

<sup>49</sup> John G. Nicolay, *A Short Life of Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1902), p. 551.

<sup>50</sup> Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of American Memory*, pp. 224-55; Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, pp. 198-9.

from the same American sources. However, in light of the Great War, a strong democratic war-leader was far more relevant to him than a labour patron was.

Charnwood's work was also a call for American sympathy at a time when this had become a priority. Throughout the Great War, numerous British intellectuals served as official and unofficial diplomats, trying to harness the now major power to Britain's aid by showing that Britain fought for principles that were common to both nations such as liberty, freedom and above all democracy.<sup>51</sup> Basil Williams' introductory note to Charnwood's biography was an out-and-out attempt to draw parallels between Lincoln's struggle for "the noblest cause", and Britain's pass through the "fiery [...] trial for a cause we feel to be as noble."<sup>52</sup> Such parallels, it was hoped, might alter the views of anti-interventionists in the United States such as Randolph Bourne and Jane Addams, who saw Britain's war as anything but noble and pressed for maintaining American isolationism.

Whilst the reasons for Lincoln's appeal to Britons as a nationalistic war-President and the advantages of using his legacy for public diplomacy in the United States were clear, it also raised major difficulties on both fronts. The accepted wisdom in Britain as well as in the United States was that the British ruling elite had historically been antagonistic towards Lincoln because it saw in him the embodiment of the American values that they scorned. One of the most resented values for which Lincoln stood was that of unrestricted mass democracy. Lincoln, in other words, was remembered as a symbol of Anglo-American ideological differences rather than

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<sup>51</sup>On British propaganda efforts in the U.S. see: J. Lee Thompson, 'To tell the People in America the Truth: Lord Northcliffe in the USA, Unofficial British Propaganda, June-November 1917', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Apr., 1999), pp. 243-62; Stewart Halsey Ross, *Propaganda for War: How the United States Was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (Jefferson, 1996), pp. 27-36.

<sup>52</sup>Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. vi.

affinities. Additionally, whereas Lincoln the war-leader was indeed appealing to Britons during the Great War, this representation was but one of many of the President, and until the late 1910s it was not even the dominant one in Britain. Binns' radical-nonconformist was the familiar Lincoln in both the United States and Britain. Therefore, in 1916, Lincoln's representation as a war leader and an Anglo-American symbol still had to be established before it could be appropriated and put to use.

Before appropriating Lincoln as a symbol for historical Anglo-American affinities, Charnwood had to negotiate with the Americans regarding Britain's right over their President's legacy. Whereas feelings such as those expressed by Bancroft in 1866 were somewhat assuaged by this time, the Civil War was still seen as a nadir of Anglo-American relations in both Britain and the United States. Whilst Binns' endeavour to bypass this heritage was relatively simple to execute (because in both countries British workers' support of Lincoln was also remembered), Charnwood, representing the British upper and ruling class, had to address this problem again, and from a different angle.

Charnwood was severe in his outlook on the British elite in the 1860s. "[...] it is impossible", he noted, "not to be ashamed of some of the forms in which English feeling showed itself and was well known in the North."<sup>53</sup> In a sub-chapter dedicated entirely to this subject, Charnwood mentioned how Britons had tended to support the Confederacy over the Union and thus undermined Lincoln's war efforts. In face of such British antagonism, Charnwood did not blame the Americans for having resented the British ever since. At a time of need – "the embers of this resentment", he wrote, "became dangerous to England in the autumn of 1914" – Charnwood made great

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<sup>53</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 257.

efforts to make amends for this historical misconduct.<sup>54</sup> This was done in two separate but complementary ways. The first, building upon Binns' approach, was by emphasising the steadfast support given to the Union by the working class. Confronting the accepted representation of the conflict, Charnwood insisted that there was yet another important angle to the British response to the war that needed to be remembered:

There is, however, quite another aspect of this question besides that which impressed so many American memories. When the largest manufacturing industry of England was brought near famine by the blockade, the voice of the stricken working population was loudly and persistently uttered on the side of the North.<sup>55</sup>

However, Charnwood had to go further and explain the attitudes of the British elite, whom he represented and with whom he now hoped to associate Lincoln. Thus, Charnwood maintained adamantly that the local sour feelings had stemmed solely from British misunderstanding of Lincoln and of the war as one purely for emancipation. "When such men as these said such things" he explained, "they were [...] merely blind to the fact that a very great and plain issue of right and wrong was really involved in the war."<sup>56</sup> According to Charnwood, had they understood, Britons, elite and workers alike, would not have hesitated to support Lincoln and the Union in what, it was by now clear, was their noble war for the values of racial freedom and emancipation that Britons and Americans have historically shared.

That was Charnwood's greatest adaptation of the Civil War outside its historical and geographical contexts. True, Britons did not understand many of the issues involved in the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation perhaps above all. Furthermore, it is entirely plausible that had the British elite grasped these issues, its

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

attitudes to Lincoln and the Union might have been more positive. In fact, current research shows that Britons did not wholeheartedly resent the North and did not endorse the Confederacy, even despite frequent transatlantic misunderstandings.<sup>57</sup> However, none of this is to claim, as Charnwood did, that Britons and Americans shared a common set of values in the 1860s and that these values were at the bottom of the Civil War. American democracy, for example, which took the central place in Lincoln's thought, was seen by British intellectuals and politicians, from across the political spectrum, as a dubious social and political system during and even after the war. By discussing the British reaction to the conflict only in the context of the slavery question, Charnwood turned the Civil War – as he turned also the Great War – into a simple conflict between right and wrong. He thus swept under the rug of the Emancipation Proclamation all the vast differences between the countries that had existed in the 1860s.

Having established that, Charnwood was free to draw parallels through the Civil War and through Lincoln's life between British and American views regarding what really mattered to him at the time – democratic outlooks. In Charnwood's narrative, the kind of American democracy that Britons had resented during the Civil War was the old American democracy of the pre-modern republic, not the modern American democracy that Lincoln represented. On the failures of the American political system in its early, pre-Lincoln days he noted that:

Only, Englishmen, recollecting the feebleness and corruption which marked their aristocratic government through a great part of the eighteenth century, must not enlarge their phylacteries at the expense of American democracy. And it is yet more important to remember that the fittest machinery for popular government, the

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<sup>57</sup> See for example: Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 82-189; Phillip E. Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, 2008); and Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

machinery through which the real judgment of the people will prevail, can only by degrees and after many failures be devised.<sup>58</sup>

According to Charnwood, Britons and Americans shared also a common history of democratic evolution from a corrupt social and political system to a noble one. Unsurprisingly, in Lincoln Charnwood saw the rise of the new American democracy to which he could have related and associated British attitudes. “I venerate Abraham Lincoln”, he stressed, “exactly because he is the true, honest type of American democracy.”<sup>59</sup> Charnwood thus projected the British views of American democracy in the 1910s onto the British attitudes to American democracy in the 1860s. His narrative replaced the differing American and British attitudes to democracy in the 1860s with their closer outlooks on democracy in the 1910s.

Charnwood’s endeavour was a complete success and his target audience in the United States endorsed his views wholeheartedly. Under the title “An Englishman’s Lincoln”, one Boston periodical noted, for example, that:

One of the best traits of the English is their readiness to admit and correct past errors [...] the British aristocracy, which was strongly in sympathy with the Confederacy almost to the end of the American Civil War, has publicly and frequently repented of its blindness to the true issues involved in the struggle. (Abraham Lincoln by Lord Charnwood is an excellent example of the present British attitude to the Civil War period...)<sup>60</sup>

Charnwood’s became the example of contemporary British attitude towards the Civil War and the Americans accepted his apologies on behalf of his country and class. In a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1917, historian John Morse presented a paper about Charnwood and his work that went as far as placing some of the responsibility for the British misunderstanding of Lincoln and of the war on

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<sup>58</sup> Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 50.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>60</sup> ‘An Englishmen’s Lincoln’, *The Independent*, 18 Dec. 1916, p. 505.

Lincoln himself and on the Americans. Lincoln's conduct, the paper read, "was so hard to explain that no American could explain it."<sup>61</sup>

With this hurdle behind him, Charnwood became a British diplomat of the first order. Invited to speak at the dedication of a Lincoln memorial in Springfield, Ill, in 1918, Charnwood was applauded as the most fitting intellectual-diplomat in Britain. Under the title "British Literary Envoy", one newspaper noted, for example, that, "[...] an ardent admirer of Lincoln and a student of his life and times, the British peer is peculiarly fitted to promote mutual understanding and sympathy between his country and the United States."<sup>62</sup> Charnwood's work altered the way in which Americans understood the British response to the Civil War so dramatically that a British peer, a symbol of British aristocracy, became "peculiarly" fit to promote Anglo-American affinities through the representation of the conflict. In the South, too, where by this time Lincoln's legacy of reconciliation and democracy was largely accepted, it was noted that the visit of the "biographer of Lincoln", as Charnwood was by then widely known, would surely contribute to the "era of good feeling between the people of Great Britain and America."<sup>63</sup> Charnwood's biography turned Lincoln and the Civil War from historical sources of bitter feelings and divide – as, for example, Bancroft had used them – into symbols of a budding Anglo-American relationship.

Whilst Charnwood sought to leap across the above historical hurdle, Lincoln's heritage posed an additional difficulty. During the Great War Britons wanted a Lincoln who could matter to them at this specific point in time, namely one who had led a great democratic nation through a vigorous trial and one who had represented a

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<sup>61</sup> Morse, 'Lord Charnwood's "Life of Abraham Lincoln"', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol. 51 (1918), p. 95.

<sup>62</sup>*The Beaver Herald*, Nov. 21, 1918, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>*The Watchman and Southron*, Nov. 20, 1918, p. 2.

shared Anglo-American ideological heritage. Charnwood had provided them with just that. However, Charnwood had done more than propel a much-needed representation of Lincoln; he had suppressed an unwanted one. Charnwood's work, stressed historian Basil Williams in his introduction to the biography, was "the first considered attempt by an Englishman to give a picture of Lincoln, the great hero of America's struggle for the noblest cause."<sup>64</sup> Although there is no evidence that either Williams or Charnwood had read Binns' work, no one in Britain or in the United States rushed to correct this error.<sup>65</sup> Binns' biography was irrelevant and perhaps even dangerous. It presented Lincoln as a social reformer who was deeply linked with the British working class rather than an Anglo-American war-leader. Binns thus ultimately did not do enough in order to downplay the schism in Britain over the Civil War and the transatlantic divide between Britain and the United States in the 1860s. A single British-written biography was easy to suppress in order to advance a more relevant and desired representation of Lincoln. However, when the submerged representation was imposed on Britain from across the Atlantic through an American statue of Lincoln, it took a certain effort to repress it again.

One example of the subtle complexity of the relationship between Lincoln and the British was evident in the controversy in the 1910s over the Lincoln statues. Founded respectively in 1909 and 1911 to celebrate the centennial of the Treaty of Ghent (1815), the American and British Peace Committees decided on a symbolic exchange of statues between Britain and the United States. After much deliberation, it was agreed that the British were to send Washington a statue of Queen Victoria, whereas the Americans would send to London Augustus Saint-Gaudens' statue of

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<sup>64</sup>Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. vi.

<sup>65</sup> It is clear that American readers were exposed to Binns' work as excerpts from it were included in a tribute book that was published to mark the centennial for Lincoln's birth in 1909. Horatio Sbeafe Krans, *The Lincoln Tribute Book* (New York, 1909). See for example, pp. 46-8.

Abraham Lincoln, a replica of the one standing in Lincoln Park in Chicago. Shortly afterwards, however, the Great War forced the cessation of the Committees' work, and it was resumed only in 1917. By then, however, it seemed that the American decision has been altered when instead of Saint-Gaudens' statue, the Committee announced that the Americans intended to send Britain George Grey Barnard's statue of Lincoln. The decision sparked a controversy on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>66</sup>

Saint-Gaudens' and Barnard's statues represented two different Lincolns. Whereas the former represented Lincoln as a strong national leader – the saviour of the Union, to use Merrill Peterson's terminology – the latter was a representation of Lincoln the self-made-man-of-the-people.<sup>67</sup> Whilst both representations depicted an American Lincoln and both were accepted in the United States as legitimate depictions of the President, for many British intellectuals only the first was applicable to their country and only this representation was thus desired. Frederick C. De Sumichrast, for example, a military-man and scholar, stressed in *The Times* that:

It is claimed that it [Barnard's statue] represents "the man of the people", and not the statesman. It is the statesman who saved the Union; the statesman who gave freedom to the slaves; the statesman who laid his life down for the country; the statesman who lives in history. And it is the great Lincoln that should be commemorated in this country.<sup>68</sup>

Importantly, De Sumichrast did not argue that Barnard's Lincoln was not American (although he did contend that even Americans despised the statue). However, First-World-War Britain demanded a nationalist war-leader, not a humble rail-splitter. Furthermore, not only was one Lincoln desired over the other; rather, British

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<sup>66</sup> Frederick C. Moffatt, *Errant Bronzes: George Grey Barnard's Statues of Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1998), pp. 111-13. On the controversy see: Harold E. Dickson, 'George Grey Barnard's Controversial Lincoln', *Art Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Autumn 1967), p. 13; Terry Wyke and Harry Cocks, *Public Sculptures of Greater Manchester* (Liverpool, 2004), pp. 89-90. Hutchison, *All Man of Great Affairs*, pp. 2-5.

<sup>67</sup> Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, p. 27.

<sup>68</sup> 'The Lincoln Statue', *The Times*, 2 Oct. 1917, p. 5.

opposition to Lincoln the self-made-man went so far as to openly scorn him. Already famous for his war-leader Lincoln, Charnwood noted in the House of Lords that, “it was very undesirable to set up a big public statue of a great man which to the ordinary eye had the appearance of a violent caricature [...]”<sup>69</sup>

True, as Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton have argued, “The absence of sustained and bare-knuckled foreign critique of Lincoln [throughout history] is remarkable.”<sup>70</sup> Yet the British rejection of Barnard’s statue showed that whilst a Lincoln was perhaps always appealing to Britons, some Lincolns were not. When they seemed to have stood against a British perception of Lincoln and in opposition to British needs and values, certain Lincolns were even explicitly treated with derision by the British. Whilst the American objection to Barnard’s statue might have explained some of the British negative reaction to it, it must be emphasised at the same time that the statue represented an acceptable American view of Lincoln, and that it was an official American gift, endorsed by two ex-Presidents, William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt, as no less a Lincoln than that of Saint-Gaudens.<sup>71</sup> The British, however, would not compromise their own view of Lincoln and their own national identity, and they would not accept what seemed an irrelevant – even insulting – Lincoln.

Although the President and the historical episode that his image represented posed grave difficulties to British intellectuals, Lincoln was, in many respects, irreplaceable. As an American icon, Lincoln held the potential of reaching the American public as no British or other foreign war-leader could. Giuseppe Garibaldi,

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<sup>69</sup> Charnwood in a debate in the House of Lords, in: The National Archives, Work 20/106.

<sup>70</sup> Carwardine and Sexton, ‘The Global Lincoln’, in: Carwardine and Sexton, *The Global Lincoln*, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Dickson, ‘George Grey Barnard’s Controversial Lincoln’, pp. 13-14.

for example, praised in Britain as a nationalistic democratic war hero in the 1860s, naturally had less appeal in the United States than Lincoln had;<sup>72</sup> and by the 1910s, the relevance, immediacy and importance of the United States had far exceeded that of Italy. George Washington, the only possible alternative as an American war-President, and indeed potentially attractive for his British roots, was remembered also for fighting against the British. Furthermore, during this time the United States exported and projected Lincoln – if unintentionally – as the foremost American symbol. In 1926, David Knowles, a British Benedictine monk and historian, argued in his book about the Civil War that:

The cult of Lincoln, indeed, in America, has occasionally been unintelligent and to some degree extravagant, as must always be the case with popular heroes, and it has led many outside America, who could see little greatness in the traits of his character which were emphasized by his admirers, to believe that his reputation was largely exaggerated. Within recent years, however, his personality and actions have been more carefully and critically examined, and his fame has not been diminished by the scrutiny. Lincoln was, of a certainty, a great statesman [...]<sup>73</sup>

Especially during the Civil War's semi-centennial, between 1911 and 1915, one could not have missed that the Civil War was, so to speak, the United States and vice versa. The Americans thus signalled that Lincoln and the war were a way to approach them. Therefore, when Britons looked for an American symbol of wartime leadership that would provide them with an additional communication route with the Americans, Lincoln was the natural, best and in many aspects sole option at that time.

Nonetheless, only in the spring of 1918 and following a request by the donors Eleanor and Charles Taft that Barnard's statue was to go to a British city after all, did a joint Anglo-American committee put forward a solution to the statues controversy.

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<sup>72</sup> Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 153-4 and 197-8; Maura O'Connor, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 149-185; Kees Windland, *Garibaldi in Britain: Reflection of a Liberal Hero* (Unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2002), pp. 1-14.

<sup>73</sup> Knowles, *The American Civil War: A Brief Sketch* (Oxford, 1926), p. 202.

The United States, the committee suggested, would send both statues to Britain. After the Great War the controversy ultimately came to an amicable conclusion when the Saint-Gaudens statue was sent to London whilst Barnard's Lincoln was placed in Manchester.<sup>74</sup> This solution placed each representation of Lincoln where Britons thought it belonged. The *Manchester Guardian* enthusiastically reported that Manchester, chosen over Liverpool and Norwich, was about to receive the Lincoln that its people have endorsed since the days of the Civil War.<sup>75</sup> It was declared that Manchester appreciated Barnard's Lincoln even more in light of the controversy.<sup>76</sup> Before and after the unveiling ceremony in 1919, both the American Ambassador, John D. Davis, and Judge Alton B. Parker celebrated the historic alliance between the people of Lancashire and Lincoln and praised the great sacrifice of the textile workers during the war whilst supporting Lincoln. Davis, for example, emphasised the hundred years of overcoming Anglo-American differences peacefully and based on a common "sentiment, interest, and purpose."<sup>77</sup> With historical memory of unbroken support on their side, it was easy to harness Lincoln in Manchester to celebrate Anglo-American relations in 1919.

In London the following year Britons finally celebrated the Lincoln that they thought they deserved. On 20 July 1920, Secretary of State Elihu Root officially offered Saint-Gaudens' Lincoln to the people of Britain.<sup>78</sup> Newspapers reported moving speeches by both Root and David Lloyd George who accepted the gift on behalf of the British people. Root, like his countrymen in Manchester the previous

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<sup>74</sup>Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculptures of Greater Manchester*, p. 90.

<sup>75</sup>'The Barnard Lincoln', *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 Jan. 1919, p. 3; 'The Lincoln Statue Coming to Manchester?', *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1919, p. 10; and 'The Barnard "Lincoln", Great Statue Coming to Manchester', *Ibid.*, 30 Jan. 1919, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup>'A Bond of Union', *The Irish Times*, 16 Sep. 1919, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup>'Britain's Part in the War, American Judge's tribute, Statue of Lincoln in Manchester', *The Scotsman*, 16 Sep. 1919, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup>'Lincoln Statue, Mr. Root's Tribute', *The Times*, 29 Jul. 1920; Waldo Warder Braden, *Building the Myth: Selected Speeches Memorializing Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana, 1990), p. 105.

year, emphasised the deep roots of Anglo-American partnership which had overcome minor differences between the countries.<sup>79</sup> Lloyd George, heartily agreeing with him on this point, stressed the co-ownership that both nations had over Lincoln. “I am not sure”, the Prime Minister stressed, “that you in America realize the extent to which he is also our pride.”<sup>80</sup> In the euphoria and zenith of Anglo-American affinities in the immediate aftermath of the Great War, it was finally established that for Britain it was Lincoln the national democratic war-leader that was most suitable. The man-of-the-people representation was confined to the Manchester area where it was celebrated as a local legacy. It was further established by this time that Lincoln symbolised an Anglo-American heritage of fighting for freedom, and that during the Civil War, had Britons seen that these were Lincoln’s goals, all antagonism towards him would have vanished. After all, it was now accepted that on all other matters – especially on the moral superiority of democracy – the British and Americans had always been in firm fundamental agreement.

The British representations of Lincoln reflected and shaped the intellectual atmosphere within which the historiography of the British reaction to the Civil War emerged. In 1925, American historian Ephraim Douglass Adams published his *Great Britain and the American Civil War*. Adams’ seminal work has rightly been the starting point of any academic study and historiographic survey on the subject since.<sup>81</sup> Adams is known amongst academics for cementing the bi-polar class interpretation of the British reaction to the Civil War according to which the British upper class supported the Confederacy whilst the working class and radicals endorsed the Union. However, in the context of the present thesis, much more important was Adams’

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<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>80</sup>‘Lincoln Statue, Mr. Root’s Tribute’, *The Times*, 29 Jul. 1920, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> See for example: Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, p. 3.

conciliatory tone towards the alleged supporters of the Confederacy from across the ocean. Examining the hostile British response to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Adams asserted that:

To Englishmen and Americans alike it has been in later years a matter for astonishment that the emancipation proclamation did not at once convince Great Britain of the high purposes of the North. But if it be remembered that in the North itself the proclamation was greeted [...] with doubt extending even to bitter opposition and that British governmental and public opinion had long dreaded a servile insurrection – even of late taking its cue from Seward's own prophecies – the cool reception given by the Government, the vehement and vituperative explosions of the press do not seem so surprising.<sup>82</sup>

According to Adams, there were no real bitter feelings or deep differences between the British elite and Lincoln's North, just mutual and superficial misunderstandings. In another milestone in this academic debate, Jordan Donaldson and Edwin Pratt reached similar conclusions in 1931.<sup>83</sup> Thus, in the mid 1920s Adams could have summed up that, "For nearly half a century after the American Civil War the natural sentiments of friendship, based upon ties of blood and a common heritage of literature and history and law, were distorted by bitter and exaggerated memories."<sup>84</sup> Half a century of the Civil War's memory being a source of division between the British elite and the Union was over. Instead, the Civil War and Lincoln came to propel a unique historical link between the countries. And the academic debate was officially launched.

## II

Between 1919 and the early 1920s Lincoln had been broadly endorsed in Britain as a war-President as well as a symbol of Anglo-American affinities and common values such as democracy and national freedom. As Adam Smith has shown, during the Second World War these aspects of Lincoln's heritage were reiterated in both the

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<sup>82</sup> Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (London, 1925), II, p. 101.

<sup>83</sup> Donaldson and Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (London, 1931), pp. 70-1.

<sup>84</sup> Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, II, p. 305.

United States and Britain.<sup>85</sup> It was in this spirit that, upon receiving two pictures of Lincoln from American officials in 1940, A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, noted: “No gift from you could have been more happily chosen, expressing as it does your sympathy in the struggle for the preservation of human liberty, the cause to which Abraham Lincoln devoted his life”.<sup>86</sup> These symbolic exchanges continued throughout the Second World War and reaffirmed the abovementioned representation of Lincoln. However, whilst in the 1940s Lincoln regained his place in British thought as a democratic war-President and emblem of Anglo-American values, this position had not been awarded without struggle during the late 1920s and 1930s.

During the mid and late interwar period, the marginalised radical-liberal-nonconformist representation of Lincoln was still being commemorated in Britain and had even regained some of its prominence. One such example was Henry Withers’ 1927 biography of Lincoln, written for the Religious Tract Society, a Protestant evangelical organisation that published essays mainly for the British working and middle class.<sup>87</sup> Withers’ biography thus emphasised Lincoln’s religious zeal as the source of his belief in freedom. “The basis of Lincoln’s power and influence”, he wrote, “was undoubtedly a firm belief that the will of God prevails and that without Him all human reliance is vain.”<sup>88</sup> That same year Henry Binns’ biography of Lincoln saw its second edition and the radical-liberal-nonconformist heritage of Lincoln raised its head.

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<sup>85</sup> Smith, ‘The stuff our dreams are made of’, p. 131-3.

<sup>86</sup>*The Times*, 27 Dec., 1940, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup>Aileen Kennedy Fyfe, *Industrialised Conversion: The Religious Tract Society and Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain* (DPhil thesis, University of Cambridge, 2000), pp. 16-43.

<sup>88</sup>Henry Withers, *Abraham Lincoln, a Champion of Freedom* (London, 1927), p. 192.

Other than illustrating the still prevailing relevance of the above representation of Lincoln in Britain, the publication and reception of Withers' and Binns' works showed what by this time had become less important to stress through Lincoln's image. As opposed to the early interwar period, Lincoln and the Civil War served far less to celebrate Anglo-American relations. Whilst broadly covering the subject of Lincoln's religion as put forward by Binns, the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, omitted any reference to Lincoln's British pedigree or to his alleged Britishness, which were central to Binns' narrative.<sup>89</sup> Anglo-American relations were now sailing on somewhat turbulent waters in light of American isolationism and frictions over issues of sea power and war debts.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the image of the Great War as a noble Anglo-American war was also fractured. A poll from 1939 indicated that 40 percent of Americans thought that the United States was a victim of British propaganda when it entered the war.<sup>91</sup> The relative cooling in the relations between the countries and the lessening presence of American power in Britain meant that Lincoln's post-Great War representation as an Anglo-American war-President had lost some ground, allowing other Lincolns to emerge in Britain.

In conjunction with the cooling of Anglo-American relations and a lessened presence of American power during the later interwar period, the Great War assumed a new prominent position in British memory. This, in turn, rendered Lincoln an irreplaceable source of appeal, as was evident in the quintessential British biography of the period. In 1935, Denis Brogan (1900-1974), an eminent Scottish historian

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<sup>89</sup>*The Manchester Guardian*, 24 Aug. 1927, p. 8.

<sup>90</sup>On the main issues that lay at the heart of the Anglo-American tensions in the interwar years see: B. J. C. McKercher (ed.), *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Basingstoke, 1991), ch. 1, 6 and 7; for the anti British feelings in the United States during this time see: J. E. Moser, *Twisting the Lion's Tail: Anglophobia in the United States, 1921-1948* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 6-41.

<sup>91</sup>Fred M. Leventhal, 'Public Face and Public Space: The Projection of Britain in America Before the Second World War', in: Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (eds.), *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 212-17.

whose works resonated loudly on both sides of the Atlantic, published his account of Lincoln's life.<sup>92</sup> Whereas Brogan's work reflected the author's admiration for Lincoln, it was a severely critical account of the Civil War. Rather than a moral war and heroic epoch in America's history, in light of his view of the Great War Brogan saw the Civil War as a horrible tragedy. The carnage in America in the 1860s was as appalling to him as that in France in the 1910s; the sights of the Somme as horrible as those of Fredericksburg. "Burnside sent forward wave after wave of troops, whose astonishing gallantry [...] won the admiration of their foes, who had the simple task of shooting them down. Like July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1916, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1862, showed what new troops can be trained to endure."<sup>93</sup> Similarly, whilst in other places McClellan was often depicted as a timid and hesitant general, Brogan found that "it is easier to sympathise with him now than it was before 1914."<sup>94</sup> On the background of the dreadful Civil War, Brogan presented Lincoln as an admirable peace advocate who fought only as there seemed to have been no other choice, against his will and hopes. On 4 March 1861, Brogan noted, "there was still hope of peace and, perhaps, of union."<sup>95</sup> He then quoted from Lincoln's first inaugural address to show the President's last appeal for peace.

Brogan's account of Lincoln was a typical contemporary anti-war manifesto. Pacifist movements, such as the Women's Co-operative Guild, represented the Great War no longer as a patriotic and heroic war, but as a cruel and futile experience. By the mid 1930s, the zenith of pacifist and anti-militant initiatives, Britain did not celebrate the Great War or any other war, including the American Civil War.<sup>96</sup> As the

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<sup>92</sup> DNB. Accessed on 9 Sep. 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Denis Brogan, *Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1935), p. 118.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>96</sup> Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory, Armistice Day: 1919-1946* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 141-57.

Civil War was caught in the current of lost generation literature in Britain, Lincoln became, for Brogan, the foremost example of a national leader who hoped for peace when the world around him sought war.

To represent Lincoln as such, Brogan drew selectively from the existing Civil War representations crossing the Atlantic. Brogan especially recommended his reader to consult James Truslow Adams' *America's Tragedy* (1934). Adams' was a Lost Cause narrative of the war, which brought into full colour the horrors of the conflict and the devastation of the South.<sup>97</sup> More generally, as Kenneth Stampf noted, the interwar period was a time when Southern historians such as Ulrich Phillips, Charles Ramsdell and Frank Owsley published some of the works stressing that the Civil War was a repressible conflict, one that could have been avoided were it not for the work of radicals and warmongers.<sup>98</sup> Brogan could have chosen otherwise. A competing narrative that highlighted the inevitability of the war – associated at this time primarily with Charles and Mary Beard – was even more accepted and Brogan was surely familiar with it.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, if Stampf is correct, then as opposed to Brogan, American historians such as those above were not influenced in their Civil War writings by the memory of the Great War but by their Southern bias.<sup>100</sup> This highlights the independence of British scholars' reading of Lincoln's life and shows the different context within which Britons and Americans represented the Civil War. Finally, Brogan drew selectively and autonomously even from within the Lost Cause narrative he had adopted, as was evident in his portrayal of Lincoln as an appeaser.

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<sup>97</sup> See for example: Adams, *America's Tragedy* (New York, 1934), pp. 383-94.

<sup>98</sup> Stampf, *The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War* (New York, 1980), pp. 214-20.

<sup>99</sup> The Beards, for example, titled their discussion of the Civil War: "The Drift of Events toward the Irrepressible Conflict". See: Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *History of the United States* (New York, 1921), p. 332.

<sup>100</sup> Stampf, *The Imperiled Union*, pp. 215-17.

From the days of the war, Lost Cause narratives have often represented Lincoln as an aggressor who led the violent North to a brutal war on the peace-loving South.<sup>101</sup>

Brogan took the opposing view.

As important was the fact that Brogan drew and selected from America's history rather than from that of Britain. In many ways, in order to reinforce his view, Brogan was left with little choice. The prevailing memory of the First World War perpetuated the notion that the horrors of that war could have been avoided had there only been strong peace-seeking statesmen in Europe in 1914.<sup>102</sup> This, in turn, had rendered any past political leader involved in this war, unsuitable for canonising. Represented as a moderate appeaser who had hoped to avoid war, Lincoln could not have been replaced by any other leader, British or American.

The Second World War and its memory eradicated this representation of Lincoln in Britain. In 1974, for example, Hugh Brogan wrote in the introduction to his father's biography that, "no survivor of the appeasement period could doubt that it is better at times to fight than to submit."<sup>103</sup> Brogan senior himself noted reflectively in 1962 that, "[in] the years after the massacre of the Western Front McClellan's caution seemed more sagacious than timid. I shared this view when I wrote. I do not hold it now."<sup>104</sup> The prism of the "guilty men", cementing in British memory the notion that Chamberlain and the appeasers of the 1930s should have aggressively confronted Hitler in time whilst preparing Britain for war, brought back ideas of nationalism and

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<sup>101</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988), p. 265.

<sup>102</sup> George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Brogan, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. viii.

<sup>104</sup> Denis Brogan, *Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1962, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), pp. xxiii-xxiv.

strong war-leadership.<sup>105</sup> These facets were to remain as main aspects of Lincoln's representations within British intellectual circles.

What should be surprising, however, was not that British intellectuals had again changed their understanding of Lincoln, but rather that he interested them at all. As opposed to the Great War, the Second World War provided Britons with an enduring and heroic war legacy of their own.<sup>106</sup> For one thing, the Second World War entered collective memory as the first truly ideological and morally justified war.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, Winston Churchill emerged from the conflict as a determined and admired national war-leader and largely filled the void created by the memory of the poor leadership of the Great War and of the submissiveness of the British leadership in the late 1930s.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, the Second World War could have replaced the Civil War as a symbol of Anglo-American alliance much more easily and with far less contentions. That is, in that war, and unlike during the Civil War, Britain and the United States fought shoulder to shoulder for democracy and freedom from tyranny. Additionally, as David Reynolds has shown, from the Second World War, the "Special Relationship" emerged as a culturally- and politically-constructed diplomatic tool that was utilised to stress the deep historical connections between the peoples.<sup>109</sup> The

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<sup>105</sup> Sidney Aster, 'Appeasement: Before and After Revisionism', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2008), p. 443.

<sup>106</sup> Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It!: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow, 2004), pp. 1-2 and 14-15.

<sup>107</sup> Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, pp. 272; For a survey on historical revision about Churchill's place in British history see: Nile Gardiner, 'Forever in the Shadow of Churchill?: Britain and the Memory of World War Two at the End of the Twentieth Century', *Historical Roots of Contemporary International and Regional Issues Occasional Paper Series*, No. 9 (Jan. 1997), pp. 8-11.

<sup>109</sup> Reynolds, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations', *International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Winter, 1988-1989), pp. 89-111; see also David Watt, 'Introduction: The Anglo-American Relationship', in: William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds.), *The "Special Relationship": Anglo-American Relations Since 1945* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 5-6; Steve Marsh and John Baylis, 'The Anglo-American "Special Relationship": The Lazarus of International Relations', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2006), pp. 173-211; William Wallace and Christopher Phillips, 'Reassessing the Special Relationship', *International Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (2009) 263-84.

profound and widespread mourning of Roosevelt in Britain in 1945 and the reciprocal canonisation of Churchill in the United States after his death in 1965 were evidence that Anglo-American relations could be celebrated much more easily through the heritage of their relations than through the heritage of the relations between Lincoln and Palmerston.<sup>110</sup> Finally, taking a broader perspective, British historians of the United States turned more often to study the New Deal and the Civil Rights movement, which seemed more relevant and less studies. All of the above, however, only made the clear British interest in the Civil War more interesting.

Indeed, Britain's leading scholars and intellectuals kept returning to Lincoln and to the American Civil War. Jack Pole wrote three essays on Lincoln between 1959 and 1966; Churchill's account of the Civil War saw light in 1961; in 1962 Brogan's study of Lincoln was published in a second edition and with a new introduction by the author; and Lord Longford published a biography of the President in 1974, the same year that Brogan's biography saw its third edition. The question thus arises: in what way were Churchill and the Second World War unable to replace Lincoln and the Civil War? In what way was the previous – turbulent – special relationship more interesting or useful than the new one?

For one thing, Lincoln, and the Civil War more broadly, seemed to British scholars to symbolise and explain the rise to prominence of the United States. This, in turn, made them crucial in understanding the nature of a power that had become immensely relevant to Britain. In his inaugural lecture at University College London (UCL) in 1955, the British historian specialising in the United States, H. C. Allen,

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<sup>110</sup> John Dumbrell, 'Winston Churchill and American foreign relations: John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush', *Journal of transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2006), pp. 31-42.

assessed the place, role and power of the United States in the world since the Second World War and noted that:

Whether as individuals we welcome this situation, or whether we deplore it, it is certainly vital that we recognize its existence. It is no more than rudimentary common-sense to do our utmost to understand – if only to help us influence – this powerful nation, upon whose action the destiny of the whole mankind, and of ourselves above all people, depends, as it has depended perhaps upon no nation in recorded history. We must study the history of the United States: we dare do no other.<sup>111</sup>

As Michael Heale has argued, after the Second World War and in light of growing American power, British academics had turned to study American history because they came to realise America's profound influence on British and world affairs.<sup>112</sup> Allen's lecture left no doubt that he was amongst them. Within the study of American history, Allen thought, the Civil War was particularly important since it was a key that was to unlock the origins of his present-day United States. In 1965, he explicitly argued that it was especially the "war that made America great" because it modernised, industrialised and unified the United States.<sup>113</sup> His 1969 account of the British reaction to the Civil War was, *inter alia*, part of his endeavour to understand Britain's connection to the founding moment of the modern United States.<sup>114</sup>

The presence of Lincoln in British thought at the time was also a result of the American export of his image for purposes of public diplomacy. This made Lincoln's persona into a representation of America, which could be exploited by British commentators. The mode of thought prevalent in the United States Information Agency (USIA), the foremost exponent of American public diplomacy at the time, was

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<sup>111</sup> Allen, *American History in Britain* (London, 1956), p. 17.

<sup>112</sup> Heale, 'The British Discovery of American History: War, Liberalism and the Atlantic Connection', in: *Journal of American Studies*, 39 (2005), 357–69.

<sup>113</sup> Allen, 'The War that Made America Great', *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 Apr. 1965, no page number, in: LH 15/1/37, LHCMA.

<sup>114</sup> Allen, 'Civil War, Reconstruction, and Great Britain', in: Harold Hyman (ed.), *Heard Round the World: The Impact Abroad of the Civil War* (New York, 1969), pp. 3-96.

clear: cultural exchanges advance diplomatic relations and American foreign policy.<sup>115</sup> American officials believed that exporting a positive image of the United States through its history and culture would strengthen the American grip in the world at a time when it competed with the Soviet Union for spheres of influence. In Britain, American history and culture were, in a sense, injected into intellectual circles by the American agencies more than into any other sector of society. For one thing, the Americans encouraged the establishment of programmes of American history in British universities. In a memorandum from March 1959, embodying this trend, Donald Elgar of the International Educational Exchange Service (IES) recommended initiating a “lectureship at King’s College London in American studies” following the model at Leeds.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, due to financial strains, the American agencies focused specifically on the British educated elite. Carl Bode, American Cultural Attaché in London, wrote to Argus J. Tresidder, Cultural Affairs Planning Officer of the USIA, on 6 March 1959 that in light of budget problems, “we are probably better advised to concentrate on high culture rather than the broader, more general kind.”<sup>117</sup>

Of special import in this context is the fact that the Americans were at this time particularly concerned about racial tensions at home and about the way in which these undermined the positive image of the United States abroad. A USIA report from the mid 1960s revealed that issues of domestic race relations were the most influential factor in shaping the western-European educated elite’s image of the United States.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (Cambridge, 2008); Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, 2006).

<sup>116</sup> Elgar to Philip J. Conley, USIA/IOP, 27 Mar. 1959, USIA RG 306, Office of Plans/Cultural Affairs, P22: Program Files; 1953-1961, December 1958 Thru August 1959, Box 4, March 1959, NARA.

<sup>117</sup> Bode to Tresidder, *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 208-209.

Lincoln was recruited to tackle the danger posed by racial tensions at home to the reputation of America abroad. As Jay Sexton has shown, the USIA utilised Lincoln to project a positive image of the United States as a free, liberal, and egalitarian society during the Cold War and especially during the sesquicentennial celebrations for Lincoln's birth in 1959.<sup>119</sup> Through such representations of Lincoln the American agencies sought to project the everlasting American commitment to Lincoln's legacy of unity, freedom and equality. However, as Jack Pole's accounts of Lincoln showed, rather than reflecting positively on the post-Civil War United States, by the late 1950s Britons appealed to the sixteenth President to highlight the problematic reality of post war America. This was true especially on issues of race relations across the ocean.

Pole (1922-2010), then a lecturer in American history at UCL and reader in American history at Cambridge, wrote three essays on Lincoln between 1959 and 1964. Compared with his British predecessors, Pole's greatest innovation in his account of Lincoln was most visible in his analysis of the President's plans for Reconstruction. During the last phases of the war, he stressed, Lincoln aligned his policies more closely with the radicals in the Republican Party. From there Pole inferred that had Lincoln not been assassinated "[i]t is [...] by no means fanciful to believe that something closely resembling Radical Reconstruction would have been enacted under presidential leadership."<sup>120</sup> For Pole, Lincoln was by the end of the war a genuine freedom fighter, not only a great nationalist. Had he lived, a radical Reconstruction that would have guaranteed greater racial equality in America would have been conducted under an executive authority. By contrast, all previous British

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<sup>119</sup> Sexton, 'Projecting Lincoln, Projecting America', pp. 288-308.

<sup>120</sup> Pole, *Abraham Lincoln and the American Commitment*, A Lecture given in the University of Cambridge to mark the Centenary of the Death of Abraham Lincoln (Cambridge, 1966), p. 36. Pole followed this narrative also in his biography of Lincoln from 1964. See: Pole, *Abraham Lincoln* (London, 1964).

biographers of Lincoln – from Binns to Charnwood to Brogan – admired Lincoln for his appeasing tone towards the South and for his moderate plans for Reconstruction. Under this view, radical Reconstruction was to break away from Lincoln’s legacy. As Binns bluntly wrote: “After Lincoln’s death his policy was wrecked by the temper both of his successor and of the Northern and Southern parties [...]”<sup>121</sup>

Pole’s innovation was even greater in that he analysed Lincoln’s view on slavery and freedom in racial and political terms and thus kept it in its historical context. For Binns, racial freedom was translated into freedom of labour. To him slavery was but a previous manifestation of distorted labour relations, not a result of racist predispositions. As he had written: “black slavery of the plantation has given partial place to the industrial white slavery.”<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, Binns was critical of Gilded Age America for perpetuating immoral labour conditions. During the interwar period, the British used the idea of freedom in the context of Lincoln’s life in order to reiterate the need for national freedom and national unity. Drinkwater, for example, thought that freedom derived its very existence from the reality, unity and power of the nation. Both Britain and the United States, he wrote in an essay about Lincoln in 1920, had roots in the “mystical idea of coexistence” of individual freedom and national unity.<sup>123</sup> Conversely, for Pole, freedom in the context of Lincoln’s life denoted racial and political freedom. Accordingly, in his eyes, Reconstruction should have been fiercer and it should have advanced real racial equality rather than be the prologue for the reign of “Jim Crow”.

Pole’s analysis reflected a broader shift in the historiography of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Influenced by civil rights activists and contemporary

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<sup>121</sup> Binns, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 334.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> John Drinkwater, *Lincoln, the World Emancipator* (Boston, 1920), pp. 7-20.

developments in American society as well as contributing to their growth, historians came to see Reconstruction as a failure – not because it was a too radical endeavour taken against the South, however. Rather, Reconstruction was now seen as a failure because it was not radical enough and stopped short of bringing true change to the social and political status of the freed slaves and even further perpetuated past prejudice and racism.<sup>124</sup> These developments in American academia and society echoed loudly in Britain when confronted with issues of a similar nature.<sup>125</sup> When in the 1950s and 1960s concerns about race relations and civil rights came to the fore in Britain in light of growing immigration from the Commonwealth, Britons turned to the United States for lessons. The Race Relations Act of 1965 and especially those of 1968 and 1976 were largely an outcome of British perspectives of events in America during that time.<sup>126</sup> Pole himself was in contact with human rights activists in the United States in the 1950s, shortly before he became involved in drafting a scheme for a British anti-discrimination law.<sup>127</sup>

It is hard to determine the degree to which social and political developments in the civil rights era in the United States influenced Pole's works on Lincoln. He was a serious student of American history well before he published these works and his interest in the conflict was clearly also motivated by pure intellectualism. Nevertheless, the fact that contemporary British scholars seemed to have found the

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<sup>124</sup>For a detailed account of the historiography of the reconstruction see: Eric Foner, 'Reconstruction Revisited', *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1982) pp. 82-100; On the influence and relationship between the image of Lincoln in America and the Civil Rights movement see: Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman, 'History, Commemoration, and Belief: Abraham Lincoln in American Memory, 1945-2001', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (2005), pp. 135-67.

<sup>125</sup> See for example on Malcolm X visit in Britain in 1965: Joe Street, 'Malcolm X, Smethwick, and the Influence of the African American Freedom Struggle on British Race Relations in the 1960s', *Journal of Black Studies*, 38 (2008), pp. 932-47; more generally see: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, pp. 219-21.

<sup>126</sup> Erik Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 35-106.

<sup>127</sup> Information taken from the catalogue of Pole's papers in the Churchill Archive Centre, University of Cambridge.

Civil War interesting for its lessons about racism and race relations, especially in the United States, is beyond doubt. When Hugh Brogan listed the sources that influenced him whilst studying Lincoln and the Civil War, the most important of these was “the vast, confused, incomplete movement of the Black Revolution in the United States.”<sup>128</sup> “My own view”, Brogan stressed, “[...] is more or less neo-Abolitionist.”<sup>129</sup> Mary Ellison, too, who had written an influential study on the British response to the Civil War in 1972, turned to the study of the war as a graduate student following an earlier, undergraduate, interest. She had become interested in the negative impact of racism and she wanted to focus on race in the United States. In this, Ellison was encouraged by her doctoral supervisor in UCL, H. C. Allen, who seemed to have held a similar outlook about the Gordian knot connecting the Civil War and the history of race relations in the United States.<sup>130</sup>

In keeping with the above and considering the motivation behind the USIA’s export of Lincoln, the British studies of the President and of the war suggested that the American public diplomacy endeavour in the late 1950s and 1960s backfired. Pole, as other British scholars, reviewed the Civil War through Lincoln’s life autonomously, and reached the conclusion that Reconstruction had ultimately betrayed the President’s legacy of racial equality in America. Admiring Lincoln, Pole’s work was critical of the post-Civil War United States. The British public, and certainly academics, were aware of events and developments in the United States and they saw well beyond what the American agencies wished them to see. A USIA report, which examined coverage of the riots in Alabama in 1963 in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Sunday Telegraph*, concluded that, “West European press treatment of the Birmingham situation

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<sup>128</sup> Brogan, *Abraham Lincoln* (1974, [3<sup>rd</sup> ed.]), pp. viii-ix.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Personal correspondence between Prof. Ellison and the author.

continues to show remarkable sophistication and unusual understanding of the conflicting drives behind the racial struggle and the immense intricacy of the problem.”<sup>131</sup> Whilst the USIA asked the British to focus on Lincoln, British scholars could, and did, put his life-story in the broader context of the Civil War and of American history and thus depicted a different picture of the United States from the one projected from across the ocean.

Although British intellectuals also appealed to the Civil War in order to understand the United States, they no longer used it for cultural public diplomacy. As noted, the notion of the Special Relationship – of which Allen, for example, was an utmost advocate – largely replaced the Civil War in British eyes as an apt means to propel and advance Anglo-American affinities, shared values and historical links.<sup>132</sup> Sustaining its importance as a key to understand the origins of the United States, the Civil War was no longer a historical event that could, from the perspective of British intellectuals, define or influence contemporary Anglo-American relations.

As an academic subject that had no impact on contemporary Anglo-American affairs, the British reaction to the Civil War could now be revised in a way that undermined the work of Charnwood and his contemporaries. In the late 1950s, British labour historian Royden Harrison challenged the prevailing wisdom that British workers had supported the Union during the Civil War.<sup>133</sup> Mary Ellison forcefully propelled this argument even further in 1972.<sup>134</sup> The Civil War thus became a less appropriate event to celebrate Anglo-American relations than it was before. Whilst

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<sup>131</sup>RG 306 USIA, Office of Research, Entry P. 142: Research Reports; 1960-1999, R-51-63 Thru R-90-6, Box 14, Report R-84-63 (A), May 13, 1963: Reaction to Racial Tension in Birmingham, Alabama. NARA.

<sup>132</sup> See for example, Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (London, 1954).

<sup>133</sup> Harrison, ‘British Labour and the Confederacy’, *International Review of Social History*, 2 (1957), pp. 78-105.

<sup>134</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago, 1972).

Charnwood had sought to downplay the Anglo-American tensions of the 1860s by showing that the British largely supported – or ought to have supported – the Union and the United States, Harrison and Ellison showed that even amongst the workers – Charnwood’s fig leaf – there existed strong support for the Confederacy. However, unlike Charnwood, contemporary scholars did not seek to make the war a symbol of Anglo-American affinities or endeavour to use it in order to advance British goals in the United States. They were thus free to revise previous assumptions in this field.

From the 1960s, an academic approach, based on archival research and professional standards removed propaganda and politics from British historians’ works. This marked a change from the interwar period. During the 1920s and the 1930s, with the exception of Brogan’s work, the dominant representations of Lincoln in Britain were fashioned by non-professional historians. Charnwood and Binns explicitly stressed that they did not engage with archival research and that their works did not ask to add to the historical study of the Civil War or even of Lincoln. Drinkwater’s works on Lincoln equally lacked professional dimensions and aspiration. Rather, these works were invested with ideology and political aspirations and Lincoln’s life were harnessed for ends that were not necessarily academic.

No longer a tool in the service of British public diplomacy, the Civil War was still central to understanding the birth and rise of the modern United States and the British relation to it. In addition, the war and its President could well be used to reflect upon issues of civil rights and race relations, in Britain but especially in the United States. In these, Churchill and the Second World War could not, and indeed did not take the place of Lincoln and the American Civil War in British thought.

### III

By the mid 1920s Lincoln had become an admired figure across the Atlantic, but British intellectuals appealed to him for diverse and at times opposing reasons. For some he was a democratic radical, for others he was a moderate reformer, for others still he was a constitutionalist conservative. For some he was a peace advocate, for others a determined war-leader; some regarded him as a nationalist, others as a civil rights fighter. That a number of these representations could not be accommodated together became clear when British accounts of Lincoln seemed to undermine each other. In his depiction of Lincoln as a peace advocate Denis Brogan challenged Charnwood's war-president; Charnwood's war-president replaced Binns' labour patron; and Pole's abolitionist Lincoln stood in opposition to Brogan's moderate sectional appeaser. However, whilst British intellectuals did not agree on Lincoln's image and heritage, they all thought that relevant lessons about contemporary British concerns could be drawn from the historical legacy of the American President – pertaining to democratic changes, social reforms, wartime leadership and civil rights.

One of the main concerns for twentieth-century British intellectuals was the United States: its place and role in the world and its impact on British life. Accordingly, intellectuals turned to Lincoln also in order to comment on, understand, explain and even influence the United States or Anglo-American relations. Lord Charnwood used Lincoln and the Civil War to advance warmer Anglo-American connections; Henry Binns criticised the Gilded Age United States through Lincoln's life; H. C. Allen studied the war in order to better understand the American rise to world power; and Jack Pole and Mary Ellison looked into the war and Lincoln's life for the roots of post-Civil War race relations in the United States.

In keeping with the above findings, it is clear that British intellectuals turned to the image of the American President autonomously and that they mastered Lincoln's history to such a degree that enabled them to fashion his image according to their own understandings, and, crucially, according to their own needs. Charnwood's narrative of Lincoln, for example, was clearly a British representation of Lincoln, created for British purposes. His representation of Lincoln in a way that the American public found admirable (even more so than contemporary American representations) demonstrated Charnwood's ability to control and manipulate Lincoln's image. Similarly, the fact that British intellectuals did not accept the American representation of Lincoln as a symbol of racial equality and liberal progress in the United States demonstrates that they formed their own views of Lincoln, his legacy and his place in the story of the Civil War. These views did not always correlate with the way in which the Americans viewed him or with how they wished others to view him.

The British appropriation and rejection of certain representations of Lincoln sheds light on what made the sixteenth American President unique in British thought. For one thing, Lincoln was a multifaceted romantic hero and a political genius whose life generated an array of legacies. He was the war leader that Charnwood saw as much as he was the freedom fighter that Pole saw. He was an advocate of democracy as radicals saw him, and a constitutionalist as conservatives saw him. Moreover, throughout his presidency, Lincoln was confronted with numerous challenges that twentieth-century British intellectuals came to see as similar to the challenges that they themselves faced. They thought that in a similar way to Lincoln, they too had to decide on issues of institutional democratic reforms, changes in labour relations, the call to arms and ethnic rights.

At the same time, Lincoln was also an American symbol. In the aftermath of the Great War, as Adam Smith has noted, George Bernard Shaw saw “a cult of Lincoln in England.”<sup>135</sup> That local “cult of Lincoln” was closely related to what David Knowles saw at about the same time as the “the cult of Lincoln [...] in America”.<sup>136</sup> The rise of Lincoln to prominence in American culture made him a prism through which to observe and communicate with the United States. He was the American President who stood at the head of the nation when it was reborn, and by the early twentieth century, he had become the personification of the modern United States. That is not to say that the British were fascinated with Lincoln because the Americans exported his image as an American hero. However, that Lincoln became an agreed-upon American symbol which the British could manipulate and use was central to the appeal Lincoln held.

Since 1920 a statue of Lincoln has been standing in Parliament Square in London, a sole foreigner amongst statues of British historical icons. Even amongst intellectuals, few today know the story of the statue and few could tell the story of Lincoln’s life or even just of his presidency in detail. However, if asked, any educated person would surely mention that the man was an American President who freed the slaves in the United States and led his country through its greatest trial in the Civil War. Many other aspects of his life and policies remain debatable at best, where others remain obscure to most. This only adds to the romantic aura and flexible legacy of Lincoln. That Lincoln was a romantic American hero and that he led the United States through its rebirth into modernity and freedom would always give his image in a unique and irreplaceable position in British thought.

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<sup>135</sup> Smith, ‘The “Cult” of Abraham Lincoln, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Knowles, *The American Civil War*, p. 202.

## Chapter Four – The Civil War in British Popular Culture, Part I: Films and Television

Reviewing *Santa Fé Trail* in 1941, the *Picturegoer* stressed that the film “is wholly American in spirit and therefore not extraordinarily attractive to British audiences.”<sup>1</sup> A film about the road to the Civil War, it seemed, was too American to be of special interest to the British filmgoer. Yet by the 1960s the American historical conflict had become an integral part of the popular culture in Britain and some even took it upon themselves to re-live it in historical re-enactments. The next two chapters address the origin of this phenomenon and suggest that rather than a cause for detachment, the American origins of the Civil War were in fact one of the primary sources of its appeal in Britain.

This chapter focuses on the popular British reception of Civil War films, the foremost agent in transmitting representations of the conflict from the United States to Britain. The Civil War was a favoured cinematic theme in Hollywood and according to one count, 359 films about the conflict were produced in the 1910s alone.<sup>2</sup> The few studies on the appeal of films about the Civil War to the British focused on the ability of the local audience to relate to what they saw on the screen as part of their own British experience. Michael Hammond, for example, has argued that British advertisements for *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915) tried to attract audiences and direct their understanding of the film by drawing parallels between the Civil War and the Great War.<sup>3</sup> For example, promotional posters proclaimed the film

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<sup>1</sup>*Picturegoer*, 21 Jan. 1941, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>John B. Kuiper, ‘Civil War Films: A Quantitative Description of a Genre’, *The Journal of the Society of Cinematologists*, Vol. 4/5 (1964/1965), pp. 81-83. These numbers, however, vary. For another count see: Bruce Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film* (New York, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Hammond, “‘A Soul Stirring Appeal to Every Briton’: The Reception of “The Birth of a Nation” in Britain’, (1915-1916), *Film History* Vol. 11, No. 3, Early Cinema (1999), pp. 362-5. In a later version of this essay, Hammond added a brief account of the reception of *The Crisis* (1917), another Civil War film. See: Hammond, ‘Letters to America: A Case Study in the Exhibition and

to be showing the regeneration of the United States after its war and equated this with a similar process that awaits Britain after *its* war.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, according to Helen Taylor, British and American women turned to the character of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) because it represented values, such as resourcefulness and determination, which they attributed to themselves.<sup>5</sup>

That Britons could have seen the Civil War and the values that were embedded in it as relevant and familiar was important in explaining the war's appeal to them. In this regard, much more needs to be said about the way in which the British turned the American war of the 1860s into an event relevant to contemporary British affairs by translating and adapting what they saw on the screen to their present-day lives. Moreover, the British ability to turn the Civil War "British" and thus relevant to them served only as a partial explanation of their interest in the American conflict. This chapter further contends that the British interacted with the Civil War also because it presented them with scenarios and values that were foreign to them and that they did not want to translate. More specifically, it is shown that Civil War films attracted the British public also because they presented an American story that, Britons sometime took special efforts to stress, was particularly American and not British.

Having said that, this chapter argues that British filmgoers found the Civil War attractive primarily because it was entertaining and it focuses on the British appeal to Civil War cinema as a form of entertainment. It is shown that films about

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Reception of American Films in Britain, 1914-1918', in: Andrew Higson, (ed.), *Young and Innocent?: The Cinema in Britain, 1896-1930* (Exeter, 2002), pp. 135-19.

<sup>4</sup> Hammond, "'A Soul Stirring Appeal to Every Briton'", p. 356.

<sup>5</sup>Helen Taylor, *Scarlett's Women: Gone With the Wind and its Female Fans* (London, 1989). A later study by Taylor deals also with the sequel to *GWTW* and *Roots*, discussed later in this chapter. See: Taylor, *Circling Dixie: Contemporary Southern Culture through a Transatlantic Lens* (New Brunswick, 2001), esp. pp. 28-62.

the American conflict allowed for a thrilling cinematic experience of which a view of the United States and the ability to relate to the films' and to the war's message and values were only a part. The other components of this experience were the epic proportions of the films and of the war-story that they presented.

Methodologically, this chapter poses two challenges. The main challenge is to reconstruct the views about the Civil War of ordinary British filmgoers who attended a film about the conflict. One way to recover this information was to use Mass-Observation (M-O) records. The work of this institution, founded in 1937, with the aim of recording everyday life in Britain, provided evidence of people's views of contemporary events in the form of reports, diaries and surveys.<sup>6</sup> Some of these documents contain first-person accounts of people who watched a Civil War film and their thoughts about it. M-O records, however, are limited. Established in 1937, the institution restricted its work significantly between 1949 and 1981, meaning that documentation of this period is minimal. Columns and letters to the newspapers help fill this void, as do BBC viewers' reports and surveys. However, the main corpus of primary sources in this chapter is reviews of Civil War films in the main and most influential film magazines and journals. These had a wide circulation and covered every Civil War film examined here. That is, of course, not to argue that what critics thought of a film necessarily reflected the views of the wider public. As seen in what follows, sometimes critics and people's views stood in opposition to one another. Accordingly, this chapter restricts its findings to the available sources, dealing chiefly with the way the war was portrayed and used publicly by critics. However, where possible, the chapter does examine the difference between the way British critics

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<sup>6</sup> Nick Hubble, *Mass-Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 1-16.

represented the Civil War and the way ordinary viewers did so in order to cast additional light on the diverse uses that the British found for the conflict.

The second challenge is the abovementioned vast number of Civil War films coming from the United States. As coverage of every film about the conflict is impossible, the chapter focuses on three milestones, roughly dividing into constitutive periods in the cinematic representation of the war. It begins with an analysis of the British reception of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, which first fixed the Civil War in British cinemas and possibly in British popular culture as a whole. The second section looks into the British response to films about Abraham Lincoln from the late 1930s alongside the profoundly different reaction to *Gone with the Wind* in the early 1940s. The third section examines the rise of the representations of the Civil War from an African American point-of-view in cinema and television and it pays heed especially to Alistair Cooke's *America* (1972), *Roots* (1977) and *Glory* (1989).

## I

The British public had little contact with the Civil War between the war's end and the first decades of the twentieth century. As the guns fell silent in America, Britain ceased to serve as a battleground for American propaganda and the plethora of information that flooded the British public sphere during the war turned into a drizzle of popular representations of the conflict. The British public largely lost sight of the war. In 1915 that changed. Half a century after Appomattox, D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* cemented the Civil War in British popular culture, where it stayed for the decades to come. Resonating loudly in Britain, much of the film's power and long lasting impact across the Atlantic stemmed from the place and circumstances of its own birth.

Thomas Dixon Jr. was a fervent Lost Cause soldier in the battle over the Civil War's memory in the United States around the turn of the century. In 1905, Dixon – a North Carolinian intellectual – wrote *The Clansman*, the novel upon which *The Birth of a Nation* was primarily to be based, to counter Harriet Beecher Stowe's narrative in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>7</sup> The latter, Dixon believed, had challenged the Southern narrative that argued that slavery was a benign institution from which both slaves and slaves owner had benefited. In its stead, Dixon demurred, through the agency of popular culture, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* rooted in the United States a distorted representation of a decadent South. Accordingly, Dixon's work glorified the South and its cause in the Civil War, especially through a romanticised portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan as the saviour of the Southern way of life during Reconstruction. In 1914, Griffith – son of a Confederate soldier and likewise a Southern exponent – bought the rights to Dixon's work and launched the production of *The Birth of a Nation*.

*The Birth of a Nation* was a grandiose film on every level. The final version that was released in the United States was 12,000 feet long and it was over three hours in duration. Its production, too, was massive, and involved numerous actors, musicians, filmmakers and supporting personnel together with a vast amount of military equipment, specially designed costumes, and specifically designated sets.<sup>8</sup> The film featured enormous battle scenes on a scale that was never seen before, alongside stretching its coverage to include not only the battles, higher policies and ramifications but also the impact of the war on the home front. It told the story of an epic war and covered a historical period of almost twenty years.<sup>9</sup> For its scale,

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<sup>7</sup> Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation: A History of "the most controversial motion picture of all time"* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 35-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-109.

<sup>9</sup> The film started on the eve of the war, unlike the novel (*The Clansman*) that began in the war's aftermath.

resonance and artistic value, *The Birth of a Nation* was a milestone in cinematic history. As Melvyn Stokes has argued for example, “through its success, *The Birth of a Nation* helped mold the future course of American cinema.”<sup>10</sup>

In content, Griffith’s film followed Dixon’s narrative and even more so the latter’s sentiments and was a combative defence of the South’s identity and integrity. It was, according to John Hope Franklin, out-and-out Southern propaganda.<sup>11</sup> *The Birth of a Nation* claimed that disloyal African Americans and radical Northerners were to blame for the war that had destroyed the South – an idyllic, moral and peaceful society of slaves and slave owners – and resulted in the death of over 600,000 Americans. Presenting the tragic war at length, much of the film’s weight was in its account of the war’s aftermath. Reconstruction was presented as a conspiracy of radical Republicans and freed slaves to financially, politically, socially and morally rob the devastated South. Facing the further devastation and exploitation of their region, according to the film, white Southerners formed the Ku Klux Klan to redeem the South.

Yet *The Birth of a Nation* was not about Southern supremacy. Although it was an outright defence of the South, and despite its attack on the North’s aggression, the film conveyed that the South sought peace and cross-sectional white brotherhood. “Liberty and union”, read the film’s final slide, “one and inseparable, now and forever!”<sup>12</sup> The film was not about the South being morally or otherwise better than the North, but rather about the South being as good as the North. According to the narrative, in the horrendous war the South showed that it was no less patriotic than the

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<sup>10</sup>Stokes, D. W. *Griffith’s The Birth of a Nation*, p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Franklin, “‘Birth of a Nation’: Propaganda as History”, *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1979), pp. 429-32.

<sup>12</sup>*The Birth of a Nation*. Underlined in original.

North and no less brave and moral. No less than the North, the South wanted peace and American unity. In this, *The Birth of a Nation* was part of the South's application to re-enter the Union and become, again, part of the American heritage of liberty, unity and democracy from which it was expelled after the Civil War by, *inter alia*, the war narrative of the North.<sup>13</sup> The latter emphasised that the South sought to break the Union and that it brought war upon the United States for the notorious cause of maintaining the institution of slavery. *The Birth of a Nation* argued that the South asked none of these, but rather that it was forced to fight for its right to preserve its way of life in the Union.

In order to communicate this message, the South in Griffith's film fought for its identity and integrity in national terms and within a national discourse. In particular, it emphasised that the South wanted liberty and unity, as shown above. These, in turn, were historically seen in the United States as neither Northern nor Southern, but as American ideals. By showing that the South had wanted liberty, unity and peace – agreeable all-American values – *The Birth of a Nation* represented it as the embodiment of the American identity. Applying to re-enter the national heritage, the South marked African Americans as truly un-American in its stead. "The bringing of the African to America", read the film's second slide, "planted the first seed of disunion."<sup>14</sup> Coming from a place that was not America, African Americans brought to the United States the un-American seed of war and disunion.

The film's reception in the United States showed that the South's application was successful. Racist and biased, the significance of the film lay in its loyal reflection of the context within which it was created. As David Blight has shown, by

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<sup>13</sup>Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865 to 1913* (New York, 1987), pp. 5-6.

<sup>14</sup>*The Birth of a Nation*.

the war's semi-centennial, the cultural quarrel over the conflict's memory had come to an alleged end with sectional reconciliation emerging as the war's dominant representation and legacy.<sup>15</sup> *The Birth of a Nation* reflected and propelled this spirit.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, and with protests against it notwithstanding, the film gained wide national endorsement.<sup>17</sup> Testifying to its cross-sectional appeal was the fact that it was extremely well received in the white North – arguably even more so than in the South.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, as shown in chapter three, during the Civil War's semi-centennial the historical conflict became an official American symbol, a motion to which *The Birth of a Nation* greatly contributed when it promoted a consensual representation of the war and became one of its most recognised manifestations.<sup>19</sup> Thus in 1915 *The Birth of a Nation* became the official representation of the Civil War in popular culture exactly as the war was being unanimously accepted as the date of birth of the modern, unified United States. It is under these conditions that it reached Britain.

Arriving in Britain on 27 September 1915, *The Birth of a Nation* instantly entered the acceptable mainstream. If the film generated any objection at all, it was marginal.<sup>20</sup> Judging by the reviews, the British found the film and the war attractive in the first place as an entertaining event that in its scale had no precedent. “Eighteen

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<sup>15</sup>Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 394-7.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Rogin, “‘The Sword Became a Flashing Vision’: D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*”, *Representations*, No. 9, Special Issue: American Culture Between the Civil War and World War I, (Winter, 1985), pp. 150-5.

<sup>17</sup> For protests against the film see for example: Paul McEwan, ‘Lawyers, Bibliographies, and the Klan: Griffith’s Resources in the Censorship Battle Over *The Birth of a Nation* in Ohio’, *Film History: An International Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2008), pp. 357-66; Arthur Lennig, ‘Myth and Fact: The Reception of “*The Birth of a Nation*”’, *Film History*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Motion Picture Making and Exhibiting (2004), pp. 124-137; and Stokes, *D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation**, pp. 235-49 and 228-9.

<sup>18</sup>Akiyo Ito Okuda, “‘A Nation Is Born’: Thomas Dixon’s Vision of White Nationhood and His Northern Supporters’, *The Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep. 2009), pp. 214-16 and 223-4.

<sup>19</sup>Blight, *Race and Reunion*, pp. 395-7.

<sup>20</sup> Melvyn Stokes, ‘Race, Politics, and Censorship: D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* in France, 1916-1923’, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Fall, 2010), pp. 20-21.

Thousand Actors In A Mighty Film Spectacle”, noted one review;<sup>21</sup> The film features “[...] extraordinary war scenes, which are presented on a scale never before attempted [...]”, stressed another;<sup>22</sup> “the most expensive photo-play ever yet produced [with] no fewer than 18,000 performers and 3,000 horses being used in the production”, wrote a third.<sup>23</sup> The British were thrilled by *The Birth of a Nation* because Griffith’s film was a landmark in cinematic history and it set new standards for popular entertainment. Subsequently, through the most spectacular film of the era, the Civil War was presented and viewed accordingly, as an incomparable spectacle.

On another, related level, Britons were excited to have an overview of the famous, spectacular American war about which they in fact knew very little. The film, noted the *Bioscope*, “does more [...] than present us with a series of mighty historical events. It links those events together and indicates their place as part of one great purpose.”<sup>24</sup> Since the days of the war, the Americans had presented the British public with fragmented information about and partial images of what was often seen as detached wartime events. In 1915, Griffith’s film gathered all these events and projected a single account on a single canvas. As such, the film was seen as a valid authoritative lesson in American history. None other than the American President and former president of Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson himself, was known for having approved of the narrative, and several slides in the film featured excerpts from his *History of the American People* (1901). *The Athenaeum* for example, thus stressed that the film helped in “correcting what may be a widely held false idea of the causes which led to the American Civil War [...]”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the *Review of Reviewers* saw it

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<sup>21</sup>*Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 2 Oct. 1915, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup>*Bioscope*, 9 Sep. 1915, p. 1114.

<sup>23</sup>*Observer*, 26 Sep. 1915, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup>*Bioscope*, 9 Sep. 1915, p. 1114.

<sup>25</sup>*The Athenaeum*, 9 Oct., 1915, p. 250.

“as an absorbing lesson in history [...] [with] a profound educational value. Few Englishmen have more than a nodding acquaintance with the great war of North and South; fewer still know anything of the ghastly time of ‘Reconstruction’ [...]”<sup>26</sup>

As the above reviews suggested, the British found the film and the Civil War attractive also because they now saw the conflict as a holistic event with “one great purpose” that thus had an “educational value” for them. As argued earlier, *The Birth of a Nation* conveyed notions of unity, gallantry, selflessness, sacrifice for a higher cause, white supremacy and nationalism, which in the context of the historical and dramatic plot were associated with the American South. During the Great War the British found these values familiar and relevant and they translated them according to their domestic experiences. As one critic bluntly wrote:

Just as the unbridled passions of the blacks threatened to engulf the New World in its terrible flood of lust and horror, so the whole civilization, and especially Europe, is now faced with an even greater horror through the mechanisation of the Modern Huns. Let all learn from this production the lessons of fortitude, courage, and tenacity.<sup>27</sup>

In the above example, black-white relations in the United States – Dixon and Griffith’s original concern – were translated to denote white-white British-German relations. Colour was thus translated to nationality and ethnicity. To appropriate the values that were embedded in the Civil War, as these were presented to them in *The Birth of a Nation*, the British detached these values from their historical and national context and ascribed to them universal and a-historical validity. A critic for the *Bioscope* opened his article on the film by stressing that:

In the first place, it may be as well to point out that this picture is not a work of merely local interest [...] Its value as a wonderfully accurate reconstruction of a definite historical episode is so far transcended by its power and fascination as a

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<sup>26</sup>*Review of Reviewers*, Dec., 1915, p. 499.

<sup>27</sup>*The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 3 June 1916, p. 6.

mighty epic dealing with abstract human forces that its appeal will not be confined to Americans [...]<sup>28</sup>

Of the universal values that were embedded in the war with which this reviewer could have related were “sacrifices and sufferings.” Seeing themselves as undergoing similar national labour pains, and required for similar bravery, patriotism and unity as those that were presented in Griffith’s film, the British public turned the Civil War into a familiar experience and saw in *The Birth of a Nation* its visual account.

Whilst the British found that *The Birth of a Nation* presented them with experiences that seemed relevant and familiar to them, a final source for the film’s appeal was that it was a foreign film, which told a story of a foreign war and of foreign people. More specifically, the film and the war were appealing because they were from and about the United States. “We are introduced”, noted one laudatory review, “to every conceivable sphere of life and to every possible class and type of American men and women.”<sup>29</sup> Another critic noted that the film was “a work of great fascination, for it depicts [...] the development of the United States from the days of slavery and the great war of the North v. South.”<sup>30</sup> In 1915 few Britons were yet to have experienced the United States directly and for many it remained far and mysterious. As archetypal American products, both the Civil War and the film itself generated interest and even exotic wonder. The *Times*, for example, noted that the screening of an American film in a British theatre “is an event of considerable theatrical interest and significance.”<sup>31</sup> The Ku Klux Klan, this reviewer then added in puzzlement, was a “[...] strange, romantic, somehow intensely American affair [...]

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<sup>28</sup>*Bioscope*, 9 Sep. 1915, p. 1114.

<sup>29</sup>*Pictures and the Picturegoer*, 2 Oct. 1915, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup>*Western Daily Press*, Oct. 3, 1916, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup>*Times*, 23 Mar. 1916, p. 11.

whose members [were] disguised in strange medieval garments [...].”<sup>32</sup> The British audience went to see *The Birth of a Nation* because it presented a plausible image true to its name: the birth and rise of their contemporary, related yet distant, powerful United States.

Therefore, the significance of British acceptance of *The Birth of a Nation* did not lie solely with the local audience’s ability to make it British. Rather it was also rooted in Britons’ keenness to appropriate American culture and identity, as such. As discussed in previous chapters, in an unprecedented position of requiring aid during the Great War, America rose sharply in prominence within the British horizon. It was also during this time, in not an unrelated way, that the United States became an object of interest and potential emulation for the British on an ideological level. As Douglas Lorimer has argued, between the Civil War and the first decades of the twentieth century the notion of an Anglo-Saxon race had emerged with great vigour on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>33</sup> This common consciousness was part of the basis for the positive British experience of the United States and of *The Birth of a Nation*. “The production”, stressed one reviewer, drawing Britain and the United States together under the same title, “has a lesson for all of us of the Anglo-Saxon race at this time [...].”<sup>34</sup> Representing a nation that had become increasingly close and relevant to them, the Civil War was an apparatus allowing Britons to better understand and thus align themselves with the United States.

That is not to say that the British were blind to the presentation of the awful war and of the racial tensions in the United States, or that they could have related to

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<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1978), pp. 202-11.

<sup>34</sup>*The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 3 June 1916, p. 6.

every aspect of the film, of the war or of the American life. The *Athenaeum*, for example, noted that whilst the film cast a new light on the causes for the Civil War, this aspect of the narrative “does not appeal to us [...]” because it was not relevant.<sup>35</sup> Through American films, Britons could and indeed did see beyond the triumphant story of the United States’ rise to global power. As one M-O respondent noted:

By far the most lasting impression gained, and the most informative obtained, was from American films, which proved to be the greatest media for showing to the world the American way of life, its aims, its beliefs, its policies as well as its triumphs and its problems.<sup>36</sup>

*The Birth of a Nation* certainly presented some of the United States’ problems, especially regarding race relations.

Outright negative reflections on the American society or on the Civil War, however, were hard to find in British reviews of *The Birth of a Nation*. The British used the drama and romance and the redemptive climax of the Civil War to construct a positive image of a better post-war modern United States. “The audience”, reported one reviewer of the film’s première at the Royal Theatre in Exeter “was fascinated and spell-bound as the drama, with all its awful realities of civil war and racial antagonism, with the lighter touches of love and pathos humour and merriment was unfolded”. It was, he therefore concluded, “the most terrible, yet glorious, epochs of American history.”<sup>37</sup> Even the advertisements, said another critic, “give no idea of the great human interest aroused in this extraordinary story of romance, love, and patriotism interwoven with the pictorial record of the history of the United States.”<sup>38</sup>

The British saw *The Birth of a Nation* as Griffith wanted them to see it and as the Americans generally saw it.

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<sup>35</sup>*Athenaeum*, 9 Oct. 1915, p. 250.

<sup>36</sup>Attitudes to USA: M-O in the 80s – Autumn 1984 Directive Americans Men A-Z, R 456, 17.1.85. in: Mass-Observation Archive, The University of Sussex.

<sup>37</sup>*The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 3 June 1916, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup>*Western Daily Press*, Oct. 3, 1916, p. 7.

That the British saw the film in the same way as its creator had intended did not mean that they viewed it passively. To argue this would be to undermine one of this thesis' main premises, contradicting the ample evidence to the contrary presented so far, and to miss a key point in the British utilisation of the Civil War through its American representation in *The Birth of a Nation*. The British could have seen and interpreted the film, the Civil War and the representation of the United States differently. In France, for example, the screening of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1916 generated a fierce protest and antagonism.<sup>39</sup> The French were disturbed by its pacifist message, its racist tone and the realistic violence that was presented in it. While having watched precisely the same film, the British, based upon concrete need, Anglo-Saxon sentiments and ideological common ground, represented the Civil War as a glorious American affair with which they could have – indeed with which they wanted to – associate themselves. Put differently, the British representation of the Civil War served to draw the countries closer together (at least ideologically) and propel ideas and sentiments Britons considered important at the time.

In 1915 the Civil War achieved a place in British popular culture as a spectacular and thus highly attractive and entertaining event. It was appealing also as a war with which the British public was not fully familiar, but which presented values with which it could relate. In addition, the Civil War was an American symbol through which Britons could align themselves with the American experience and draw parallels between the United States and their country. In sum, in 1915 the British public turned to the Civil War because it was both entertaining and edifying, because it was both familiar and foreign, because it was grandiose and romantic and because it was a key to explain the modern, their contemporary United States.

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<sup>39</sup>Stokes, 'Race, Politics, and Censorship', pp. 19-38.

## II

During the interwar period and as the Second World War approached and, indeed, arrived, the British continued to turn to the Civil War. As before, the war fascinated the British for its scale, romance, the values it presented and for its American pedigree. However, unlike the reception of *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915, this period, during which Anglo-Saxon sentiments largely faded and Anglo-American cooperation was less common on the international stage, saw Britons begin to utilise the American conflict publicly both for drawing parallels between Britain and the United States as well as for emphasising the divide between the countries. In both cases, it was critical for the British who represented the Civil War that it was an archetypal American symbol and a milestone in the constitution of the modern United States.

As the fourth decade of the twentieth century dawned, as during the Great War itself, the British used the Civil War as evidence of common values shared with the Americans. As was evident in their reception of films about Lincoln, what Britons found most appealing were the films' celebration of the American belief in freedom and the presentation of a fight for democracy. Thus for example, on 31 August 1939, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* saw in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939) "the glorification of democracy and its ideals [...]"<sup>40</sup> Another critic noted that *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (in Britain *Spirit of the People*, John Cromwell, 1940) was important "both as entertainment and as education, while its propaganda value in the present state of world crisis is incalculable."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, British critics emphasised the films' American origins and stressed that Britain and the United States shared the values that the films conveyed. "For although it deals with another country's history", noted one

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<sup>40</sup>*Monthly Film Bulletin*, 31 Aug. 1939, p. 164.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, Mar. 6, 1940, p. 10.

reviewer about *Spirit of the People*, “its theme is universal and its effect far-reaching.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, *Today’s Cinema* wrote that although *Lincoln in the White House* (William C. McGann, 1939) was an American film, “The Gettysburg Speech brings to conclusion a subject that completely transcends mere American appeal [...]”<sup>43</sup> On the verge of a global conflict against fascism, and as American support was becoming crucial, the British willingly stressed their allegiances to values – and democracy above all – that in the context of Lincoln’s life were associated with the United States.

In many senses, there was little requiring British translation in American films about Lincoln and the Civil War because through these films the Americans projected and exported these very ideas so pressing in the British psyche at the time. The representation of the Civil War as a war that Americans fought in the name of democracy and freedom was becoming a main theme in the United States during this time and films about the conflict conveyed this message without the British having to search for it. *Lincoln in the White House*, for example, opens with the final clauses of Lincoln’s first inaugural speech, expressing the President’s hopes to avoid war; it then moves on to show Lincoln kneeling before the Declaration of Independence as he hears about the bombardment of Fort Sumter; shortly afterwards Lincoln is shown issuing the Emancipation Proclamation; and the short 20-minute educational film ends with Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, a hymn of praise for democracy.<sup>44</sup> The film was thus all about the coming of the war against fascism and about the need to fight, when all other solutions have failed, for freedom and democracy.

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<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>*Today’s Cinema News and Property Gazette*, 18 Feb. 1939, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup>*Lincoln in the White House*, (Warner Bros. Pictures).

Furthermore, films about Lincoln often conveyed that the United States shared the British view on global affairs and was ready to take its place next to Britain in the coming war. The anti-isolationist tone of *Spirit of the People*, for example, must have been an encouraging sign for the British, heralding the end of the United States' non-intervention policy of the 1930s. According to the film, in his famous debate with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln was explicit about his views regarding the government's moral responsibility to actively spread freedom and democracy. Responding to Douglas' policy of Popular Sovereignty, the cinematic Lincoln professed: "That is the conclusion towards which the advocates of slavery are driving us: 'Let each state mind its own business,' says Judge Douglas. 'Why stir up trouble?' This is the complacent policy of indifference to evil, and that policy I cannot but hate."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Robert E. Sherwood's 1938 play, upon which the film was based, was an outright anti-isolationist work that marked its author's change of heart, from an interwar pacifist to an ardent advocate of America's intervention in global affairs.<sup>46</sup> "I feel", he noted in his diary on 21 September 1938, "that I must start to battle for one thing: the end of our isolation."<sup>47</sup> The British must have been delighted to hear that Lincoln, the prototypical American, whose legacy according to American films reflected the American spirit, could not have advocated "indifference to evil." As was the case in their reception of *The Birth of a Nation*, then, the British often saw American films about the Civil War as the Americans had intended.

Again, however, that is not to say that the British critics were passive. They actively reconstructed the meaning of the Civil War and chose independently from the films' American messages those they found most relevant. For example, both *Spirit of*

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<sup>45</sup>*Spirit of the People*, (Max Gordon Plays & Pictures Corporation).

<sup>46</sup>John Mason Brown, *The Worlds of Robert E. Sherwood: Mirror to His Times, 1896-1939* (New York, 1965), pp. 382-4.

<sup>47</sup>21 Sep. 1938, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 384.

*the People* and *Young Mr. Lincoln* were as much about the Depression Era United States as they were about democracy's battle against fascism.<sup>48</sup> "Thank God we live under a system by which men have the right to strike", stressed Lincoln, assailing slavery in his cinematic debate with Stephen Douglas in *Spirit of the People*.<sup>49</sup> Putting these words in Lincoln's mouth, words which he did not say during the debates, Sherwood had created Lincoln as a Rooseveltian New Dealer, in accord with Sherwood's own contemporary stances. However, for the British public in 1939 and early 1940 this Lincoln was less relevant and only seldom did reviewers address this aspect of his personality and policy.

Whilst finding the Civil War appealing as a result of common Anglo-American ideology, the British turned to the war also in order to distinguish Britain from the United States and construct their national identity as a contrast to that of the United States. Nowhere was this more evident than in the British reception of *Gone with the Wind*, the foremost Civil War film of the time.<sup>50</sup> Historians have correctly noted that David O. Selznick's cinematic adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel was the "box-office phenomenon of the war years" in Britain.<sup>51</sup> However, less discussed is the fact that, from its initial arrival in 1940 the film was a source of much discomfort and criticism for the British public, which the latter often tied with the film's and its subject's American pedigree.

As was the case for Dixon, a major driving force behind Mitchell's motivation to write *GWTW* was to resurrect the honour of the South. She, too, found the long

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<sup>48</sup>J. E. Smyth, 'Young Mr. Lincoln: Between Myth and History in 1939', *Rethinking History*, Vol. 7 No. 2 (2003), pp. 6-7; Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-century America* (Chicago, 2008), p. 272; Melvyn Stokes, 'Abraham Lincoln and the Movies', *American Nineteenth Century History*, Vol. 12 No. 2 (2011), pp. 214-21.

<sup>49</sup>*Spirit of the People*.

<sup>50</sup>*GWTW* is an accepted abbreviation in scholarly works about the film.

<sup>51</sup>Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: the British Cinema in the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 16.

shadow of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* threatening the integrity of her region of birth and life.<sup>52</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, as Bruce Chadwick has argued, “the fingerprints of ‘*The Birth of a Nation*’ were all over ‘*Gone With the Wind*’.”<sup>53</sup> Like *The Birth of a Nation*, Mitchell’s novel presented the mid-nineteenth-century South as a peaceful, harmonious and idyllic society, which was destroyed by the war and Reconstruction.

However, *GWTW* differed from *The Birth of a Nation*. For one thing, it was not at all warlike. The film featured few battle scenes and its emphasis was on the folly of the war and the needless suffering and destruction that it had brought. Furthermore, *GWTW* decidedly turned the focus from the battlefield to the home front, and especially brought to the fore the image of the Southern woman. And, lastly, *GWTW* was not a film about white supremacy or even about racial tensions. On the contrary, racial aspects were deliberately downplayed in Fleming’s film in order to deliver a more peaceful and all-American message of racial harmony.<sup>54</sup>

Historically flawed, *GWTW* was an American work much in keeping with its *zeitgeist*. Mitchell wrote her novel at the height of American isolationism and pacifism. *GWTW* reflected that spirit when it followed the dominant narrative of the 1930s and showed – as did *The Littlest Rebel* (David Butler, 1935), *So Red the Rose* (King Vidor, 1935) and *Hearts in Bondage* (Lew Ayres, 1936) – that the Civil War, or any war, were not worth the victims who died in them or the destruction that they generated. Furthermore, although the novel was primarily for and about the American South, Fleming’s film made it a national symbol.<sup>55</sup> Propelling consensual American

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<sup>52</sup>Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War*, p. 211.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>54</sup>Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Washington, 1995), pp. 81-4.

<sup>55</sup>Jan Cronin, ‘The Book Belongs to All of Us: *Gone With the Wind* as a Post-structural Product’, *Film/Literature Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2007), pp. 399-400; on the novel’s widely endorsement in the U.S. as an American work, see: Darden Asbury Pyron, *Southern Daughter: The Life of Margaret Mitchell* (New York, 1991), pp. 334-6.

values and omitting discussion of race tensions (mainly by cutting out the story of the K.K.K.), the film was widely endorsed across sections and races in the United States. Even the African American press largely praised it, especially after Hattie McDaniel had won an Oscar for her performance in the role of Mammy.<sup>56</sup> As such, and like *The Birth of a Nation*, *GWTW* reached Britain as an authoritative account of the most American event endorsed at point of origin. However, as opposed to *The Birth of a Nation* or the abovementioned films about Lincoln, Britons used this American film and war representation to fashion their national identity in contrast to that of the United States.

Upon its arrival, *GWTW* became the centre of a financial controversy. On the weekend just after the film's première, the British Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (C.E.A.) launched the first blow in what would become an on-going battle between the C.E.A. and MGM over the terms of the film's distribution in Britain. On their part, and as was practiced in the United States, MGM demanded a higher-than-usual minimum price for tickets, as well as 70 percent of the revenues. The C.E.A., however, insisted that no special price should be charged for tickets and that no more than 50 percent of the film's profits would be paid to MGM.<sup>57</sup> Soon, what the *Kinematograph Weekly* called the "Gone with the Wind dispute" reached the public and even Parliament, where it was often dressed in nationalistic colours.<sup>58</sup> *The Scotsman*, for example, proudly stressed that, "they [British exhibitors] refuse to exploit their audience in the interests of an American film distributor."<sup>59</sup> Much in the

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<sup>56</sup> Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*, pp. 81-4. For the black reaction to the film see: James F. Tracy, 'Revisiting a Polysemic Text: The African American Press's Reception of Gone With the Wind', *Mass Communication and Society*, Vol. 4 No. 4 (2001), pp. 425-31.

<sup>57</sup> Allen Eyles, 'When Exhibitors Saw Scarlett: The War Over Gone With the Wind', *Picture House*, No. 27 (2002), pp. 23-32.

<sup>58</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 May 1940 p, 11.

<sup>59</sup> *The Scotsman*, 7 May, 1940, p. 7.

same note Neil Maclean, Labour MP for Glasgow Govan, anxiously asked in the House of Commons whether, “Is it not the case that when this war finishes cinemas in this country will be in the hands of the American producer, who has taken possession of the film production in this country since the last war?”<sup>60</sup> Fears were expressed that local money was leaving Britain for the United States during the world war and cinemas in Lancashire went as far as boycotting the film for this reason.<sup>61</sup> During the dispute, *Gone with the Wind* was presented as an American attempt to financially exploit the British public and take over the British film industry.

In addition to the financial dispute, the film’s pacifistic tone grated on many British ears. C.E.A president Harry Mears, for example, stressed that, “the horrors of war are so emphasised that the psychological effect upon the public may not be good in times when we are fighting for our existence.”<sup>62</sup> Mears was at the time deeply involved in the abovementioned dispute with MGM, which likely influenced his view. However, he was not widely off the mark with regard to public feelings. “I didn’t really enjoy it”, noted one M-O diarist of her viewing experience, “I had been warned that it was very sad but it wasn’t so much its sadness as the horrible realism of it [...] that made it un-enjoyable to me.”<sup>63</sup> Another reaction, antagonistic to the film’s pacifist and isolationistic tone, was criticism of the Americans for dealing with a romantic war whilst Britain was fighting in a real one. Urging people to boycott the film due to the high prices of the tickets, an angry reader of the *Daily Mirror* stressed that, “Hollywood’s a bit optimistic in expecting Britain to pour out what is saved [...] on four hours of the American Civil War, particularly when this country’s got quite a

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<sup>60</sup>Cinematograph Films (Rentals), HC Deb 30 Apr. 1940 Vol. 360 cc515-6.

<sup>61</sup>*Nottingham Evening Post*, 25 May 1940, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup>*Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 Apr. 1940, p. 5.

<sup>63</sup>Mass-Observation, Diary No. 5338, 3 Dec. 1942. Mass-Observation Archive online: <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk/index.aspx>. Accessed on 22 Sep. 2012.

war of its own.”<sup>64</sup> Unlike Britain, local critics emphasised, the United States was indifferent to injustice outside its borders and it was occupied with its own romantic war of the past. To the lay public, in the period before December 1941, this view was supported by strong, though circumstantial, evidence.

Such criticism of American cultural products, and specifically the cinematic representations of the Civil War as an archetypal American icon and landmark in the history and identity of the modern United States, was not new. During the interwar period, as Anglo-Saxon sentiments waned and relations between the countries cooled, the British distanced themselves from the American experience, exported through cinematic representations of the Civil War. The *Kinematograph Weekly*, for example, wrote on *Operator 13* (in *Britain Spy 13*, Richard Boleslawski, 1934) that, “it is a little too American in sentiments and detail for the entertainment to approach the upper class.”<sup>65</sup> Much in the same spirit, the reviewer of the *Picturegoer* was bored by *So Red the Rose* because “the American Civil War period does not mean as much to us, obviously, as it does to American audiences, and in consequence one is not deeply moved as one might have been by the action.”<sup>66</sup> Rarely was a contemporary review of a Civil War film complete without stressing the war’s American pedigree and its irrelevance to the British audience as a result.

During the 1920s and 1930s, many Britons felt increasingly threatened by American culture and its growing influence in Britain.<sup>67</sup> The Cinematograph Film Act of 1927, which set quotas to limit the number of foreign films arriving in Britain,

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<sup>64</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 May 1940, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 Dec. 1935, p. 18.

<sup>66</sup> *Picturegoer*, 21 Mar. 1936, p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> Paul Marshall, ‘The Lord Chamberlain and the Containment of Americanization in the British Theatre of the 1920s’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 19 No. 4 (Nov., 2003), 381-94.

mirrored a growing public antagonism, especially towards American cinema.<sup>68</sup> However, rather than allowing the irrelevance of American films about an American war to condemn them to anonymity, such reviews as those mentioned above showed how through Civil War cinema the British constructed their identity in opposition to the American one, making active use of the very foreign nature of these films. Viewed in this way, that the films and the Civil War were archetypically American was not only relevant but of the utmost import. Whilst less significant Civil War films had generated such reviews already in the 1920s and 1930s, the British endeavours to detach themselves from the United States and construct their national identity in contrast to it through the representation of the Civil War had reached a peak with *GWTW*.

The dominant aspect of *GWTW* and by far the most abundant source from which Britons drew in order to emphasise the divide between their country and the United States was Scarlett O'Hara's character and the film's representations of gender roles. The image of British actress Vivien Leigh, cast over hundreds of American actresses who had auditioned for the role of O'Hara, was crucial to this national endeavour.<sup>69</sup> No coverage of the film was complete without stressing Leigh's Britishness. Some regretted that Britain had lost a local star to Hollywood;<sup>70</sup> others saw it as a welcomed symbol of Anglo-American harmony.<sup>71</sup> Everybody, however, celebrated Leigh's Britishness.

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<sup>68</sup>Ryall, *Britain and the American Cinema*, pp. 14-36; John Trumbour, *Selling Hollywood to the World: U.S. and European Struggles for Mastery of the Global Film Industry, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 119-41.

<sup>69</sup>Hugo Vickers, *Vivien Leigh* (London, 1988), pp. 100-106; for a less romantic account see: Taylor, *Scarlett's Women*, pp. 83-6.

<sup>70</sup>*Observer*, 22 Jan. 1939, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup>*Manchester Guardian*, 20 Jan. 1939, p. 12.

Soon Leigh became the archetypical British woman and critics began to set her British femininity against that of Scarlett. *Today's Cinema*, for example, described Scarlett's womanhood with an evident disdain and stressed that she was "a revelation of a feminine dishonour and determination."<sup>72</sup> Against Scarlett's femininity, Leigh's British womanhood glowed. *The Picturegoer*, for example, published Leigh's own account of her experience on the set of *GWTW*. In the article, Leigh positioned herself in clear contrast to Scarlett and noted that, "She [Scarlett] needed a good, healthy old-fashioned spanking on a number of occasions and I should have been delighted to give it to her."<sup>73</sup> Leigh was pictured in the press as moderate, innocent and motherly, i.e., a true woman and all that Scarlett was not. Furthermore, *GWTW* opened the way for the British to export their own perception of womanhood to the United States. Upon the release of film, one reporter for example stressed that:

It was not so long ago that any American cartoonist depicting a British woman would draw her in a tweed suit, flat heeled shoes, an odd-shaped hat with a feather in it, and a walking-stick. But the success of British girls in recent American pictures has caused a sharp revision of this conception.<sup>74</sup>

Leigh thus became a cultural ambassador to the United States and an exponent of British identity to a place that, the British were at this time eager to stress, was very different.

By the early 1940s, in Britain the Civil War had become instrumental not only in drawing the two nations together, but in marking the divide between them. On 3 August, 1940, reviewing the impact of *GWTW* and other Civil War films on Britain, film critic Edward Wood captured this spirit and wrote in his column that:

Many of the films that the British public does not yearn for at any time, and has absolutely no use for just now, depict some phase of the American Civil War,

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<sup>72</sup>*Monthly Film Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. (Apr. 1940), p. 56.

<sup>73</sup>*Picturegoer and Film Weekly*, 20 Apr. 1940, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup>*Picture Show*, 4 May 1940, p. 3.

which started in 1861 and finished in 1865. I have lost count of the number of films I have seen with this war as a background, foreground, beginning, middle piece or ending, but I know there were too many for my liking since the present war began. Most of us have scant knowledge of the part England played in the Napoleonic wars – apart from the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo – and many of us are hazy about the last war, but every regular cinemagoer must have seen enough pictures about the American Civil War to write a book about it, as the saying goes [...] Some of these films have been first-class pictures, on the whole, but so far as the British public is concerned the war part has not been wanted, and at this particular period of our history American producers have shown a lamentable lack of knowledge of what the British public wants in sending over such films. A more touchy people might have boycotted these films, but we are notoriously long-suffering in such matters. It cannot be said that film depicting the American Civil War have any educational value for us.<sup>75</sup>

Wood perhaps somewhat exaggerated. Such vehement expressions about Civil War films were hard to find in the archives. However, Wood was not entirely out of tune with other critics, many of whom were critical of the Americans for dealing with a historical romantic conflict when British and Europe were immersed in a real war for the survival of democracy against fascism.

However, the British view of *Gone with the Wind* was not homogeneous, certainly not as critics had sometimes wished to present it. The public was divided both on the film's pacifistic sentiments and on its representation of gender roles. Some, for example, saw *Gone with the Wind*'s anti-war messages as a legitimate, even timely lesson. One reviewer thus argued that:

A point arises here whether the realism of the war scenes with their attendant tragedies will strike a little too closely at the heart of a nation at war [...]. Such scenes could not, in any case, be legitimately cut, for they are the basis of the whole argument and vivid lesson in humanity's inhumanity.<sup>76</sup>

Likewise, personal accounts disclose that many amongst the British public found the American characters in *GWTW* extremely familiar. One woman, for example, recalled that “[...] as a girl I held up Scarlett as a kind of model for myself, especially in

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<sup>75</sup>*Picture Show*, 3 Aug. 1940, p. 9.

<sup>76</sup>*Today's Cinema News and Property Gazette*, 19 Apr. 1940, p. 9.

regards to her ‘never give up’ sentiments.”<sup>77</sup> Endeavouring in their reviews of *GWTW* to propel a distinct British identity in opposition to that of the United States, expressions in the press often obscured the fact that the public was far more ambivalent in its views of the Civil War, of Scarlett and indeed of the United States. Press reviews thus concealed that the British public used the Civil War in a versatile way, which, as noted, created a nuanced and ambivalent picture.

This ambivalence mirrored the way in which Britons saw themselves, especially in relation to the United States in the early stages of the Second World War. Historians have shown that the social and cultural changes that the war brought challenged British perceptions of their identity and led them to re-consider some of it. The movement from appeasement to war and the transformation of women’s place in society were just two such examples.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, the increased presence of the United States – both physically and ideologically – opened the way for closer relations between the peoples, but also for confusion. An M-O survey from 1943 illustrated this when it showed that the United States’ entry to the Second World War generated much confusion and even discontent among many in the British public.<sup>79</sup> Exported continuously as an iconic representation of the United States, the Civil War was an apt and available platform for the British to reconsider and reiterate their national identity in relation to that of the United States. As such, the Civil War was

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<sup>77</sup> Taylor, *Scarlett's Women*, p. 96. Accounts from other places suggest that this phenomenon was not restricted to the Anglo-American world: John Haag, ‘Gone With the Wind in Nazi Germany’, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Summer 1989), pp. 285 and 289-90; Mart A. Stewart, ‘Teaching Gone with the Wind in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam’, *Southern Cultures*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall 2005), pp. 20-21.

<sup>78</sup>Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 108-39; on women’s place in the myth of the People’s War see also: Garry Champion, *The Good Fight: Battle of Britain Propaganda and the Few* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 1-8; for a less polarised, account of the relations between official propaganda and the public see: Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It!: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (Harlow, 2004), pp. 1-9 and 173-80.

<sup>79</sup>Mass-Observation Report on Opinion on America from 22 Jan., 1943, pp. 5-10. M-O Archives Online. Accessed on 22 Sep. 2012.

relevant and useful, even if used negatively in order to criticize the Americans or to position Britain in opposition to the United States, which, as seen, was not always the case. Such uses, in other words, did not mean that the British found the American conflict unappealing or irrelevant, as critics sometimes argued.

Furthermore, even when the Civil War was utilised in Britain to criticise the United States, it continued to fascinate British critics as a romantic, colourful and thrilling affair in American history. *Today's Cinema*, for example, argued about *Santa Fé Trail* (Michael Curtiz, 1940) that, “as with most films dealing with American history, this one is most impressive for Britishers on its spacious treatment.”<sup>80</sup> *Spy 13*, wrote the critic for the *Kinematograph Weekly*, was a “picturesque [...] drama, set in the colourful period of the American Civil War, which cunningly camouflages the slightness of popular story with charming romance, bright comedy, tuneful music, and stirring spectacles.”<sup>81</sup> With *GWTW*, the Civil War’s romance, colourfulness, drama and thrill reached a peak. As one laudatory review noted, “there are outstanding scenes thrillingly presented, notably the capture of Atlanta by the Yankees and its destruction by fire.”<sup>82</sup> The film’s greatest asset, wrote another:

is that, despite its length, it does not seem to be longer than the average, for it has no moment when the story ceases to grip or the theme to interest. A flaming background of the American Civil War lends this take of romantic conflict a strange earnestness, and its spectacle is always part and integral part of the development.<sup>83</sup>

Even Edwards Wood – whose vehement criticism of the United States, of Hollywood and of the Civil War is cited above – chose *GWTW* as one of the best films of 1940.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>*Today's Cinema*, 22 Aug. 1941, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup>*Kinema weekly*, 12 July 1934, p. 20.

<sup>82</sup>*Picture Show*, 1 June 1940, p. 15

<sup>83</sup> *Today's Cinema News and Property Gazette*, No. 4404, Vol. 54, 19 Apr. 1940, Front Page.

<sup>84</sup>*Picture Show*, 1 Feb. 1940, p. 5.

To sum up, since the latter interwar period, the British appealed to the Civil War as an American emblem through which they both aligned themselves with the United States and distinguished themselves from it. In addition, the war fascinated the British public as it was represented as an epic and romantic conflict. In films, this representation gained extra force. Starting from this period, films began to present the Civil War on the big screen in full colours and rich sound, giving the British filmgoer a spectacular experience of a spectacular war. In this, too, *GWTW* was the foremost example. As one journal put on its front page: “‘*Gone With the Wind*’ opens a new era in screen history and one which cannot fail to make itself felt as a public force [...]”<sup>85</sup>

### III

The following section focuses on the British reaction to the rising of the African American narrative of the Civil War in popular culture, starting from the 1960s. It deals only indirectly with the British appropriation and generation of this narrative, a subject to which the next chapter devotes much attention. Here it is shown that, although the representation of the war from an African American vantage point challenged the prevailing attractive representations of the Civil War, ultimately it enhanced the war’s appeal to British critics.

Despite its suppression in American popular culture before the 1960s, the African American view of the Civil War did not escape the attention of the British public, who often saw beyond the official or dominant American representation of the conflict. For example, despite its relatively moderate narrative and despite its wide endorsement in the United States even amongst African Americans, one M-O diarist noted that he was suspicious about *GWTW* since:

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<sup>85</sup>*Today’s Cinema News and Property Gazette*, No. 4404, Vol. 54, 19 Apr. 1940, Front Page.

I note that the negro and radical press in the U.S.A. have found both [the novel and film] far from satisfactory. They dislike its defence of slavery and feudalism, race problem, anti-Lincoln sentiments, etc. [...] Fem[ale]-sec[retary] (30-ish) trots out a familiar line of talk about some American friends (Virginia) who were “so kind to their old ‘mammies’, who in turn were faithful to them”. Seems everything in the slave tradition can be excused these days.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, the Coloured People’s Association in Britain as well as British minority groups that were sensitive to the resistance to the film in the United States protested against the screening of *GWTW* in Britain in 1940.<sup>87</sup> The *Daily Worker*, the official communist voice in Britain, severely criticised the film as well.<sup>88</sup> Peter Noble’s assault on *The Birth of a Nation* in the 1940s was another example that Britons could see beyond the official American representation of the Civil War. Griffith, Noble stressed, was “a pioneer of prejudice!” for his *The Birth of a Nation*.<sup>89</sup>

However, until the 1960s all of the above and their like were the exception. For example, although its circulation in 1939 was impressive in comparison to previous years, the *Daily Worker* did not represent a consensual British perspective.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, as seen, the American objection to *The Birth of a Nation* in the 1910s had no parallel in Britain until the 1940s.<sup>91</sup> Likewise, the reception of *GWTW*’s representation of race relations was overwhelmingly positive. Whilst the British have fashioned their own views and interpretations of the war, the African American narrative was not central to their understanding of the Civil War in the sphere of popular culture.

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<sup>86</sup>Anonymous, 12 Mar. 1940, Mass-Observation, Diarist No. 5006.

<sup>87</sup>*Daily Mirror*, 24 Apr. 1940, p. 3; *Daily Worker*, 22 Apr. 1940, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup>See for example, *Daily Worker*, 29 Apr. 1940, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup>Peter Noble, ‘A Note on an Idol’, *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 15, No. 59 (Autumn, 1946), p. 81. For a later attack on Griffith and the film see: Noble, *The Cinema and the Negro, 1905-1948* (London, 1948), p. 3. For an account of the quarrel between Noble and Griffith see: Jenny Barrett, *Shooting the Civil War: Cinema, History and American National Identity* (London, 2009), pp. 130-1.

<sup>90</sup>By this year, the *Daily Worker* sold between 40,000 and 50,000 copies a day. See: James Eaden and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 40.

<sup>91</sup>As noted in section I, although it often came to nought, Griffith’s film did generate resistance in the U.S. in the 1910s. For the continuous protest against the film see: Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 148-9.

During the late 1950s that began to change, first in the United States and then in Britain. Against the background of the Cold War, and especially during the Civil War's centennial between 1961 and 1965, the Americans sought to fashion the historical conflict of the 1860s as a symbol of American unity and patriotism.<sup>92</sup> To nourish and distribute this heritage, Civil War representations blurred the differences between North and South and between blacks and whites, accentuating instead their common American identity. Civil War cinema, which had flourished since the 1950s and during the centennial, often promoted this message.<sup>93</sup> In *Major Dundee* (Sam Peckinpah, 1965) for example, Union and Confederate, as well as African American soldiers united despite their mutual antagonism towards each other, in order to fight murderous Indians. The film showed that, faced with an outsider non-American enemy, all Americans – Union, Confederate and African Americans – found their differences negligible. “The Major’s present war is not with the South”, narrated the script, “but with the Apache.”<sup>94</sup> In this way, African Americans were incorporated into the national story of the Civil War after being pushed out of it since the late nineteenth century (as seen in *The Birth of a Nation*). Their place as outsiders was now taken by Native Americans, Mexicans or other foreigners, who played the role of non-Americans.

However, as Robert Cook has shown, from inception, the centennial celebrations were immersed in controversies and struggles between Southern Lost Cause agitators and civil rights activists. Advancing the African American point-of-view of the Civil War, civil rights activists accentuated the appalling image of a slave-ridden South, of the war as an unfinished enterprise and of Reconstruction as an

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<sup>92</sup> Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge, 2007), pp. 139-53.

<sup>93</sup>Brian Steel Wills, *Gone with the Glory: The Civil War in Cinema* (Lanham, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>94</sup>*Major Dundee*, (Columbia Pictures Corporation, Jerry Bresler Productions).

abortive project that had legitimised racism in the United States. Clearly, this representation could not have been realised alongside the Lost Cause representation in a grand narrative of American reconciliation and unity. Consequently, as early as 1961, the celebrations had become a symbol of sectional and racial fragmentation and the contested nature of the conflict's legacy surfaced.<sup>95</sup>

The protest in the United States resonated loudly in Britain. Whilst representations of the Civil War continued to cross the Atlantic through popular cultural products, more than ever they now reflected a greater diversity of views corresponding with developments in the United States. One M-O respondent, for example, recalled that:

It wssn't [sic] till the 60's that I learnt about the existence of slavery in the USA, and that the Civil War hadn't changed things very much. When I grew up in the 60s I knew all about the struggle for civil rights in the USA. That was mainly through the singing of Pete Seeger.<sup>96</sup>

Events in the United States motivated the British public to revise its understanding of the war. Thus, when *GWTW* was released again in London in 1961, the *Observer* noted that, "the Jim Crow amusements now seem more than ever repellent."<sup>97</sup> The *Guardian*, stressing that *GWTW* was a mere nostalgic mirage of a corrupt society, contended that, "not the least important political aspect of the centennial has been the

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<sup>95</sup>Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, pp. 88-120.

<sup>96</sup> Attitudes to USA: M-O in the 80s – Autumn 1984 Directive Americans Men A-Z, G 220, 7.1.85, in: Mass-Observation Archive, University of Sussex. Jazz artists since the 1910s and Blues musicians in the 1960s and 1970s also contributed much to the distribution of such ideas. See: Roberta Freund Schwartz, *How Britain got the Blues: The Transmission and Reception of American Blues Style in the United Kingdom* (Aldershot, 2007). For the 19<sup>th</sup> century roots of American Jazz in Britain see: Catherine Parsonage, 'A Critical Reassessment of the Reception of Early Jazz in Britain', *Popular Music*, Vol. 22/3 (2003) pp. 315-36; for American Blues music in the 1950s and 1960s see: Neil A. Wynn, "'Why I sing the Blues': African American Culture in the Transatlantic World", in: Neil A. Wynn, (ed.), *Cross the Water Blues: African American Music in Europe* (Jackson, Miss, 2007), pp. 3-19.

<sup>97</sup>*The Observer*, 11 June 1961, p. 29.

obvious, if camouflaged, attempt to dissociate it entirely from the South's present guilty secret."<sup>98</sup> Such reviews were new in the mainstream media in Britain.

However, at the height of the Cold War, the British found the conciliatory and patriotic representation of the Civil War more appealing than the one that presented the United States as a disintegrated – and disintegrating – country and society. After all, the British film industry produced similar cinematic narratives at that time and reflected similar nationalistic and anti-communist sentiments.<sup>99</sup> Thus, whilst a narrative that excluded African Americans had become unsustainable, the British public seemed to have been receptive to the inclusive representation of the Civil War that incorporated contesting views into a story of a continuous American progress towards freedom and unity. For its wide resonance and authoritative stature on both sides of the Atlantic, Alistair Cooke's famous series, *America: A Personal History of the United States* (BBC, 1972), was a valid example and an illustrative case in point.

Cooke became enamoured with the United States during the early 1930s, when he left for Yale on an academic scholarship. In 1937, after continuously having crossed the Atlantic back and forth, he left Britain for good. Also from early on, Cooke came to believe that the British and Americans needed to know more about each other and he devoted much of his career in the media to that purpose.<sup>100</sup>

By the time he made *America*, chiefly due to the Cold War, Cooke had come to believe that understanding the United States was a necessity more than a luxury. "I have tried in this programme", he summarised *America's* 13 episodes, "to say

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<sup>98</sup>*The Guardian*, 8 Apr. 1961, p. 8.

<sup>99</sup>Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War: The State, Propaganda, and Consensus* (London, 2001), pp. 9-21 and 24-33.

<sup>100</sup>Nick Clarke, *Alistair Cooke: The Biography* (London, 1999), pp. 129; see also Cooke's own words on this matter in: Alistair Cooke, *Letters from America* (London, 1951), pp. 12-13.

something about American civilization today, because what is fiercely in dispute between the communist and the non-communist nations is the quality and staying power of American civilization.”<sup>101</sup> *America*, then, was, amongst other things, a look at the United States as the representative of the non-communist world and an endeavour to evaluate its ability to resist communism by offering an alternative liberal ideology. Cooke’s programme celebrated the American spirit of innovativeness, pragmatism, liberalism, diversity and wealth as the world’s best hope against communism and as its antithesis. His episode on the American Revolution, for example, opened with a comparison between Lenin and the Declaration of Independence as the founding icons of Russia and the United States. With admiration, he presented the idea of equality as it was expressed in the Declaration of Independence, “all man are created equal” he declaimed, and stressed that it was a “world changing” document.<sup>102</sup> Cooke thus made it clear that the American, indeed western idea of equality was superior to this idea’s communist interpretation. From this perspective, *America* was a story of the continuous growth of a liberal alternative to communism.

However, *America* was not an uncritical glorification of the American way of life. Whereas the programme showed Britons the wonders of the United States, it also criticised the Americans for having abandoned the path set forth by the nation’s fathers. In his criticism, Cooke reflected the low point which the contemporary United States had reached in British eyes by the early 1970s. As his biographer has noted, “Cooke hated the 1960s” and he saw the United States as a giant who had lost his way.<sup>103</sup> Cooke resented what he saw as Americans’ unrestrained materialism and

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<sup>101</sup> *America: A Personal History of the United States*, Episode 13: The More Abundant Life.

<sup>102</sup> *America*, Episode 4: Making a Revolution.

<sup>103</sup> Clarke, *Alistair Cooke*, p. 430.

consumerism, as well as the United States' over urbanisation and mistreatment of its natural resources. He also opposed the war in Vietnam and was disappointed by the Watergate scandal. One of the gravest sources for Cooke's concern was the social upheavals of the 1960s in general, which he thought tore the American society apart, and the African American and civil rights movements specifically, in which he saw the greatest danger to American stability and social order, especially in the South.<sup>104</sup> By the early 1970s, the world's best hope against communism seemed to Cooke to be standing at a crossroads and not necessarily facing what he thought was the right direction. Summarising his programme, he thus posed the pessimistic open-ended question of "whether America is in its ascendant or its decline."<sup>105</sup>

Recognising the image of an ideologically and socially unified United States in the background of Cooke's thought, his episode about the Civil War presented the viewer with a typical conciliatory narrative. Accordingly, the programme acknowledged slavery as a major theme in the story of the war and it debunked the myth of the idyllic South. Cooke dedicated approximately 22 minutes (roughly half the episode's total running time) to discuss the horrible conditions under which slaves had lived in the South. Cooke's emphasis on slavery, however, did not come at the expense of presenting Reconstruction as a terrible, vengeful and extremist project set out to devastate the South. The South, he said bitterly, "was not only conquered, it was now to be punished [...]. [...] several Southern states were put under military control [...] and the state governments were run by negroes who could hardly read or write [...]"<sup>106</sup> Ultimately, Cooke delivered an inter-racial reconciling lesson and noted that,

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<sup>104</sup>See for example, *Ibid*, pp. 297-8.

<sup>105</sup>*America*, Episode 13: The More Abundant Life.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid*, Episode 7, *A Firebell in the Night*.

“the negro has a long way to go, but he has come further in the last 30 years than in the previous 300.”<sup>107</sup>

Had Cooke adopted the African American view of the Civil War he would have been forced to present the post-war United States as a racist country that was reunited at the price of racial divide and racial suppression. That would portray a decadent and unequal American society and it would undermine the positive image of the western civilization as morally superior to the communist world. Instead, Cooke chose to examine the Civil War of the 1860s from the vantage point of the 1960s. That is, he did not linger upon the war’s immediate aftermath or on the long lasting repression of African Americans in the United States. Rather, he ended his account of the war – after giving the South its respectful place in post-war American history – a century after its termination and presented it as the starting point of a long yet deterministic liberal project that was now reaching its admirable end. As *America* showed, by the mid 1970s the African American narrative of the Civil War had remained marginal in the British thought about the Civil War.

The late 1970s and 1980s saw deep change come over the representation of the Civil War. The African American narrative finally reached the mainstream of popular culture as an independent aspect of the Civil War that was to challenge the other, until then dominant, representations of the conflict. Nonetheless, as the reception of *Glory* (Edward Zwick, 1989) showed, the African American narrative of the conflict was appealing as a story of heroism, bravery and a will to make the ultimate sacrifice for a higher cause, this being held in common with the other war narratives. Also similar to other war narratives, it enabled the British to comment on

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<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*

the contemporary United States. In this way, the African American view of the Civil War did not undermine the war's appeal to Britons but rather enhanced it.

The African American view of American history made important headway into the heart of British and American popular culture with Alex Haley's 1977 *Roots*. *Roots* was a written and then televised manifestation of the identity politics that took hold in the United States in the 1970s. Haley, who wrote the book upon which ABC's mini-series was based, wanted to celebrate his and his African American heritage's American history and give them a distinct voice in the story of the United States.<sup>108</sup> Presented manifestly from an African American vantage point, through the story of Haley's ancestors the book traced the place of Africans in the United States, from their arrival as slaves in the eighteenth century to the 1960s.<sup>109</sup> Whilst Haley presented his book as a painstaking genealogical research, shortly after its publication *Roots* was revealed as a work of fabrication, at least to a degree. This, however, did not prevent it from becoming a tremendous success. Following the success of the pseudo-research, ABC bought the rights to Haley's work and in 1977 the production of *Roots* was on its way.<sup>110</sup>

*Roots* exposed the public – in both the United States and Britain – to an unromantic view of the Civil War era, especially in the South, in an unprecedented way.<sup>111</sup> The programme vividly showed how in the post-war United States, reconciliation between whites in the South came at the expense of the freed slaves. “We’s got to go to the law, don’t you see?” cried freedman Tom Harvey after another

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<sup>108</sup>Alex Haley, *Roots* (New York, 1976) p. 685.

<sup>109</sup>The last episode of the television series ends with Alex Haley's summary of black history since the post-Civil War era to his day, but the drama actually ends when Tom Harvey's family leaves North Carolina to Tennessee after repeatedly having being assaulted by the K.K.K.

<sup>110</sup>Chadwick, *The Reel Civil War*, p. 266.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 263-73; Taylor, *Circling Dixie*, p. 69.

white supremacists' assault on his family and property, "ain't supposed to be no white men's law. Only supposed to be one law, *the* law."<sup>112</sup> Soon, however, the African American family discovered that the sheriff cannot and indeed will not enforce the law on white racists, fearing it would lead to violence. There was nothing in the account of the Civil War era to show a romantic image of the South or of the United States of the kind that *GWTW* had perpetuated. Even the touching scenes of soldiers' sacrifice were omitted. Instead, *Roots*' post-war United States was a cruel and violent place and if reconciliation and reunion eventually came to America, the series stressed that it was for the immoral price of political and social racial repression.

*Glory* attacked the romantic representation of the Civil War from another angle. Focusing on African Americans, it unfolded the story of the Union's all-black 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, from the decision to create it in 1862, to its abortive assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina on 18 July 1863. For the broader public, *Glory* presented for the first time the story of African Americans' bravery and eagerness to fight for their freedom and their gradual understanding that they needed to unite amongst themselves as well as to join the Union Army in order to achieve that goal. Furthermore, as James McPherson has argued, the film focused on a historical point in time when African Americans' keenness to fight freed Lincoln to take the measures needed to turn the Civil War from a war solely for reunion, to one aimed at ending slavery.<sup>113</sup> The film was based on Peter Burchard's novel *One Gallant Rush* (1965) and on the letters of Robert Gould Shaw, the white Colonel who was placed in command of the regiment. Accordingly, the film maintained a high level of historical accuracy and authenticity. *Glory* thus authoritatively undermined

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<sup>112</sup>*Roots*.

<sup>113</sup> McPherson, 'Glory', in: Mark C. Carnes, *Past Imperfect: History According to Movies* (New York, 1995), pp. 129-30.

the representation of slavery in the South as a benign institution that benefited both slaves and slave owners by showing that African Americans sought freedom and were willing to die for it. It also challenged the Northern narrative of the war by showing the prejudice and racism that was rife throughout the Union Army.

The public in Britain reacted favourably to these representations of the Civil War and especially to the new African American viewpoint. As an American programme that focused on American history, *Roots* enjoyed an unprecedented success in Britain and the last two episodes, dealing with the Civil War era, achieved staggering ratings.<sup>114</sup> As a favourable BBC Audience Research Report indicated, the majority of the audience “were closely involved with this well-paced story.”<sup>115</sup> On *Glory*, the conservative *Daily Mail* joined the liberal press in praising the film and stressed that, “[...] if your cinema expectations of Civil War drama have been set by *Gone With The Wind* and cavalry-adventure escapism, prepare for a new world.”<sup>116</sup> As historiography changed, and as filmmakers responded, so audiences were given more versions of the Civil War, which they readily accepted.

However, whilst the African American narrative of the war undermined the conflict’s Southern and reconciliatory romantic representations, it also presented a new and no less appealing narrative of the Civil War. For one thing, the African American story of the war was a heroic story of bravery and sacrifice for a higher cause. For showing African American fighting for their freedom – especially despite the hardship of training and the horrors of war and despite the widespread racism and

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<sup>114</sup>Taylor, *Circling Dixie*, p. 69. The abovementioned episodes enjoyed a 36 and 37 percent rating in the London area, respectively. See: A Joint Committee for Television Advertising Research Report of 24 Apr. and 1 May, 1977 (weeks ending 24 Apr. and 1 May), in: JICTAR Weekly TV Audience Report. The library of the British Film Institute.

<sup>115</sup>Audience Research Reports, Television General, Chronological, March & April 1977, R9/7/146, VR/77/203, BBC Written Archives.

<sup>116</sup>*Daily Mail*, 14 Sep. 1990, p. 34.

prejudice within the Union Army, historical phenomena that the film discusses admirably – British critics saw in *Glory* an “epic reconstruction [that] lives up to its title by finding nobility in combat.”<sup>117</sup> Equally, Robert Gould Shaw, whose view of the idea of an African American regiment develops throughout the film from ambivalence to outright support, was seen by British reviewers as an “idealistic young Boston aristocrat” who believed in freedom and equality and ultimately, leading his all-black regiment in battle, gave his life for that cause.<sup>118</sup> As the North’s war for reunion and the South’s willingness to sacrifice its people for its way of life, the African American devotion to the idea of freedom and their readiness to die for it was of equally moving and heroic stature.

Furthermore, British critics lauded *Glory* because they saw in the African American narrative of the Civil War also a story of a thrilling war. The film, wrote a critic, was “a stirring account of the first black regiment to fight in the American Civil War, from its first recruiting drive to its heroic assault on an impregnable fort.”<sup>119</sup> “Aside from its motives”, noted another, “the film’s chief virtue is its spectacular choreography. The final battle [...] is a striking combination of dynamism and clarity [...]. The battle’s intensity sucks in the spectator and quickens the blood.”<sup>120</sup> “The charge on a Rebel fort”, wrote a reviewer on the screening of the film on television in 1996, “is so moving there won’t be a dry eye in the house.”<sup>121</sup> In *Glory*, the African American representation of the Civil War contributed another angle to the action and to the representation of the conflict as an epic and thrilling war-story.

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<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 4 Mar. 1990, p. 33.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup>*The Independent*, 29 Apr. 1990, p. 61

<sup>120</sup>*Sight and Sound*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (1990), p. 135.

<sup>121</sup>*Daily Record*, 22 Jan., 1996, p. 16.

Moreover, the African American narrative of the Civil War, as presented in *Glory* and *Roots* (prior to its revelation as a fabrication) attracted audiences because it told a true and historically accurate story. No coverage of *Glory* omitted mentioning that it was based on actual events and on authentic historical records. Even the more critical reviews found it hard to challenge its authenticity. As the reviewer of the *Guardian* noted:

Few cinemagoers expect total historical accuracy [...] In the case of *Glory*, a portrayal of the outrageously ignored saga of the all-black (but white officer-led) 54th Massachusetts Regiment in the American Civil War, complaints centre more gently on the sheer lack of space in the film to portray all the terrible ironies experienced by ex-slaves in Lincoln's army.<sup>122</sup>

Unlike other Civil War films before it, *Glory* even presented a high level of authenticity in all that regarded the costumes and firearms. The heroism, patriotism, belief in freedom and equality and the gruesome battles that *Glory* presented were thus more appealing than the romanticised and, by then it was clear, widely fabricated image of the Civil War as seen through the prism of the Lost Cause and films as *GWTW*.

Finally, as with the other Civil War narratives, the British found in the story of the African American troops a prism through which to comment on the contemporary United States. For example, seen through African American eyes as a war for the highest causes, the Civil War in *Glory* was favourably compared with the war in Vietnam, which was deeply criticised in Britain.<sup>123</sup> The reviewer for the *Times* put *Glory* together with other films that were “titillating the national consciousness with guilt for Vietnam [...]”<sup>124</sup> Another critic went as far as to argue that *Glory* “vaults clean over the shame of Vietnam, to reaffirm the almost prehistoric notion of the

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<sup>122</sup>*Guardian*, 1 Mar., 1990.

<sup>123</sup>John Dumbrell, *A special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (Houndmills, 2001), pp. 149-59.

<sup>124</sup>*Times*, 1 Mar., 1990, p. 19.

value of gallantry in a just cause.”<sup>125</sup> The *Guardian*, too, as the *Times*, connected between *Glory* and *Born on the Fourth of July* as two films about “real-life heroes [...] who went to wars a century apart charged with idealism and patriotic fervour.”<sup>126</sup> The idealism of Shaw was thus utilised in order to comment on the moral questions that the war in Vietnam had raised regarding the moral image of the United States.

Through the African American view of the Civil War the British harnessed the conflict of the 1860s for purposes that went well beyond the original American intentions. *Glory* was not a film about Vietnam and there is no evidence that its makers had the war in Southeast Asia in mind when they made it. Unlike *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986), *Full Metal Jacket* (Stanley Kubrick, 1987) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone, 1989), *Glory* was a film about race and freedom in the United States in the 1860s. As they did with previous Civil War films, British critics de- and re-constructed *Glory*'s message and values, universalised them and used them according to their need.

The African American story of the war was thus appealing as it was heroic, it was moral, it involved sacrifice for a higher cause and it allowed the British a stage from which to observe the past and present United States. In addition, the representation of the Civil War from an African American vantage point as done in *Glory* was fascinating because it told an until then untold story. Moreover, the African American story in *Glory* and even in *Roots* was historically true and therefore more impressive and thrilling. In this way, the African American story of the Civil War ultimately added another appealing aspect to the American conflict of the 1860s.

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<sup>125</sup> *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (1990), p. 135.

<sup>126</sup> *Guardian*, 4 Mar., 1990, p. 60.

#### IV

Reviews of Civil War films showed that the British attended the cinema to watch films about the American conflict primarily because the films and the war entertained them. Even when Britons criticised the ideological content or message of the films – *Gone with the Wind*'s presentation of gender roles, for example – they were in agreement that the films were thrilling, colourful, artistically impressive or, in a word, fun to watch. During the interwar period, for example, when criticism of American cinema in Britain soared and reviews dismissed American films as a low form of culture, critics still overwhelmingly praised films about the Civil War as entertaining.

In addition, films about the Civil War attracted the attention of British critics and audiences because they presented an array of values that Britons were able to separate from the American context and appropriate to themselves. This made the films relevant to contemporary British affairs. The presentation of black-white race relations in the United States in *The Birth of a Nation*, for example, was translated in Britain to be applied to the relations between Germany and the Anglo-American world. The film thus came to convey a timely lesson about the need to suppress the “new Huns”. Furthermore, as seen in the case of the British reception of *Gone with the Wind*, the values that that Civil War film presented were relevant to the British also by way of contrast. As seen, British critics used the pacifist tone of the film in order to reaffirm Britain's character as a determined uncompromising fighter against fascism at a time when pacifism was irresponsible and immoral at the very least.

Finally, British reviews of Civil War films showed that Britons saw in the conflict an opportunity to examine the American society and the character of the modern United States. Reviews of films about the conflict were often a platform used

by critics in order to reflect on the history of the modern United States and on its development since its rebirth and to their present day. Alistair Cooke's documentary, for example, looked at the war as the starting point of a long process of racial integration in the United States, which, he believed, had reached, or should have reached its end by the 1970s. *The Birth of a Nation* was an opportunity for British critics to express their views on the might of their contemporary United States, a country that had emerged from the conflict a united and powerful modern nation. Reviewing *Glory*, many critics looked to this episode in American history in order to comment on the United States' conduct in Vietnam.

As for the last two sources of British attraction to the Civil War, there is little need to repeat at length the findings of previous chapters. As in the British political discourse, military thought and academic writing, the diverse British appeal to Civil War films demonstrated the multifaceted nature of the war. It also demonstrated the unique place of the Civil War as a constitutive event in American history and as the moment of birth of the modern United States. These two features of the Civil War rendered it an apt source for an array of lessons and a platform to express an array of views on the United States.

To these the present chapter adds the argument and observation that the Civil War featured all the elements that make good entertainment. It was an enormous, tragic, heroic and epic war; it was a war of soldiers and citizens, of man and women; it was a founding and transformative moment in the history of the world's greatest power; and it raised heroes, from professional military-men to citizen-soldiers to women and children. The Civil War, in other words, was a good story. It was this

element that allowed other elements full scope of use by holding the fascination, hearts and minds of generations of Britons.

Moreover, the cinema was an apt medium for the representation of the American conflict in the sphere of popular culture. The silver screen allowed for the presentation of the war in all its gigantic proportions and epic dimensions. Unlike statues, academic studies or even the television, the cinema presented the war in motion and as close to its true measures as was possible fifty and more years after its end. Ultimately, the cinema also enabled the portrayal of the Civil War in vivid colours and rich soundtrack. It allowed for the presentation of the blue and the grey and the white and the black, and it allowed for the presentation of the red of blood.

Finally, unlike many other cinematic stories that featured similar characteristics, the story of the Civil War was entertaining and interesting because it was true. The sacrifice that African Americans made for freedom, the South's fierce resistance in order to maintain its way of life and the North's war to save the Union were all, to a greater or lesser degree, historically true. If stories from the war, such as the one told in *Glory*, seemed sometime unbelievable, their historical veracity added to the thrilling experience of watching Civil War films.

As in every other aspect examined in this thesis, the British were of course interested in films and popular cultural products that were not related to the Civil War. However, the Civil War featured a unique combination of history, fiction, entertainment, contemporary relevance and the ability to reflect on the past and present United States. The following chapter advances the examination of the place and role of the Civil War in British popular culture further.

## **Chapter Five – The Civil War in British Popular Culture, Part II: Civil War Societies**

Public societies in Britain studying and re-enacting the American Civil War are not new. The first society, the Confederate Caucus, was founded in 1951. Many, as this chapter shows, have followed since. Yet academic attention paid to these clubs has been hitherto remarkably scarce. To the best of the author's knowledge, Stephen Hunt has published the only study that looks at Civil War re-enactment in Britain.<sup>1</sup> However, Hunt has focused on a single re-enactment group and his study – on re-enactment as a form of serious leisure – is primarily sociological rather than historical. Thus, although now entering into its seventh decade of existence, Civil War popular activity in Britain is still *terra incognita*.

For the purpose of this study, the importance of the above societies lies with the insight they provide into the place and role of the Civil War in British popular culture in the second half of the twentieth century. The previous chapter left two fundamental aspects of this subject unexplored. The first is the mutuality in the exchanges of Civil War representations between the United States and Britain within the sphere of popular culture. The second is the British representations of the British response to the American conflict. Additionally, themes that were discussed in the last chapter – such as the war's representations as a source of images of the United States, its role in American public diplomacy and the place of the African American narrative in British popular culture – may be fully understood through the study of the abovementioned societies.

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt, 'Acting the Part: "Living History" as a Serious Leisure Pursuit', *Leisure Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Oct. 2004), pp. 387-403.

Popular Civil War societies also allow for a more profound analysis of the main questions of this study, namely why Britons had appropriated that historical American conflict above others and how they used it both at home and in the transatlantic sphere. The numerous devotees – including some of those re-enacting the American Civil War – who re-enact and study the Battle of Hastings or the English Civil War or the Boer War or the Great War or the Second World War or the Falklands War testify that Britons have a sufficient arsenal of national wars on which to draw.<sup>2</sup> So why join an American Civil War society? Sociological, psychological and anthropological answers have been put forward as to why people have been joining Civil War re-enactment and historical clubs of this sort, mostly in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Few studies have taken a historical approach.<sup>4</sup> Fewer still have examined American Civil War societies outside the United States.<sup>5</sup> This chapter does both.

The chapter argues that British Civil War enthusiasts became fascinated with the conflict for an array of reasons. First, as an American war, it allowed them both to understand a global force that they thought has had an influence on their lives, and at the same time to distance themselves from British wars that might have been sources of contention. Second, it was a romantic conflict, especially when seen through the representation of reconciliation. Third, because of the war's impact in Britain, as

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<sup>2</sup> On re-enactment in Britain more generally see: Adam I. P. Smith, 'Re-enactors, National Identity and a "Usable Past"', in: Robert Phillips and Helen Brocklehurst (eds.), *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke, 2004), 302-12.

<sup>3</sup> Hunt, 'Acting the Part', pp. 394-402; Hunt, 'But We're Men Aren't We!: Living History as a Site of Masculine Identity Construction', *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 10 (2008), pp. 471-8; Dennis Hall, 'Civil War Reenactors and the Postmodern Sense of History', *Journal of American Culture*, 17 (1994), pp. 7-11; R. D. Mittelstaedt, 'Reenacting the American Civil War: A Unique Form of Serious Leisure for Adults', *World Leisure & Recreation*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1995), p. 26; Randal Allred, 'Catharsis, Revision, and Re-enactment: Negotiating the Meaning of the American Civil War', *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 19 (1996), pp. 6-11; W. B. Wilhelm and S. Mottner, 'An Empirical Study of the Motivations and Consumption Behaviors of Civil War Re-enactors: Implications for Re-enactment Tourism', *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, Vol. 12 No. 4 (2005), pp. 43-51.

<sup>4</sup> The seminal work in this regard has remained Jay Anderson, *Time Machines: The World of Living History* (Nashville, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> See for example: Stephen Gapps, 'Authenticity Matters: Historical Re-enactment and Australian Attitudes to the Past', *Australian Cultural History*, No. 23 (2003), p. 110.

elaborated upon in previous chapters, many Britons saw it as part of their history. Fourth, the values that the American conflict presented seemed to them to be relevant to contemporary British affairs. Accordingly, the chapter contends that for British enthusiasts the question of whether to join the Union or the Confederacy was, in principle, irrelevant. Both were American, both seemed romantic, both represented applicable values and through the re-enactment and study of both the British connection to the war could be commemorated. This, in turn, explains not only why Britons joined these clubs and why they chose one side over the other, but also why many have been able to cross the sectional lines.

The main themes in this chapter – the rise of Civil War societies, the question of why and how Britons appropriated the war, the mutuality of Civil War exchanges and the narrative of the British aspect of the conflict – have been historically intertwined and could not but artificially be separated from one another. However, in the name of clarity this chapter is divided into two sections: Network and Substance. The first part explores the transatlantic network that allowed for the development of popular Civil War societies in Britain. Providing the first scholarly account of the emergence of these groups, this part focuses on exchanges of Civil War representations between the United States and Britain and connects to a discussion of American public diplomacy. The second part lays more emphasis on what the abovementioned network made it possible to transmit. It focuses on the values that were exported from the United States the war's representations, on the British translation of these values and on the emergence of a genuinely British heritage of the

war in the sphere of popular culture. This part also engages more directly with the question of why Britons assumed the war's legacy.<sup>6</sup>

## I

Popular activity dedicated to the American Civil War has been organised around two main formulations and its inception dates to the 1940s and 1950s in the United States. Constituting the first established format, Civil War Round Tables are academically oriented organisations, comprised mostly but not solely of amateur historians and enthusiasts. Since the opening of the first club in Chicago in 1940, Round Table activities have included conferences, dinners and study-tours.<sup>7</sup> The other format, Civil War re-enactment societies, deals with performing Living History activities and mock battles. During re-enactment events participants dress in period costumes, re-create military camps, present authentic period lifestyle and some even pay heed to period food. Too often associated with post-Civil War encampments held by the Grand Army of the Republic, Civil war Round Tables and re-enactment societies had in fact developed separately as popular organisations.<sup>8</sup> The first American re-enactment club, the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA), thus owes its origins in 1950 to a group of westerns fans who first met at a shooting club.<sup>9</sup> Since the early 1950s, first historical societies similar to the Round Tables and later also re-enactment clubs, began to appear across the Atlantic.

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<sup>6</sup> This chapter is based largely on interviews conducted by the author. Endeavouring to preserve the privacy of the people who contributed to this study, and since their identity adds or detracts nothing to or from the academic quality of this research, I marked the interviews conducted for this work 'anonymous'.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Ambrose, 'The Civil War Round Tables', *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Summer, 1959), p. 257-8.

<sup>8</sup> On GAR encampments see: Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (N.J., 1999), pp. 49-69.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, *Time Machines*, pp. 137-8.

In 1951, F. R. D. Marshall, a Civil War enthusiast, founded the Confederate Caucus in Sutton, Surrey, and marked what was to be the beginning of decades of diverse popular activity revolving around the Civil War in Britain. Not much is known about Marshall or about this early “discussion group”, which seems to have left little evidence of its existence.<sup>10</sup> According to its founder, the society was “a group of serious students of the Confederate and Civil War history, its main object being to hold regular meetings to discuss the subject and all new book publications, films, plays etc., on television and cinema screens, that dealt with some facet or aspect of it”.<sup>11</sup> Despite its still somewhat obscure origins, it is clear from its emphasis on studying the war that the Confederate Caucus followed the practice of Civil War Round Tables in the United States. As will become clearer in what follows, during the 1950s and 1960s Marshall cultivated a wide and branching net of personal connections with Americans who were involved in Civil War activities in the United States. In all likelihood, based on this network, Marshall imported the increasingly popular Round Table activity from the United States to Britain, as he later did with other sorts of activities. What is also clear is that as early as 1951 Marshall was exposed to American representations of the Civil War through books, films, plays and television programmes that were available to him in his country.

As seemed to be the case for Marshall’s interest in the conflict, the Civil War first penetrated the consciousness of future British founders and members of Civil War societies primarily through American popular culture. As demonstrated below, this was carried by agents – such as the television, the cinema, books and people – who

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<sup>10</sup> Robin M. G. Forsey, ‘Editorial’, *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1990), no page number.

<sup>11</sup> A letter from Marshall to Karl S. Betts, Executive Director, Civil War Centennial Commission, Washington, D.C., from 4 Sep. 1959, Foreign Organizations, 1959-64, Records of the National Park Service, 1785 – 2006, Box 73, National Archives and Records Administration (henceforth cited as NARA).

could have crossed the Atlantic when most Britons, or Americans, could have not. Before the age of transatlantic mass tourism in the 1970s and 1980s, British middle and working class, comprising the bulk membership of Civil War societies in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, were largely dependent upon American export of Civil War narratives, images and information.<sup>12</sup> Recalling the scope of Civil War re-enactment in Britain in the 1960s, a founder of the country's first Civil War re-enactment society noted that, "fifty years ago, there was nothing. Maybe in America but going there was a dream."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the journal of one British Civil War society enthusiastically published low-quality pictures taken by a member during his visit to Fort Darling in 1962, illustrating the rarity of such direct experience, geographically possible, of course, only in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

However, as the story of the Confederate Research Club (CRC) illustrated, through the agency of American popular culture, the British public had a range of Civil War representations available in their country. In February 1953, three Civil War enthusiasts formed the CRC in Portsmouth, Hampshire. Similar to the newly born Confederate Caucus, the CRC, too, followed the format of Civil War Round Tables activity in the United States. By 1956, Patrick C. Courtney, one of the club's founders, could thus say that the CRC ran its activity "along the lines of the Civil War Round Tables", which, as noted, flourished in the United States but not yet in Britain.<sup>15</sup> Following in the tradition of the Round Tables, according to its constitution the CRC aspired to "promote and advance research and study of the Confederate history,

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<sup>12</sup> Victor T. C. Middleton and L. J. Lickorish, *British Tourism: The Remarkable Story of Growth* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 75-9 and 96-105.

<sup>13</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 29 Apr. 2011.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal of Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov. 1962), pp. 38-41.

<sup>15</sup> Courtney to Mary Elizabeth Massey, 2 Oct. 1956, Mary Elizabeth Massey Papers, Acc 20 Manuscript Collection, Box 3, Folder 22, The Confederate Research Club 1955-1956, Winthrop University Archives. (henceforth cited as WUA).

especially Confederate activities in the United Kingdom and Europe [...].”<sup>16</sup> During club dinners, members of the CRC heard papers on topics such as “The ‘*Alabama*’ and the Law” by archivist and librarian Rupert Charles Jarvis, and “Confederate Humour and Morale” by Thomas Green, another founder. The club’s official journal, *The New Index*, reported on current affairs and published members’ independent studies on themes related to the Civil War. On 1 January 1961, the CRC changed its title and officially became the American Civil War Round Table of London, England and shortly thereafter the American Civil War Round Table UK (ACWRT UK), which still exists today. “It was a dining club, meet periodically, have dinners together”, recalled a veteran member this period of transition.<sup>17</sup> Broadening its scope of interest beyond the history of the Confederacy, the ACWRT UK continued the scholarly tradition of the CRC, and saw itself as an organisation “dedicated to the study of all aspects of the civil war [*sic*].”<sup>18</sup>

The founders and future members of the CRC were exposed to the Civil War well before the club was established in 1953. In a letter from August 1955 to historian Mary Elizabeth Massey, then in Winthrop College, South Carolina, Courtney wrote that it was the re-issuing in Britain of the film *Gone with the Wind* in 1953 that had flared the enthusiasm of the founders and motivated them to establish the club.<sup>19</sup> However, by the time he wrote the letter the club had already listed more than 70 members and Courtney himself reported that by the time the CRC was established, “scattered Confederates” already existed in Britain.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, then, by 1953 future

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<sup>16</sup> The Constitution and Rules of the Confederate Research Club, *Official Handbook of the Confederate Research Club for 1959-1960*, p. 6, undated, Records, 1953-2004; Series 3: Civil War History, Box 4, Kent State University, Special Collections and Archives. (henceforth cite as KSU)

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, interview, Oxford, Oxfordshire, 9 Apr. 2011.

<sup>18</sup> ACWRT UK website, <http://www.americancivilwar.org.uk/about-us.php>. Accessed on 17 Aug. 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Courtney to Massey, 16 Aug. 1955, Mary Elizabeth Massey Papers, Acc 20 Manuscript Collection, Box 3, Folder 22, The Confederate Research Club 1955-1956, WUA.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

CRC members were familiar with the Civil War. That is hardly surprising considering that, as this thesis shows, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Civil War had been projected in Britain as part of the ever-growing American cultural export. More specifically, as the previous chapter showed, Civil War cinema was a pivotal American cultural agent that exported Civil War representations to the broader British public. Many British Civil War enthusiasts today recall how intrigued by the war they became after watching *The Red Badge of Courage* (John Huston, 1951) or John Wayne films.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, *GWTW* was a success in Britain already during the Second World War and along with other contemporary Civil War films exposed the British public to the conflict.<sup>22</sup> The founders of the CRC, like many in Britain, were lured and motivated by the lasting influence of the film.

Narratives and representations of the Civil War likewise arrived in Britain with Americans who consumed them as an integral part of their own popular culture.<sup>23</sup> Illustrating this point, another early source of influence on the development of the CRC (later the ACWRT UK) was Second World War American GIs, also functioning as culture carriers.<sup>24</sup> As one ACWRT UK veteran member recalled:

I was born at the start of the Second World War. Towards the end of the war, where I lived in Liverpool there were American bases. I had a friend who have four older sisters, and each one of the sisters had an American boyfriend. [...] the war was just finished [and] there were no sweets, no chocolate, no magazines, [and they brought] American magazines, comics, [...] and in these comics [were] stories about the American Civil War. I started to read these comics and books and got very interested from about 9 years of age.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 28 May 2011; anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 30 May 2011.

<sup>22</sup>Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: the British Cinema in the Second World War* (London, 2007), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>Will Kaufman, *The Civil War in American Culture* (Edinburgh, 2006).

<sup>24</sup>David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (London, 1995), p. xxiv; Jenel Virden, *Good-bye, Piccadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana, 1996).

<sup>25</sup>Anonymous, interview, Oxford, 8 Apr. 2011.

Achieving its central place in American culture during the twentieth century, the war became part of the United States' official and unofficial, intentional and unintentional cultural export that had reached the broader public abroad.

The late 1950s saw the emergence of another kind of Civil War society in Britain, different from the ones that were shaped along the lines of the Round Tables. This organisation came about as an outcome of personal connections, which was another method for bridging over the Atlantic. By the close of the decade, F. R. D. Marshall, the father of the Confederate Caucus, had initiated a fruitful relation with Donald A. Ramsey from the Confederate High Command (CHC) in the United States. This personal connection shortly gave birth to the British branch of the society.<sup>26</sup> Similar to its American counterpart, the British branch of the CHC was a military-oriented organisation whose members carried military titles and dressed in Confederate-like uniforms. A Civil War enthusiast remembered his first encounter with the CHC:

when I get there [...] I knocked on the door and this woman answered and she's all in this bloody crinoline [...] Gone With the Wind sort of thing [...] and she introduced me to the guy I spoke to on the phone, and he's a full-blown major in the Confederate Army. He got uniforms but it was [...] a bit Hollywood-style. I got in there and there's a room full of them. They're all officers, with their ladies, and I thought to myself "oh dear, this is strange" [...] anyway, this group, I thought "I'm having none of this, I don't want to get dressed-up as a bloody officer" [...] I thought it would be like a historical society.<sup>27</sup>

An advertisement in a magazine motivated this Civil War fan in the early 1960s to look for a social club dealing with the war he had, by then, already known and loved. However, since re-enactment was just emerging in the United States and since it was unfamiliar in Britain, the activity of the CHC seemed strange to this Briton, currently an active re-enactor who often dresses as a Confederate soldier. The British branch of

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<sup>26</sup> Robin M. G. Forsey, 'Editorial', *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

the CHC was something of a hybrid. It did not perform re-enactments as in the United States, nor did it promote academic research about the war, as did the Round Tables. Consequently, although it existed until the mid 1990s, early on, members found it unsatisfactory neither as a re-enactment society nor as a scholarly setting. These, in turn, became the founders of another research society and of the first Civil War re-enactment group in Britain.

The story of the Confederate Historical Society (CHS) began as another initiative of Marshall, when the founder of the CHC in Britain grew critical of his own creation. Marshall's opposition to the CHC's militaristic and non-academic character led him to head a dissenting group of members to establish the CHS in February 1962.<sup>28</sup> The society – “for those interested in the American Civil War and in particular the rise and fall of the Confederate States of America” – met bimonthly at 75 York Street in London, and from July 1962, issued an official journal.<sup>29</sup> Until its final dissolution in the mid 1990s, the CHS focused on historical research about the war and published numerous studies by its members.<sup>30</sup>

As Civil War societies began to flourish in Britain, they, too, became Anglo-American cultural agents and platforms for Civil War transatlantic exchanges. For example, early on, the CRC listed several American members alongside its British membership. In July 1955, the editor of *The New Index* even noted that, of the society's new recruits, “out of eleven there are ten Americans and one Englishman.” “It is apparent”, he urged, “that greater effort is needed in the recruiting drives here in

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<sup>28</sup> *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter 1990).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1962).

<sup>30</sup> The Society stopped its work due to financial difficulties between 1973 and 1982.

England.”<sup>31</sup> As the club grew so did its bi-national membership, until gradually it became a centre for both British and American Civil War fans outside the United States. The Anglo-American composition of the CHS was no different. Initially comprising 43 all-British members, by 1968 the society registered 288 members of which 131 were British, 136 were Americans and 21 members were from other parts of the world. More important than numbers, which in fact never soared as the heads of the CHS had hoped, was the fact that the London-based society became an international authority on the Civil War and a platform from which to transmit representations of the Civil War across the ocean. In 1962, for example, William Payne, a Texan member of the CHS sent his British associates over a hundred Civil War stamps from the centennial special collection that was issued at the time in the United States.<sup>32</sup> As this case demonstrated, the society served as an Anglo-American hub and a conduit through which to transmit Civil War commodities from the United States to Britain. Ideas, opinions and images were transmitted, in both directions, even more frequently than artefacts with every issue of the club’s journal.

Like the CHS, the Southern Skirmish Association (SoSkAn<sup>33</sup>), Britain’s first Civil War re-enactment club, was a recalcitrant child of the Confederate High Command. Founded by four members of the CHC who were dissatisfied with the scope of the club’s re-enacting activity, the SoSkAn issued its first membership card on 1 June 1968. As a founder of the club, then in his early twenties, recalled, after four years in the ranks of the CHC, “I wanted more. I wanted this. [points out to the SoSkAn’s fully deployed camp around us].”<sup>34</sup> Soon, the SoSkAn became a beacon for

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Notes for the Month’, *The New Index, Journal of the Confederate Research Club*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (July 1955), pp. 13-14.

<sup>32</sup> *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Nov. 1962), p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> SoSkAn is the official abbreviation used by the organisation.

<sup>34</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 29 Apr. 2011.

others who sought to re-enact the Civil War and found the CHC unsatisfactory. With 19 participants taking part in the club's first event, the SoSkAn had reached 750 registered members at its peak and today lists about 400 re-enactors.<sup>35</sup>

The emergence and growth of the SoSkAn, and indeed of popular Civil War activity in Britain, owed a debt directly and indirectly to the leading Civil War transatlantic agent of the time – the celebration of the war's one-hundredth Anniversary. Re-enactment activities, for example, penetrated public consciousness in the United States and subsequently in Britain on a comparatively large scale, gaining a permanent foothold, only during and immediately after the Civil War centennial.<sup>36</sup> The Americans began to prepare for the events of 1961-1965 as early as 1957, when an Act of Congress created the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC). Whilst scholars have examined the work of the Commission and the influence of the celebration more generally in the United States, less is known about their impact in Britain and on British Civil War societies.<sup>37</sup>

For one thing, the celebrations tied the British societies in more closely with events in the United States and led to a revision of British societies' fields of interest. In the late 1950s, for example, the Confederate Research Club "was invited to become a British corresponding member of the Civil War Centennial Commission" and Courtney was appointed member of the Advisory Council of the CWCC.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, a club member explained, "[...] when it was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in

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<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge, 2007), pp. 127-33.

<sup>37</sup> The most comprehensive and updated account of the centennial is Cook's work, cited above. See also: John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 206-29.

<sup>38</sup> For Courtney's letter of acceptance of the appointment see: Letter from Courtney to Grant, 2 May 1958, Advisory Council - Organizations, 1958-61, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 6, file: Advisory Council – Miscellaneous, NARA.

1961, the group got some sort of a revival in terms of interests and they changed their name [...]. We changed our name, to the American Civil War Round Table UK [...] to join ourselves to a wider group.”<sup>39</sup>

The CRC had connections with similar American societies already during the early 1950s. However, the official link with the centennial celebration in the United States, established through the CWCC, bound the British society more firmly to American currents and led to a profound change in the orientation of the society. From a society explicitly associated with the Confederacy, the CRC became a club dedicated to the study of the Civil War as a whole. The depth and full significance of this change, which was a result of contemporary developments in the United States, is discussed at length in the second section below. Although the initiative was not always its own, the CWCC continued to endow British societies with the authority to represent the Commission and the centennial in Britain. In that way, Marshall and his Confederate High Command became official centennial exponents too, following Marshall’s repeated requests.<sup>40</sup> Gradually, more and more bridges between the United States and Britain were established through the events and organisations surrounding and implicit in the centennial celebrations.

The Civil War exhibition, held in the American Embassy in London in 1962, demonstrated another aspect of the centennial’s impact on British Civil War societies. Taking part in the exhibition was a group of people dressed in Civil War uniforms, all of whom were British. A founder of the SoSkAn recalled his enthusiasm upon first spotting them in the following way:

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<sup>39</sup>Anonymous, interview, Oxford, Oxfordshire, 9 Apr. 2011.

<sup>40</sup> See U. S. Grant III’s letter to Marshall from 14 Mar., 1961, inviting him to become a member of the Commission’s Advisory Council: Advisory Council - Organizations, 1958-61, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 6, NARA.

[...] then my wife said to me come inside and have a look at what's on television. This was in 1962. I went in, and on television there was an exhibition at the American Embassy of the American Civil War [...] A group of English Civil War enthusiasts was staged in the exhibition. So now, I'm hungry. The next day [...] I didn't go to work, I went down to the West End and I went in [...] and I met these guys standing there in their uniforms [...] and it was a group called the Confederate High Command. [...] I joined them and I stayed with them from '63 'till late '67.<sup>41</sup>

As this case illustrated, the centennial publicised the existence in Britain of Civil War societies and brought them, and indeed the Civil War itself, to the public's attention. This, in turn, gave Civil War enthusiasts who previously had had no frame within which to express and develop their interest in the conflict a local structure with which to associate and within which to act. Reporting on the growing enthusiasm about the war across the ocean at that time, Marshall thanked the Executive Director of the CWCC, Karl S. Betts, for the material he had sent him, which helped "very considerably in our plans to observe the Civil War in this country amongst the many enthusiasts we are recruiting over here".<sup>42</sup>

In addition to official initiatives, unofficial centennial by-products flooded the British public sphere during the celebrations and brought the war to an ever-widening British public. "When the centenary celebrations came up, in the 1960s", recalled a veteran member of the SoSkAn, "I collected anything I could get my hand on".<sup>43</sup> Indeed there was a lot to grab. Although not an official centennial merchandise, one of the most popular and oft mentioned sources of acquaintance with the war amongst British fans was the 82 Civil War News bubblegum cards, issued in Britain by A&BC in 1962.<sup>44</sup> The above member of the SoSkAn recalled:

During the 60s, a company called ABC Ltd. [*sic*], they brought out a set of cards [...] and one side of the card they had a reproduction of [...] some action that took

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<sup>41</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 29 Apr. 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Marshall to Betts, 24 Apr. 1961, Foreign Organizations, 1959-64, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 73, NARA.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>44</sup> In the U.S. they were issued by Topps Company.

place in the Civil War. On the back there was like a newspaper article of that event [...] All the kids collected these bubblegum cards [...] and I collected two sets of these cards [...]<sup>45</sup>

Popular ‘cultural goods’, or just plain merchandise, released officially but also unofficially during the centennial, such as games, academic studies, novels, television specials, films and stamps, generated enthusiasm and brought the Civil War closer to the British public than ever before. For many it was the first step towards either joining an existing British war society or establishing one.

Clearly, then, even if there was no British arsenal of Civil War popular representations and activities available, by the time British societies began to take shape in the early 1950s, their members had a large repository of American representations and forms of activities from which they could draw. With the coming of the centennial, this repository grew significantly and reached a peak. However, as their fascination with the war grew, the American export of the Civil War ultimately became insufficient for British enthusiasts. Early on, from every corner of the growing Civil War community in Britain came a call for more information, more primary and secondary sources and more popular goods. “The major sources are usually American”, regretted M. A. Rich of the CHS in March 1963, “and little can be gleaned from short trade advertisement in American magazines.”<sup>46</sup> In subsequent volumes, Rich practically begged members with any connection to the United States to send the editorial staff illustrations, pictures and maps, as they did not exist in Britain.<sup>47</sup>

That British enthusiasts in the 1960s often argued that they suffered from a lack of Civil War materials testified to the immense, and growing, interest in the war in Britain at the time. It also revealed an unusual course of action in contemporary

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<sup>45</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>46</sup> *Journal of Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Mar. 1963), p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 106; and *Ibid*, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 75.

American foreign policy, shedding light on the war's intrinsic power to attract British fans. As discussed in chapter three, only a short while before the official commencement of the Civil War centennial, in 1959, the USIA endeavoured to use Lincoln's image as a way of projecting an attractive image of the United States. This was done as part of the American Cold War foreign policy. Accordingly, a massive international programme was crafted and Britain was to be one of the USIA's targets.<sup>48</sup> The case of the Civil War centennial was different. The "Official Program of the Civil War Centennial Commission" from July 1958, for example, revealed no international aspirations, in Britain or elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> The USIA, too, seemed to have not been involved in the planning, and the events remained chiefly in the hands of the CWCC and the National Park Service (NPS). It was probably only in 1961 that Edmund C. Gass of the CWCC recommended to the USIA that it take upon itself to promote the centennial for the Emancipation Proclamation abroad.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, whilst the files of the NPS are bursting with letters from Britons asking for material and support in promoting Civil War events in their country, the records of the USIA remain relatively silent.

Furthermore, whereas the British public demonstrated a healthy appetite for anything relating to the Civil War – and opened the door for American agencies executing public diplomacy, projecting American values and putting the United States' soft power into effect – officials in the United States often failed to exploit this opportunity. On 13 December 1963, for example, S. C. Pemberton from London wrote to the CWCC that he "must express his regret that no C.W. Exhibition has been

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<sup>48</sup>Sexton, 'Projecting Lincoln, Projecting America', in: Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton, *The Global Lincoln* (New York, 2011), pp. 293-5.

<sup>49</sup>"Official Program of the Civil War Centennial Commission", Records of the NPS, Civil War Centennial Commission, Subject Files, 1957-1966, Legislation, Magazines, NARA.

<sup>50</sup> Edmund E. Gass, Emancipation Commemoration, Historical Societies, 1958-60, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 80, undated, NARA.

mounted in London apart from a very small effort by a small society here.”<sup>51</sup> Pemberton, introducing himself as a long-time Civil War autodidact, expected more from the CWCC than to leave official celebrations to the British branch of the Confederate High Command. Many similar British requests for material and information were answered with an equal number of official American letters of regret. When British enthusiasts, such as W. A. T. Banks from Yorkshire, had turned to the United States Information Service (USIS) in London for information about the centennial or even with plans to initiate Civil War events in Britain, rather than encouraging them and supplying them with material, USIS agents advised them to contact the NPS in the United States directly.<sup>52</sup> From there British devotees could usually have obtained some material originally designated for the American public. This lethargy should be set in opposition to the American efforts in 1959 to construct a specifically British image of Lincoln that would correlate with British perceptions of their own national icons, as Jay Sexton has shown.<sup>53</sup>

That is not to say that the CWCC did not look outside the borders of the United States at all. However, even when the Commission did contemplate plans abroad, Britain received relatively limited attention. Sidney Morgan’s mission to Europe demonstrated this. On 6 October 1961, Morgan – former U.S. Military Attaché to Allied Governments in Exile – was appointed the CWCC’s representative in Europe.<sup>54</sup> On 2 September, he reported on his mission to Britain. Morgan had intended merely to meet Marshall from the Confederate Caucus and Courtney from the CRC, and to

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<sup>51</sup> Pemberton to the CWCC, 13 Dec. 1963, General Correspondence, 1963-66, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 75, File: General Correspondence – 1963, NARA.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Banks to the New York State CWCC, 4 Jun. 1961, Foreign Organizations, 1959-64, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 73, NARA.

<sup>53</sup> Sexton, ‘Projecting Lincoln, Projecting America’, pp. 293-5.

<sup>54</sup> For the letter of appointment see: Foreign Organizations, 1959-64, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 73, NARA.

contact American travellers who came to Britain in search of Robert E. Lee's ancestral history. This was the sum of his British ambition. In a laconic report, barely two pages in length, Morgan noted that he had met with Marshall (yet missed Courtney and the American pilgrims) and attended a Confederate Caucus dinner. This he regarded his "most outstanding success in England."<sup>55</sup> By comparison, the previous report, on Germany, was more than twice as long, far more detailed and it reflected Morgan's earnestness as to the many objectives that he had set to himself and to the CWCC in that country.<sup>56</sup>

Of course, for American foreign policy Germany was a far more sensitive target than Britain was, as Morgan's report clearly reflected. "The U.S. Air force in Europe", he wrote, "has the same problem of public relations with the German people, official and personal. Here again the historic fact that 175,000 Germans fought on the Union side during the Civil War makes an interesting and especially timely subject for exploitation."<sup>57</sup> Surely American public relations in Britain were better. By this time the American military presence in Britain was also far less significant than in Germany and frictions were less likely to take place. Whilst the reasons for neglecting Britain might be clear, the fact remains that, officially, the United States barely used the events and opportunities surrounding the centennial in order to appeal to the British public.

Yet it is precisely in light of this that the intrinsic power of the war to attract the British and motivate them to align themselves with the United States and with American history becomes all the more evident. Indeed, Britons were not discouraged. Despite minimal official support, enthusiasts initiated Civil War activities in Britain,

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<sup>55</sup> 'Report No. 6, Great Britain', 2 Sep. 1961, *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> 'Report No. 5, Germany Again', 7 July 1961, *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

based on the aforementioned unofficial networks. Through these activities they endeavoured to tie Britain in with the American celebrations and involve it with American history. Between 13 June and 30 August 1961, for example, the city of Liverpool initiated and hosted a special exhibition entitled “Merseyside and the American Civil War.” Amongst the contributors that the British initiators harnessed to promote and take part in the project were the CWCC, American and British museums, private businesses, private people and public institutions.<sup>58</sup> The exhibition, wrote E. W. Paget-Tomlinson, Liverpool Museums’ Keeper of Shipping, to Gass in Washington, “will feature Merseyside’s contribution to the conflict.”<sup>59</sup> To that end, read a supplementary leaflet, the display “follows the course of the war in outline, but places particular emphasis on the construction of Confederate ships in Birkenhead and Liverpool and on the activities of the Liverpool built and owned blockade runners, to draw attention to the part played by our community in the conflict.”<sup>60</sup> A special place was dedicated to the story of the *CSS Alabama* and the *CSS Shenandoah*, which were built in Birkenhead and Scotland respectively, as well as to the Trent Affair. The exhibition was a success and about 77,000 people visited it in less than three months.<sup>61</sup> Civil War exhibitions of this sort were staged elsewhere in Britain as well, as the 1961 display at the Imperial War Museum in London.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, through popular activities of this kind, British enthusiasts often endeavoured to export to the United States their interest in and connection to the Civil War. In so doing, they sought to use war representations to pull the United States toward Britain and promote Anglo-American affinities. Marshall, for example,

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<sup>58</sup> See the programme for the exhibition: Foreign Organizations, 1959-64, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006 – Box 73, NARA.

<sup>59</sup> Paget-Tomlinson to Gass, 17 Jan. 1961, *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> See the programme for the exhibition, *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> A letter from T. A. Hume Director, City of Liverpool Museums, to Gass, 1 Nov. 1961, *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> About this exhibition see for example in a letter from Marshall to Betts, 8 Mar. 1961, *Ibid.*

explicitly stated that the Military Historical Society, which organised the abovementioned exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, aspired to contact the different state Centennial Commissions and exchange Civil War material, in order “to further promote Anglo-U.S. good relations.”<sup>63</sup> On another occasion, Marshall noted that the cooperation with the CWCC “show[s] how very much the two peoples of our respective nations, are willing to co-operate at all levels, and how strong is the common bond of language and military tradition between us.”<sup>64</sup>

The impact of the British export of their view of the war is hard to determine. What is evident is that the Americans acknowledged that Britons could enrich their understanding of their own war and that the conflict had a British perspective. “We are much interested”, wrote Betts to Courtney in 1958:

in anything you may turn up in England. Broadly speaking we would like to know about the activities of the Confederate commissioners over there and more details on the life of Judah Benjamin. We are publishing a monthly newsletter and it occurs to me that you may be in a position to supply us with some completely new historical material which would prove of great interest to our readers.<sup>65</sup>

Reports and pictures from the abovementioned exhibition in Liverpool had arrived in the United States as well and were distributed to the American public by the CWCC. The immense and growing British fascination with the Civil War, and the war’s subsequent omnipresence in Britain, also made clear that the conflict was attractive in its own right and regardless of American effort, or lack thereof, to market it.

Cut off from easy use of American sources, Britons focused on expanding their knowledge of the British aspect of the conflict. “In particular”, stressed M. A. Rich of

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<sup>63</sup>A letter from Marshall to the CWCC, 17 Jan. 1963, *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Marshall to James I. Robertson Jr., Executive Director of the CWCC, 13 Apr. 1963, Historical Societies, 1963, Records of the National Park Service, 1785 – 2006, BOX 78, file: Historical Societies – 1963, NARA.

<sup>65</sup> Betts to Courtney, 12 May 1958, Advisory Council - Organizations, 1958-61, Records of the National Park Service, 1785 – 2006, Box 6, File: Advisory Council – Miscellaneous, NARA.

the CHS in 1963, “the editor would like to receive material dealing with the links between this country and America during the period of the Civil War.”<sup>66</sup> British sources, as opposed to the American ones, were easily available. Ceaselessly the CHS urged its members to use British primary sources (such as historical records of *The Times*), to broaden the scope of inquiry beyond the borders of the United States and to look for the war’s historical impact on Britain. And when they looked, they found. Thus Britain became, for those enthusiasts, a memorial and site of commemoration for the Civil War. In the late 1950s, for example, the Confederate Research Club established the Bulloch Memorial Fund, “for the purpose of restoring and permanently maintaining in a suitable condition the grave of Commander James D. Bulloch.”<sup>67</sup> Bulloch, a Georgian Confederate naval officer, was a secret agent, fundraiser and agitator who contributed immensely to the Confederate efforts in Britain during the Civil War, especially with regard to shipbuilding. After the war he settled with his family in Liverpool, where, in 1901, he died.<sup>68</sup>

Alongside memorial sites for Americans in Britain, British enthusiasts began to elevate and commemorate the British ties to the conflict. Some sought local graves of Britons who had had direct connection to the Civil War. Friends, recalled a founder of the SoSkAn, “went down to Portsmouth and they found [Arthur] Fremantle’s overgrown grave in an old cemetery and they’ve been in touch with the authorities [...] and they’ve come along, clean up the grave and bought a lovely head-stone.”<sup>69</sup> Similarly, a report on a British soldier who fought on board the *CSS Alabama* led one CHS member to ask his fellows in 1963 whether there were “any other memorials in

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<sup>66</sup> *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Mar. 1963), p. 71.

<sup>67</sup> *Official Handbook of the Confederate Research Club for 1959-1960*, p. 12, undated, Special Collections and Archives, records, 1953-2004; Series 3: Civil War History, Box 4, KSU.

<sup>68</sup> For an account of Bulloch activities in Britain see, Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford, 2005), ch. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 29 Apr. 2011.

this country to Civil War dead?”<sup>70</sup> A letter to the *Daily Telegraph* requesting information about Britons who fought in the war received over a hundred replies.<sup>71</sup> Enthusiasts also conducted memorials for both British and American fallen soldiers, and SoSkAn members, in full gear, participated in services in several cemeteries across Britain.<sup>72</sup> Others organised Civil War tours to British “battlefields”, such as the Wirral area, where, for example, the *CSS Alabama* was built.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, for Civil War fans, the war became “a very British affair” and Britain became an active, productive source for Civil War information, artefacts and representations.<sup>74</sup>

Ultimately, the growing British basis of Civil War activities and of British Civil War resources was to become fertile ground for additional local popular groups. Thus in 1975 six Civil War enthusiasts formed the American Civil War Society (ACWS), a second major British re-enactment society. By then, these Civil War buffs had not only American export of war representations and activities to draw on, but also a diverse British arsenal. “Because they [the SoSkAn] were always down south, I never joined them because I live up way in the north”, recalled an ACWS founder.<sup>75</sup> Additional groups drew on this expanding British base, and Civil War activities have since spread to all parts of the United Kingdom. The Confederate and Union Reenactment Society (CURS), for example, was established in 1997 by a member of the SoSkAn to bring together mainly members from Wales;<sup>76</sup> and although less frequently, events have been taking place in Scotland and Northern Ireland, too.

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<sup>70</sup> *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Mar. 1963), p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>72</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 1 May 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Anonymous (Civil War tour organiser on the Wirral), interview, Oxford, 8 Apr. 2011.

<sup>74</sup> ACWRT UK website. Accessed on 19 Aug. 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Anonymous, telephone interview, 5 Aug. 2011.

<sup>76</sup> See the club’s website: <http://curs1.homestead.com/SOCIETY.html>. Accessed on 22 Aug. 2012.

The coming age of mass tourism meant a further line of communication between Civil War bases on either side of the Atlantic. Thus in 1982, a first delegation of 76 ACWS re-enactors marched in full gear in North Carolina;<sup>77</sup> and in August 1989, Leighton Hall in Lancashire hosted an international event in which 151 American re-enactors took part alongside over 300 British, 30 Germans, 16 French, 2 Belgians and 2 Irish participants.<sup>78</sup> These mutual exchanges continue to this day and mark the coming of age of the transatlantic network that gave birth to Civil War activities in Britain in the 1950s.

The question thus arises as to what this network was able to transmit. The next section suggests that what crossed the Atlantic were not only historical tidbits about the war or forms of popular activities. Rather it shows the exchange also of values, conventions of commemoration, identities and heritage. These, in turn, cast light on why Britons found the Civil War uniquely appealing. These exchanges also allow for a deeper examination of the ways in which the British utilised the conflict.

## II

David Lowenthal has argued that heritage and history differ from one another in their aspirations. Whereas both are concerned with the portrayal of the past, history strives to depict it as closely as possible, whilst heritage consciously distorts it in order to celebrate the present.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, heritage-creation necessarily entails de- and re-construction of the past as well as its glorification, as opposed to historical exercise that is determined to avoid precisely that. In the United States, Civil War symbols,

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<sup>77</sup> Anonymous, telephone interview, 5 Aug. 2011.

<sup>78</sup> *Journal of Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Winter, 1990), pp. 1-4. One organiser of the event recalls also re-enactors from Russia and Australia, as well as about 2000 participants, including families: anonymous telephone interview, 5 Aug. 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York, 1996), pp. 127-68.

such as the Confederate flag or the battlefield in Gettysburg, have been undergoing constant de- and re-construction, and the heritage embedded in them has been in constant flux.<sup>80</sup> Claimed to idealise and distort the past, the activity of popular Civil War societies in the United States, and especially of re-enactment groups, tends to fall within the category of heritage-creation, too.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Civil War popular activity in the United States, similar to other Civil War commodities, has served as a means to fashion, re-fashion and glorify the war and to distribute American national heritage.

Along with, and through the transmission of, popular goods, activities and historical knowledge, transatlantic agents also carried with them to Britain this changing American heritage of the Civil War. As discussed in the previous chapter, against the background of the Cold War and during the centennial, when Civil War popular movements in Britain also began to take shape, the Americans sought to represent the Civil War as a symbol of American patriotism.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly, popular commodity, public societies and official celebrations aimed to present an inclusive narrative of the war that highlighted reconciliation and unity and was free of contentions. As seen, cinema was a primary method to project such representations of the United States. As shown in the preceding chapter, films such as *Major Dundee* (1965), promoted messages of unity and reconciliation by, for example, blurring the

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<sup>80</sup> Jim Weeks, *Gettysburg: Memory, Market, and an American Shrine* (Princeton, 2003), pp. 4-5, 115-127 and 144-5; John M. Coski, *The Confederate Battle Flag: America's Most Embattled Emblem* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), pp. 190-216.

<sup>81</sup> Amanda Elizabeth Kennedy, *The Social Rules of Engagement: Race and Gender Relations in Civil War Reenactment* (M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 2004), pp. 12-15 and 25-7; Tom Dunning, 'Civil War Re-Enactments: Performance as a Cultural Practice', *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (July 2002), p. 69; Athinodoros Chronis, 'Coconstructing Heritage at the Gettysburg Storyscape', *Annals Of Tourism Research*, Vol., 32, No. 2 (2005), pp. 380-9; Mitchell D. Strauss, 'Identity Construction among Confederate Civil War Reenactors: A Study of Dress, Stage Props, and Discourse', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2003), pp. 151-3; Strauss, 'A Framework for Assessing Military Dress Authenticity in Civil War Reenacting', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2001), pp. 149-52; James Oscar Farmer, 'Playing Rebels: Reenactment as Nostalgia and Defense of the Confederacy in the Battle of Aiken', *Southern Cultures*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 49-51; Wendy Bryce Wilhelm and Sandra Mottner, 'An Empirical Study of the Motivations and Consumption Behaviors of Civil War Re-Enactors', pp. 30-9.

<sup>82</sup> Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, pp. 139-53.

difference between North and South and between white and black Americans, and by highlighting instead their common American identity.

Another feature that promoted the conciliatory and uncontested heritage of the Civil War was an emphasis on its military aspect. In this sense, the popular sphere resembled the military sphere, discussed here in the second chapter.<sup>83</sup> Warfare and soldiers, unlike politics and politicians, seemed neutral. The Army, and since the late nineteenth century primarily the common citizen-soldier, was depicted in American culture as a-political and as a victim of the circumstances rather than an active agent that affected them.<sup>84</sup> The Civil War News bubblegum cards, for example, brought into the limelight notions of wartime heroism, altruistic sacrifice, the folly and horrors of war, cross-sectional gallantry and the naivety of the common citizen-soldier. “The brave soldiers met head-on”, reported card number 81 on the Battle of Nashville in 1864, “in one of the bloodiest battles of the war.”<sup>85</sup> Alongside the glorification of the common soldier, the cards also fostered a cult of military leaders. “The South has a new hero today in General Stonewall Jackson”, read card number 11, “the fiery leader led the Southern troops to a sweeping victory at Cross Keys, earlier today.”<sup>86</sup> Lastly, the cards conveyed that in the Civil War, the humanity of the soldiers had transcended sectionalism. The back of card number 52, entitled Friendly Enemies, featured a Confederate soldier nursing a Union foe and read: “Since medical aid could not be administered to all, often two wounded soldiers would try to help and bandage one another [...] Once wounded, the soldiers no longer thought of war, and only tried to

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<sup>83</sup>See also: Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, N.C., 2003), pp. 103-21.

<sup>84</sup> William A. Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill, 2004), pp. 127-30.

<sup>85</sup> The cards and the texts on their backs are easily accessible through the internet. For this study, I used Bob Heffner’s Civil War News Cards Homepage:

[http://www.bobheffner.com/cwn/a\\_story.shtml#anchor87](http://www.bobheffner.com/cwn/a_story.shtml#anchor87). Accessed on 20 Aug. 2011.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*

help themselves survive.”<sup>87</sup> As important as the notions and themes that the cards featured and perpetuated, were those that they omitted. Lending focus to military affairs, politics was outside the scope of the narrative, as was the subject of slavery.

The five official Centennial Stamps were not, in substance, different to the playing cards, but in addition, they advanced the importance of forgiveness as a lesson from the war. The first four stamps – entitled Fort Sumter, Shiloh, The Wilderness and Gettysburg – featured only fighting scenes of common soldiers. The last stamp – Appomattox – showed a mourning soldier, with nothing to disclose his sectional affiliation, facing a monument under the caption “with malice toward none...”<sup>88</sup> The soldiers on the stamps were all from the rank-and-file and the war was reduced to a series of battles. In the end, the stamps conveyed, all that remained was to forgive. For that to be possible, all but the soldiers and their heroic sacrifice needed not to be remembered, but rather to be brushed off and forgotten.

However, that Americans had exported their heritage of the Civil War did not necessarily entail that the British assumed it as such, or indeed that they assumed it at all. Why, in fact, should Britons adopt a foreign history and heritage? Why should they celebrate another country’s past or present? As one British film critic wrote, *Major Dundee* was “a rallying point for all the Americans, both Union and Confederate, against the Old World.”<sup>89</sup> What was Britain’s place in this all-American story? Was not the Civil War, as Stephen Hunt has argued, external to British re-enactors’ cultural and historical context?<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> The stamps are available on the internet. See for example: <http://www.collectiblestampgallery.com/proddetail.asp?prod=MY25>. Accessed on 25 Aug. 2011.

<sup>89</sup>*Movie*, No. 14 (Autumn 1965), p. 29.

<sup>90</sup>Hunt, ‘Acting the Part’, p. 387.

Indeed, for many Civil War fans in Britain, the war was in various ways foreign. This, however, was not a source of alienation. Rather, the American origins of the war and of its heritage were often a primary reason for British enthusiasts to assume them. For one thing, the American pedigree of the war enabled Britons to immerse themselves in an historical event that, familiar as it might eventually become after studying and reliving it, allowed nonetheless for a safe degree of detachment. “Because it isn’t our war”, noted one re-enactor when asked why he joined the ACWS, “I’d feel quite uncomfortable [re-enacting a British war], especially in a World War Two environment; because my parents lived through that.”<sup>91</sup> “I am not interested in portraying my English Civil War”, noted another re-enactor, “it’s a bit closer to home.”<sup>92</sup> A foreign war enabled these people to distance themselves from historical affairs, which, being part of their history and identity, might have given rise to overly strong emotions, touch upon open wounds or confront them with dilemmas as to which side to choose.

Furthermore, whereas other foreign wars could have fulfilled Civil War students’ desire to distance themselves from the history that they were re-living, only this war was a war that could have explained the rise of the modern United States. This, in turn, had made it very relevant to contemporary British life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. “Because”, argued a Round Table member when asked about his motivation for joining the club, “in Europe we recognise the impact that America has had on European history, certainly since 1914”. “Without the American Civil War”, he added, “you cannot conceive of America in its present form, [and] America has such a massive influence on us because we now live in the shadow of

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<sup>91</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 16 Apr. 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Anonymous, interview, Tatton Part, Cheshire, 17 Apr. 2011.

America.”<sup>93</sup> Two of his colleagues nodded in agreement. The Civil War was etched into memory and history as the event that gave birth to the modern United States. That United States was the one that fought the world wars; stood against communism; led and influenced global economy; and spread its culture in every media. As such, no other war – not even a different American war – could have explained for the British the sources and character of the shadow under which they have been living for nearly a hundred years.

Britons turned to the Civil War also because they found endless historical bonds tying them to the American conflict. Put differently, evidence shows that British enthusiasts often did not consider the war outside their historical context. Asked why he thought people in Britain have been dedicating themselves to another country’s history, one ACWRT UK member replied: “Don’t ask the members why they are interested in an American historical event, which it was not solely. There were as many events and happenings in the UK and all over Europe directly associated with the ACW as there were in the US.”<sup>94</sup> Becoming aware of the historical involvement of Britain in the war, and of the war’s impact on their country, British enthusiasts developed an historical consciousness that incorporated the Civil War into their national history. One veteran re-enactor, for example, lamented that “it’s a shame that English heritage [downplays] the American Civil War [...] I don’t think they realise the links [...], so many links to justify English heritage.”<sup>95</sup> Whilst for some the war was appealing because it was specifically not British, others turned to it just because they saw it as part of their history.

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<sup>93</sup>Anonymous, interview, Oxford, 9 Apr. 2011.

<sup>94</sup>Email correspondence, anonymous, received on 3 Feb. 2011.

<sup>95</sup>Anonymous, telephone interview, 3 Aug. 2011.

In addition, British fans became fascinated with the Civil War because it was an inexhaustible source of romantic stories. Telling the story of a battle that he could not specifically remember, one member of the ACWS recalled a tale about a soldier that:

was carrying no less than 11 different wounds, none of them fatal, but he was bleeding profusely leaning against the flag. [Then his commander told him]: “sergeant, you’re relieved to go to the rear. He said “why? What have I done wrong?” [...] “you’re bleeding”; “with respect, sir, I haven’t got time to bleed, I’m going back out there”.<sup>96</sup>

The soldier, the re-enactor finished his story, died shortly in battle. The place, date and context of the battle, which the re-enactor forgot, were in fact not at all important. What was important for the British buff was the story of a citizen-soldier who fought gallantly and sacrificed his life for a cause. For that matter, it was not even important if it was the Confederate or Union’s cause since all causes seemed morally justified, especially through the narrative of reconciliation. Seen through the prism of reconciliation, as a SoSkAn member reflected, the war “just grabs the human soul and [shows] just what we’re made of [...], [it] brings out the cream and the spirit of human compassion, the spirit of our humanity.”<sup>97</sup> These values went beyond sectionalism and even beyond the borders of the United States. In addition to ordinary heroes, the war supplied British re-enactors with timeless leaders. “It was the last war that created heroes,” argued a veteran member of the ACWS, “on both sides [...]”<sup>98</sup> Humanity, sacrifice for a supreme cause, heroism and leadership – on both sides – were fused together in the stories about the horrors of war. It was this combination of darkness and light overcoming, which made the Civil War a romantic event.

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<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 28 May 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Anonymous, telephone interview, 3 Aug. 2011.

Finally, Britons appropriated the American war because, rather than being external to their cultural context, they came to see it and the values that it represented deep within this context. Notions that were associated with the Civil War, such as gallantry, unity, humanity and patriotism, allured British enthusiasts. In the context of the war, these were attributed to the North, to the South or, through the prism of reconciliation, to the United States. Subsequently, American patriotism, American gallantry, American unity and American humanity were at the centre of the British understandings of the war. “And then in the end of it”, summarised one British re-enactor the story of the war in a nutshell, “you got the Confederates helping the Union and you got the Union helping the Confederate. Because when all said and done, they were all Americans.”<sup>99</sup>

Maintaining their appeal also as American ideals, upon arrival in Britain these ideals often took on new meanings and references through the act of translation and localisation. Asked about the side he chose to play, one Union re-enactor – appealing to his personal heritage – declared that, “They are just slave-owning scummy rebs. I don’t believe in slavery, I’m a Church of England Christian, and I don’t believe, as a lawyer, in people acting unlawfully and secession is unlawful.”<sup>100</sup> Appealing to their national identity, too, British enthusiasts have linked their country’s heritage, as they saw it, with values that were associated with the Civil War. An ACWRT UK member thus noted that the study of the war is still relevant, as it can inform the nature of Britain’s relationship to the EU.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, rebellion, as both a national and personal British characteristic, has also been a central motivation in joining Civil War clubs. “In these days, everybody wanted to be a reb”, noted an ACWS founder, “[it’s] the

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<sup>99</sup>Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>100</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 15 Apr. 2011.

<sup>101</sup>Anonymous, interview, Oxford, Oxfordshire, 9 Apr. 2011.

British spirit.”<sup>102</sup> A final repetitive theme amongst British enthusiasts has been the notion of the underdog. As one Confederate re-enactor bluntly put it, “it is very British to like the underdog.”<sup>103</sup>

These views revealed the act of translation from ‘American’ to ‘British’. Through representations of the Civil War, the Americans intended to export, project and celebrate their own national identity. To them, naturally, it had nothing to do with the Church of England, with the EU or with the British spirit. As noted, when they wished to use the representation of Lincoln for purposes of public diplomacy, the American information agencies did endeavour to invest his image with British characteristics.<sup>104</sup> However, as shown in the first section above, the Civil War was rarely used to such ends and was thus not charged with “British features” intentionally and in advance. That work was left to the British to carry out. In popular culture, as in other spheres, the British developed their own independent understanding of the American conflict and drew their own lessons from it. These were not always the same interpretations and lessons seen and drawn by the Americans.

Furthermore, in addition to the geographical transplant, inherent in the British reception of Civil War images was an act of de- and re-construction of the war external to its historical context. For example, far from representing the rebel spirit of 1960s and 1970s Britain, Southern secession was, as James McPherson has argued, an archetypal counterrevolutionary act.<sup>105</sup> It was a fight for conservatism, reaction and oppression, as even contemporary Southern leaders acknowledged. Similarly, in the 1860s, the Church of England was not at all supportive of the Union. “The Union

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<sup>102</sup> Anonymous, telephone interview, 3 Aug. 2011.

<sup>103</sup> Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>104</sup> Sexton, ‘Projecting Lincoln, Projecting America’, p. 295.

<sup>105</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom, The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988), pp. 244-6.

found few supporters among ministers of the Church of England”, Richard Blackett has observed.<sup>106</sup> Finally, no doubt knowledgeable about the military history of the war, most re-enactors and Round Table members likely knew that strategically, the Confederate Army was not the underdog for most of the war. As many believed at the time, despite its superiority in resources, the Union faced the impossible mission of conquering the Confederacy.<sup>107</sup>

The British translation and de-construction of the notions associated with the Civil War that were exported from the United States showed that the conflict was conveniently flexible, adaptable to British alterations. In turn, Britons’ ability to fashion their own images of the war made it appealing and easy for them to consume. However, in Britain, as in the United States, the representation of the Civil War eventually proved less consensual than what might have first seemed the case. The transatlantic network that allowed for the emergence of a Civil War community in Britain, allowed also for the transmission of competing narratives of the conflict. As in the United States, in Britain too, the different American representations of the war continually contested each other. In addition, Britons autonomously constructed a British Civil War heritage, which revealed itself to be incompatible with some of the American representations of the war. The dispute over the replication of the *CSS Alabama* in the Merseyside area in the late 1980s and early 1990s saw all of these representations surface, and collide.

The *CSS Alabama* was a Confederate ship built in Birkenhead on the Wirral in 1862. Until the *USS Kearsarge* sank it off the French shores in 1864, the *Alabama* had

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<sup>106</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Louisiana, 2001), p. 106.

<sup>107</sup> Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill, 2010), pp 38-9; see also: Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London, 2003), pp. 180-1.

caused extensive damage to Union shipping. After the Civil War, the ship became the centre of an Anglo-American dispute over Britain's responsibility for the destruction caused by the vessel. In 1871, the Treaty of Washington resolved the dispute. Although according to the treaty Britain was required to pay \$15.5 million to the United States, as Philip Myers and others have shown, the *Alabama* claims allowed for a discourse that opened the way for closer relations and cooperation between the countries.<sup>108</sup>

This, however, was not the historical dispute that surfaced in Britain more than a hundred years later. In 1987, the *Birkenhead Ironworks and CSS Alabama Trust* registered as a charity aimed:

To advance the education of the public by promoting for their benefit the acquisition, excavation, permanent preservation and restoration and display of (i) number 4 dock or a place of historic interest on the site of the former Birkenhead ironworks; (ii) hull number 290 (also known as CSS Alabama) and any items connected thereto; (iii) any other vessel or vessels of historic interest particularly those which have been associated with number 4 dock or other docks on Merseyside, provided that the aforementioned shall be open as far as is reasonably possible to access to the public.<sup>109</sup>

The initiative was part of a greater project to revitalise the Birkenhead docklands and turn the area into a tourist attraction.

Expectations of the Alabama project were high. "Construction", declared the *Birkenhead News* in October 1989, "will start in January, next year, creating jobs, training and commercial opportunities."<sup>110</sup> Upon initiating the fundraising campaign,

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<sup>108</sup> Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, 2008), pp. 248-54; Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London, 2007), pp. 185-91; William Mulligan, 'Mobs and Diplomats: The Alabama Affair and British Diplomacy, 1865-1872', in: Markus Mosslang and Torsten Riotte (eds.), *The Diplomats' World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 105-32, esp. p. 130.

<sup>109</sup> Minutes of a meeting held at the Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead, Wed., 25 Nov., 1987, ACC 1506 (5), Original pre labelled, 'Alabama – Advisory Committee', Nov. 1987 – Dec. 1989, REF: NO. 34/72. The Wirral Archives.

<sup>110</sup> *The Birkenhead News*, 26 Oct. 1989, p. 24.

appeal president Ludovic Kennedy noted that the *Alabama* full-size model, “[...] will be a flagship for Merseyside’s resurgence and enterprise, a spur to business and employment opportunity. She will provide an unrivalled training platform for young people, and a tourist attraction of both national and international interest.”<sup>111</sup> Hoping to reach the American public as well, the Wirral Borough Council, too, enthusiastically backed the project that was expected to generate “tremendous amounts of interest from across the Atlantic.”<sup>112</sup> Soon, however, the seemingly harmless educational and commercial initiative turned out to be sitting on local and national powder kegs. When dispute around the project gained momentum, it turned out that what was at issue were Lancashire’s, Britain’s and the United States’ Civil War heritages.

The Alabama project hit a sensitive nerve in Lancashire’s Civil War heritage. Since at least the 1920s, Lancashire’s position during the conflict has been a matter of scholarly debate.<sup>113</sup> However, the view that Lancashire’s working class had supported the Union, as the side who fought to abolish slavery and promote democracy, was burned into the region’s local heritage and collective consciousness. Therefore the intention to replicate the Confederate ship met with opposition from private people and anti-racist organisations, which claimed that the vessel was a symbol of bigotry that ran counter to the county’s heritage. Nigel Todd, for example, a Newcastle Labour councillor, historian and anti-racism activist, wrote in the *Guardian* that:

The implications of engaging in heritage lies are graphically illustrated in the mad scheme to raise £2.5 million to build a replica of the Alabama – a Confederate pirate ship active during the American Civil War – as a tourist attraction on the Wirral. This idea is being promoted by Wirral Council’s leisure department using the excuse that the Alabama was built on Merseyside and ‘the people of Liverpool

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 1 Nov. 1989, p. 16.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>113</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, pp. 5-8.

were sympathetic' to the slave-owning Confederacy. Someone should take the Wirral Council aside and gently remind them that, despite the enormous suffering in the Lancashire textile towns [...] large number of cotton workers made it plain they wanted nothing to do with perpetuating slavery in the United States. Wirral Council has a clear duty to explain its purpose in raking up the Alabama. Why is the Council so intent on delivering a gross insult to the heritage of Lancashire's working-class communities?<sup>114</sup>

Todd's vitriol and vehemence – as the protest against the project more generally – testified to just how ingrained in the county's heritage its part in the Civil War had become. For Labour representatives, like Todd, the Lancashire working class' position evidently became also a contemporary source of honour. A Confederate symbol like the *Alabama* was thus, even more than a century away, an "insult". Indeed, it was more than an insult. It was a threat. The re-appearance of the *Alabama* on the Wirral might have raised uncomfortable questions: Who built it? Were they British workers? Why did these workers take part in constructing a "pirate", "racist", "slave-owning" ship? The morality of the region's working class was under threat.

The accepted wisdom about Lancashire's support of the Union was part, indeed the most contested part, of a national working-class heritage of the Civil War. In accordance with this heritage, members of Civil War societies proudly propagated the traditional, but now contested interpretation of Britons' reaction to the conflict, which stressed that the working class supported the Union, whilst the aristocracy supported the Confederacy.<sup>115</sup> As a member of the ACWS noted: "The upper middle classes probably supported the South for a bunch of reasons [*sic*]. But the working class pretty much solidly [...] was pro-Northern."<sup>116</sup> When faced with the question of Britain's supply of weapons, clothes and other goods to the Confederacy, Civil War buffs often toted the neutrality of business. "Ships were built here in Liverpool",

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<sup>114</sup> *Guardian*, 15 July 1989, p. 22.

<sup>115</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, pp. 1-16.

<sup>116</sup> Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 16 Apr. 2011.

conceded one re-enactor, “but whether they were used for blockade runners or for war-ships, it was business for Britain.”<sup>117</sup> British political and economic attitudes during the war remain subjects of scholarly debate. As noted in previous chapters, current studies show that contrary to the accepted wisdom, the British upper and governing class did not overwhelmingly support the Confederacy.<sup>118</sup> However, the above heritage, perpetuated chiefly by working and middle class Civil War enthusiasts, elevated – and has been elevating since the 1860s – the moral character of their class in Britain and deplored the upper class and the government.

As the dispute over the Alabama project showed, the British heritage of the war was incompatible with what was seen as the heritage of the decadent Confederacy. The former focused on Britain’s involvement in the conflict and on the domestic contentions that it had created in Britain in the 1860s. Above all, it celebrated the moral position of the British workers during the Civil War. As such, it antagonised manifestations and representations of a heritage that seemed to elevate notions of Southern bigotry and racism.

Moreover, the dispute over the Alabama project revealed that the incompatible American representations of the war had arrived in Britain, as well. That is, it showed that as in the United States, contesting representations of the war’s meaning and impact in the United States in the 1860s split the British Civil War community too. As assaults on the project grew, Donald J. Jordan, “Brigadier-General” of the British branch of the Confederate High Command, could not refrain from comment or action. Jordan wrote to the Merseyside Community Race Relations Council, amongst others,

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<sup>117</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 16 Apr. 2011.

<sup>118</sup> On British high politics and the war see: Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, esp. pp. 30-72, 83-123 and 215-51; for British economic attitudes to the war see: Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy*, pp. 82-189. For a study focused on Liverpool and the war from an economic perspective see: John Pelzer, ‘Liverpool and the American Civil War’, *History Today*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Mar. 1990), pp. 46-52.

demanding that they refrain from publicly labelling the *Alabama* a “slave ship”. For Richard Warren of the Confederate Historical Society, all that Jordan did was to re-inflame an issue better left dormant. Concerned that racial bias attached to the project would run the initiative aground, Warren launched an assault on Jordan:

It seems that just as ruffled feathers were becoming a little unruffled, Don Jordan of the Confederate High Command took it upon himself to ruffle them well and truly once more by firing off letters to Merseyside Community Race Relation Council etc., accusing them of every abolitionist crime under the sun. The result? Naturally, all the activists beginning to come round to the realisation that the Alabama trust is, after all, perhaps not a front of the Ku Klux Klan have had their worst and most cherished fears realised. Nice one, Don! [...] the consequences could be disastrous. [...] In the old days, the High Command was a bit of harmless fun. Under Ken Sharpe’s command, it degenerated into a farce [...] under Don it has espoused born-again Confederatism with an enthusiasm that seemingly grows in direct ratio to the growing unreality of the ideology.<sup>119</sup>

Like Nigel Todd, Warren feared the “disastrous” repercussion that the *Alabama*’s contested heritage might entail. Unlike Todd, however, what troubled Warren was not the heritage of the war’s impact on Britain and of the British response to the conflict. Rather Warren was fighting over the heritage of the war’s meaning and impact in the United States. Jordan, Warren assailed, undermined the conflict’s legacy of American reconciliation. According to Warren, in so doing, “born-again Confederatism” might ignite the battle over the Civil War’s legacy that since the centennial had been casting a troublesome light on the war and on the ones involved in its representation.

Warren’s challenge did not go unmet. As he later noted, no other matter has “provoked more responses.”<sup>120</sup> Indeed, Jordan’s ire was to be expected. Furiously iterating his right to oppose labelling the *Alabama* a “Slave Ship”, he attacked the Confederate Historical Society, noting that even “the NAACP and dollar greedy developers are gentlemen compared with one of our own home grown cads [...]”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Fall 1989), p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

What angered members of the Confederate High Command was the challenge to the legacy of the South that was posed by anti-racism activists and workers' representatives and was backed by the CHS in its efforts to suppress the dispute. Accordingly, in addition to comparing him to a "dollar greedy" Northerner and an NAACP activist, members of the CHC also challenged Warren's Southern identity. To show his disrespect, in a subsequent letter Jordan decried Warren as a "self styled Confederate (?)"<sup>122</sup> In another letter, this time from a CHC member in Nova Scotia, Canada, the writer deplored Warren as being merely a "SO-CALLED Confederate."<sup>123</sup> Re-affirming their own Southern identities, Jordan and other CHC members challenged Warren's and the CHS' Confederate affiliation because, they argued, the CHS suppressed the Confederacy's heritage in orders to promote the inclusive, unitary heritage of the Civil War. As Jordan's reply illustrated, he and the CHC had in fact shared Warren's anxiety. They, too, feared for the American legacy of the war, but it was a different American legacy.

As the *Alabama* dispute established, the long arm of the South reached far and deep in Britain. As an ACWS founder recalled, even during the late 1970s, "everybody wanted to be a Confederate [...]"<sup>124</sup> Similarly, as their titles made clear, all early societies started as Confederacy-oriented organisations and their focus was on all aspects of Southern way of life and warfare. In addition, the Southern grip was fierce. A current British re-enactor, portraying Robert E. Lee thus stressed:

General Lee is still greatly respected in America [...] when you go to America, you go to some of the Southern States, there are still – those who are involved in re-enacting and some who are not – still talk about affection to the man. What I'm after is not to mean any disrespect to General Lee's memory [...] people take many

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<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.* Question mark in original.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.* Upper-case and underlined in original.

<sup>124</sup>Anonymous, telephone interview, 5 Aug. 2011.

photographs and those photographs can appear on the web and if they appeared on some American site this will be greatly disrespectful.<sup>125</sup>

Testifying to his fears that an improper portrayal of Lee might incite a transatlantic dispute, as he recalled that had happened before, this re-enactor acknowledged that disrespect to a Southern hero and symbol might be explosive.

In Britain, however, reconciliation proved strong enough to face the Southern assault. Whilst the dispute between the dominant British Civil War societies mirrored the on-going battle over the war's heritage in the United States, so did the efforts to assuage it. Soon after the eruption of the quarrel, cries for unionism and re-sterilisation of the war's representations came from every corner. Paul Jenkins of the ACWRT UK, for example, attacked the CHC for poisoning Civil War activity in Britain with ideology and disunion and implored all sides: "Instead of uniting in the interest of all to achieve our aims and ambitions, some are pursuing their own ways which could lead to everything being lost. Perhaps all Civil War Societies in the UK should take note before it's too late."<sup>126</sup> In an effort to neutralise the symbolism of the *Alabama*, advocates of the project tried to promote what were perceived to be neutral aspects of the vessel's history and at the same time to downplay its problematic features. Accordingly, emphasis was given to technical and military themes, whilst all political and social facets were pushed out of the narrative. Jim Bacon of the Alabama project thus noted that:

My despair – and it is a real despair – is caused, in part, by the futility of viewing yesterday through today's eyes, and the irrelevance which divert us from bringing the Project to proper conclusion. All we should be concerned with is the amassing of technical information for the replica, the background of the crew, the life and times of Liverpool in 1862, and the vessel's revolutionary strategic maritime use. NOTHING ELSE MATTERS [upper case in original]. [...] In terms of the Project I have no interest whatsoever in the causes and issues of the American Civil War.

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<sup>125</sup> Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 29 May 2011.

<sup>126</sup> *Journal of the Confederate Historical Society*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 5.

These matters are outside the *raison d'être* of the Project and I sincerely hope they will form no part of the Project or the accompanying exhibition.<sup>127</sup>

The Alabama project thus developed into a British fight over the American legacy of the war. The fight, although in Britain and by Britons, was conducted in American terms and within a discourse in which the war's legacy was debated at the time in the United States. The British Civil War community – allegedly Southern-oriented – reacted forcefully against what it saw as neo-Confederate expressions and assaults. Rather than being “Southerners”, it is clear that Civil War buffs were largely united behind a seemingly neutral narrative of the Civil War.

The absence of the African American narrative from this dispute was as telling, in its own right, as the struggle within the British Civil War community in general over the American heritage of the conflict was. Whilst Northern, Southern and conciliatory views received much voice in the debate, there was no representation of an African American view on the Alabama project. Those who opposed the initiative did so from the point-of-view of the British working class, not from that of black Americans. Indeed, as opposed to the Northern, Southern and conciliatory narratives, the competing narrative of the war from the vantage-point of African Americans has not been absorbed within British Civil War societies since the 1950s and to this day. True, it was not until the late 1970s, largely due to ABC's screening of *Roots*, that this narrative penetrated popular culture in both the United States and Britain.<sup>128</sup> Even in academic circles, the African American perspective of the war and Reconstruction gained ground only in the 1960s.<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless, pointing to the absence of a black contesting narrative within the discourse of British Civil War societies is not to be halted by the pitfall of anachronism.

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> Taylor, *Circling Dixie*, p. 69.

<sup>129</sup> Eric Foner, 'Reconstruction Revisited', *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1982), p. 83.

British enthusiasts were highly sensitive to events in the United States that were related to their subject of interest. Profound changes in the character of the Confederate Research Club leave little doubt that this controversy and its effects did not pass unnoticed by the British Civil War community. As members testified, taking upon itself to promote the centennial in Britain, the CRC became inevitably exposed to its American Round Table counterparts. Subsequently, the club changed its name in 1961 to the ACWRT UK to comply with American customs, as noted in the first section above. However, the change was far more profound than a mere alteration of titles. “We did not want to be seen as being Confederate”, noted a leading member of the ACWRT UK.<sup>130</sup> Confederate titles, it seems, were no longer unproblematic in Britain. Subsequently, the club’s newsletter, too, carrying the charged title *The New Index* after the Confederate propaganda newspaper that was distributed in Britain during the Civil War, was renamed in November 1963 and is since called *Crossfire*.<sup>131</sup> A further testimony of the profound change in the club’s orientation and its rejection, at least on the surface level, of its now problematic Confederate identity in order to adopt a more moderate and inclusive character, was the abandonment of the club of several members who were devoted to Southern ideals.<sup>132</sup> Indirectly and through the centennial celebration, the work of the civil rights movements and the African American view of the Civil War in the United States arrived in Britain.

That the African American narrative was not absorbed within Civil War activity in Britain was because there was no one amongst the all-white societies’ members to absorb it. There is no evidence that this was an outcome of bigotry or even of Confederate sentiments. The reason seems to be that in British societies there was

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<sup>130</sup>Anonymous, interview, Oxford, Oxfordshire, 9 Apr. 2011.

<sup>131</sup>ACWRT UK website. Accessed on 18 Aug. 2011.

<sup>132</sup>*The Gettysburg Times*, 3 Nov. 1962, p. 10.

nobody with special interest in promoting this view. In a conference in Charleston, S.C., an African American re-enactor recently stressed that he has been re-enacting the Civil War chiefly for the purpose of commemorating and propagating the African American story of the conflict.<sup>133</sup> In British societies, this interest group has been absent. Again, there is nothing here to suggest that British societies intentionally or unintentionally have been excluding blacks from their ranks. It is argued that had blacks taken part in these activities, the African American point-of-view, in all likelihood, would have been absorbed within the discourse of these societies from the start since it did exist and was available in the transatlantic space.

The existence of women's narratives of the war, as manifested in the activities of popular Civil War societies, further establishes the above argument. British Civil War societies have been from the start dominated by men. Nonetheless, women have been taking part in these activities and their influence on the representations of the war has been apparent. Despite being far less vocal, controversial or public than the African American narrative, women's presence brought into these activities women's narratives of the Civil War.<sup>134</sup> One female re-enactor, for example, has been finding it most important to elevate the story of female warriors in the Civil War. Disguised as a man and adopting a masculine name, as hundreds of American women had done during the war, she noted: "Women didn't fight in the Civil War as women. They had to disguise themselves as men [...]. I [...] represent those women I talked about that disguised themselves as men. It's not a known fact about the Civil War. It's actually getting that fact out there [that I seek]."<sup>135</sup> Whereas women's life on the home front

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<sup>133</sup> 'The Civil War – A Global Conflict', The College of Charleston, SC, USA, 3-5 Mar. 2011.

<sup>134</sup> On women in the Civil War see: Elizabeth D. Leonard, *All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies* (New York, 1999), pp. 169-97 and, for the women's motivation to join the armed forces, 238-75.

<sup>135</sup> Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 17 Apr. 2011.

has not received much attention by re-enactors, British women nonetheless keep and celebrate key aspects of the feminine heritage of the Civil War.<sup>136</sup>

Furthermore, the absence of blacks from Civil War activity in Britain, and the consequent absence of the African American narrative of the Civil War, unearths a fundamental difference between the forces that stood behind the shaping of Civil War representations in the United States and in Britain. African Americans in the United States have been using the Civil War in their fight, first for freedom and then for social equality since the war and into the twenty-first century. Their fight has been conducted, *inter alia*, through the history, legacy and representations of the conflict. In Britain, this was not the case. As Richard Blackett has argued, African Americans' interpretations of the Civil War arrived in Britain before and during the war with African Americans such as William Andrew Jackson, and they had a profound impact on the British public.<sup>137</sup> This narrative, however, seemed to have been forgotten after the war, at least partly because there was no significant black community in Britain with a pressing interest in sustaining and promoting it.

At the same time, the British constantly viewed the racial aspect of the war through contemporary British glasses. Thus the story of slavery, suppression and freedom in the Civil War was not necessarily connected, in Britain, to issues of race and race relations. As shown in previous chapters, British politicians used these aspects of the war as part of their arguments for and against national unity; intellectuals, such as John Drinkwater, used it to argue for national freedom; and in British military discourse, this aspect seemed irrelevant and was omitted altogether.

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<sup>136</sup> For women on the home front see for example: in the South: Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana, 2000), pp. 66-99; in the North: Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), pp. 10-12.

<sup>137</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, ch. 4 and 5, and esp. pp. 137-49.

This chapter shows that race issues in the context of the Civil War were harnessed in Britain in the fashioning of class identity. As seen, the British legacy and representations of the war perpetuated the divide between the British working class who supported abolition and the British elite who did not. Through this representation, attitudes to race in the context of the Civil War divided the British into classes, not races.

Racial affairs in Britain, by contrast, had less influence on the British representations of the Civil War. The 1960s did not see the growing black community in Britain making use of the Civil War in their struggle for assimilation and civil rights. One plausible reason for this might be that the racial composition of the British society was different from that of the United States in that it was not as bi-racial.<sup>138</sup> Britain was not divided into black and white as was the United States and as were representations of the Civil War. It seems that when Britons confronted racial tensions at home, the Civil War played little part in the debate. When he referred to the issue of race problems in Britain, Todd, for example, did not appeal to the Civil War but rather to the British slave trade. “And where is the Council’s sense of moral responsibility?” he challenged:

Merseyside has one of the oldest black communities in Britain, testifying to the fact that the area was built on the proceeds of the British slave trade. So, what is the meaning of Wirral’s enthusiasm for extolling the memory of a collection of squalid slave state and, as a “publicity” aid, waving racist Confederate flags?<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, the recent Civil War exhibition in the Merseyside Maritime Museum seemed to have raised little, if any, public unrest. “We have not received any

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<sup>138</sup> Tariq Modood, ‘The Limits of America: Rethinking Equality in the Changing Context of British Race Relations’, in: Brian Ward and Tony Badger, (eds.), *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 181-93.

<sup>139</sup> *Guardian*, 15 July 1989, p. 2.

complaints from visitor's concerning the exhibition", noted the display's curator.<sup>140</sup> By contrast, the exhibition on the history of slavery in the same museum, which opened in 1994 and dealt with Britain's part in the Atlantic slave trade, did raise concerns and caused some public discontent (although it was eventually praised and widely accepted).<sup>141</sup> The recent public and scholarly debate about the way to best commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade (1807/2007) also shows that on racial issues, the British tend to look back on their own history.<sup>142</sup>

As the dispute over the replica of the *Alabama* showed, the British working class' representation of the Civil War was able to resist neo-Confederatism in Britain from raising its head. Put differently, in Britain, the working class narrative of the Civil War played the role of the African American representation of the war in the United States in opposing manifestations of neo-Confederate sentiments in the public sphere. The *Alabama* project demonstrated that neo-Confederate representations of the conflict could not be accommodated alongside the British narrative of the conflict and thus they could have only limited place in Britain. From another angle, neo-Confederatism was also restricted in Britain by the prominence of the narrative of reconciliation that allowed for only expressions of moderate Southern sentiments.

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<sup>140</sup>Personal email correspondence with the author. Received on 6 Sep. 2011.

<sup>141</sup> James Walvin, 'What Shall we do about Slavery?', in: Iain McCalman and Paul A. Pickering (eds.), *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 63-78; Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory* (New York, 2006), pp. 25-65.

<sup>142</sup>For recent scholarship on the bicentenary events see: Emma Waterton and Ross Wilson, 'Talking the Talk: Policy, Popular and Media Responses to the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Using the "Abolition Discourse"', *Discourse Society*, Vol. 20 No. 3 (2009), pp. 381-99; Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki, 'Forgetting to Heal Remembering the Abolition Act of 1807', *European Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2010), pp. 23-36; Geoffrey Cubitt, 'Lines of Resistance: Evoking and Configuring the Theme of Resistance in Museum Displays in Britain Around the Bicentenary of 1807', *Museum and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2010), pp. 143-64; Anthony Tibbles, 'Facing Slavery's Past: The Bicentenary of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2008), pp. 293-303.

Furthermore, the working class representation of the Civil War held the power also to determine what manifestations of Confederate ideology or Confederate symbols were illegitimate. In many ways, there was something in Jordan's insistence that the *Alabama* should not be targeted in Britain. After all, it was no more a symbol of the Confederacy than the gray uniform that so many Civil War fans had worn across Britain before, during and after the affair. Furthermore, not thirty years earlier, the same vessel was a welcomed icon in the same place from which now it was banned. As noted here in the first section, in the exhibition held in Liverpool in 1961 to celebrate Merseyside's contribution to the Civil War, replicas of Confederate vessels were the main sources of both British pride and visitor attractions. A model of the *Alabama*, stressed the Museum's Keeper of Shipping, formed "the centrepiece of the exhibition."<sup>143</sup> No public unrest was recorded. However, whilst the historical artefact and the location remained constant, the heritage invested in both has been – as Lowenthal has contended that was always the case with heritage – in constant flux. Evidently, the question of what were to be extreme Confederate emblems was open for debate and change. The war narrative of the British working class – undoubtedly influenced by the rising of the African American narrative of the war in the United States – proved to be influential in determining this question in Britain when it contributed to the representation of the *Alabama* as a symbol of Southern racism and bigotry, which it did not symbolise before.

However, if there was no place for an extremist South in Britain, there was certainly a place for a moderate, romantic and American South with values that could be attributed to Britain. "My politics is with the North", stressed a SoSkAn member of

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<sup>143</sup> A letter from E. W. Paget-Tomlinson to E. C. Gass, 17 Jan. 1961, Foreign Organizations, 1959-64, Records of the NPS, 1785 – 2006, Box 73, NARA.

the 16<sup>th</sup> Tennessee, “[...] but there’s always [...] the association with the loser [...].”<sup>144</sup> As long as it stood for national freedom, for a romantic and youthful rebel spirit and for the gallant underdog, the Confederacy had its British followers. Put negatively, as long as it did not stand for slavery or for the destruction of the Union, the Confederacy sustained its appeal to Britons. This narrow path was, more than anything else, the symbol of British autonomous interpretation and active involvement in the adoption of a heritage, as opposed to the broadcast heritage.

Since extreme Civil War ideologies have had little place in Britain, British fans – even those who often emphasised their deep Northern or Southern sentiments – have found it easy to cross the sectional lines. “I started out on the Confederate side” noted one re-enactor, “than I joined this regiment here [1<sup>st</sup> United States Sharpshooters]”;<sup>145</sup> “Had my friends been in the Confederacy, I would have inevitably ended up there”, noted another Unionist.<sup>146</sup> Zealous Confederates, too, have often been happy to switch sides. An 18<sup>th</sup> Virginia re-enactor – considered a “hard-core” rebel – noted for example that, “I don’t have any great alliance to the Confederacy, I’m not some neo-Confederate nut or anything like it.”<sup>147</sup> For many British enthusiasts, the Civil War was not and still is not a matter of North and South, but rather of Americans and Britons. As long as these identities are not challenged, the Civil War would have a place in Britain.

In 1991 the *Birkenhead Ironworks* and *CSS Alabama Trust* was disbanded and the project was abandoned due to lack of funding.<sup>148</sup> For many it was surely a relief.

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<sup>144</sup>Anonymous, interview, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

<sup>145</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 16 Apr. 2011.

<sup>146</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 16 Apr. 2011.

<sup>147</sup>Anonymous, interview, Tatton Park, Cheshire, 28 May 2011.

<sup>148</sup>Website of The Charity Commission For England and Wales, <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/RemovedCharityMain.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=519564&SubsidiaryNumber=0>. Accessed on 22 Aug. 2011.

For others it was no doubt a disappointment. Yet the *CSS Alabama* has found a place in Britain. Once or twice a year a crew of British re-enactors gathers in Portsmouth on board the *HMS Warrior* – a British 1860 sail-powered ironclad – to re-live the life on board of the *Alabama*.<sup>149</sup> Away from where it might be challenged and on board a British vessel, the crew, originally assembled to perform on the Wirral on board a replica of the original British-built Confederate ship, continues to shape and re-shape the heritage of the American Civil War.

### III

The emergence and popularity of Civil War societies in Britain owed much to the existence of a transatlantic cultural network that allowed for the transmission of representations of the conflict from the United States to Britain and vice versa. From the American side, representations of the Civil War crossed the Atlantic through films, books, studies, artefacts and other popular cultural goods and fanned the enthusiasm of Britons about the American conflict. One of the main transatlantic cultural conduits to introduce the Civil War to the British public in an alluring way was the war's centennial celebration between 1961 and 1965 – a period that was the constitutive moment in the penetration of the Civil War to British popular culture.

From across the ocean, British members of Civil War clubs autonomously appropriated the war and constructed representations of the conflict independently, based on both American and British resources. British enthusiasts turned to the Civil War because they found the values that were embedded in it applicable and relevant; because the war seemed romantic; and because they came to see it as a key to understanding and approaching the contemporary United States. As this chapter has

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<sup>149</sup>“The Crew” website: <http://www.keme.co.uk/~nbarnes/civilwar/alabama.html>. Accessed on 23 Apr. 2012.

shown, British enthusiasts were able to construct their own representations of the Civil War, use them at home and export them back to the United States in order to communicate with the Americans.

In addition to the above reasons, which were discussed in previous chapters as well, the present chapter underlined the fact that British enthusiasts also turned to the Civil War because, almost paradoxically, it was a foreign affair though, crucially, not overly so. Some held that the impact the war had had in Britain in the 1860s meant that the Civil War was a part of Britain's national history. Emphasising this aspect of the war, British enthusiasts celebrated a British heritage of the American conflict based on its historical impact on Britain and on the British response to the events. At the same time, and often in the same clubs, there were also those who, by contrast, appealed to the war because it allowed them to distance themselves from their own, possibly charged history. For these Civil War fans, it was particularly important that the American conflict was not part of their history and they downplayed or even ignored the British aspect of it altogether. Another group that downplayed the British link to the war included Civil War buffs who turned to the conflict specifically because it was a constitutive American affair.

Britons could negotiate various links to the war due to those links' historical flexibility. On the one hand, the war was an American affair. It was fought in America, by Americans for American reasons and its impact was the greatest and most immediate on the American people and American history. With time, the Civil War also achieved a unique place in world history as the war that gave birth to the modern United States. On the other hand, the war's impact in Britain and on British lives was

profound. As such, the Civil War enabled the British to turn to it both as an American affair and as an event in Anglo-American history.

Together, this and the previous chapter present a comprehensive picture of the Civil War's place in British popular culture. Bluntly put, they showed that the Civil War had characteristics that deemed it a good story. This chapter has demonstrated that the heroic, epic, romantic, multifaceted, colourful and American story of the war was not only fun to watch but also to study, commemorate, re-create and re-live. It also showed that Britons could see the war either as part of their history or as a foreign affair, or anywhere in between. This, as the concluding chapter argues, was part of what rendered the Civil War special and part of what gave it its unique place in British culture and historical consciousness.

## Conclusions

This thesis has unearthed, examined and established the existence of two main historical phenomena. The first is that the American Civil War achieved a unique prominence in twentieth-century British culture. No other foreign conflict was etched onto British historical consciousness for so long and in such diverse ways as was the American conflict. British interest in the Civil War has continued from the days of the war itself to the present. As has been discussed in the first chapter, as early as the 1870s, British politicians resurrected the war when debating Ireland's political status in the British union. This interest did not wane and Britons continued to look to the American conflict for political lessons well into the new century. Subsequent chapters demonstrated that constant interest in the Civil War was evident in the British military, amongst British intellectuals and in British popular culture as well.

Indeed, the thesis has shown that the Civil War played a pivotal role in several key moments in late-nineteenth and twentieth-century British political, military and intellectual history. To these and to existing literature this study added a comprehensive examination of the sphere of popular culture as a place in which the American war also played a part. Furthermore, within the political, military, intellectual and popular circles that this thesis has examined, fascination with the war was not confined to a single political camp, to a social class or to a geographical area. Tories have turned to it as have Liberals and Labour; military thinkers and academics found it interesting as have people from other walks of life; residents of Cheshire studied it as have those who lived in and around London; and Scottish intellectuals and military-men were fascinated with it as were re-enactors in Wales.

The second phenomenon that this thesis exposed is that the British interest in the Civil War was part of a transatlantic encounter between the British and the war. The thesis further exposed the way in which Britons manipulated the Civil War and its meaning to fit their own ends. Indeed, in addition to being an encounter between an American war and British interpreters, the transatlantic nature of this encounter was manifest within the two central ways in which the conflict was utilised. First, the British often drew on American sources in order to shape their understanding of the war. These sources, as shown, reflected the principal ways in which the Americans interpreted their war. Second, the British often used the Civil War – particularly because it was a constitutive American event and symbol – in order to understand, comment on and communicate with the United States.

British interest in the Civil War and their use of it, demonstrated throughout the thesis, were inherently interlinked in that the exploration of the one meant an advance with the other. Discussing them in complete separation thus leads to the loss of some of the key points of this study. This chapter's first two sections thus discuss each of these elements and show the connection between them. Together, these sections present a model that explains the war's central place in British culture and delineate the dynamics that characterised the encounter between the conflict and the British. The chapter's third part summarises how understanding the British interest in and use of the Civil War at home and abroad casts new light on the conflict's long lasting global impact and on Anglo-American relations.

## I

Although it manifested in a variety of ways, the British fascination with the Civil War has its origins in several common sources. First, the British were attracted to the

American war because it was epic. During the war, the British understanding of the conflict exceeded its military aspect, recognising its exceptional magnitude. Many saw the Civil War as a gigantic conflict in which Americans fought for universal values such as democracy, liberty, independence, unity and for the survival of their country.<sup>1</sup> These went beyond the battlefield and beyond the American borders, as, subsequently, did the meaning and epic scope of the war.

In the decades that followed the Civil War, its epic proportion reached new heights in British eyes when the conflict received an additional romantic dimension and further symbolic value as the war in which the modern United States was born. As D. A. Campbell has shown, between 1861 and 1865 many deplored both the North and the South for what they saw as their immoral and inhumane conduct.<sup>2</sup> From the late nineteenth century, however, a consensus began to form in Britain, according to which either North or South, or both, had fought gallantly for just causes. The view critical of both sides practically vanished. Unison of opinion emerged also regarding American reunion as the wholly positive result of the war. “Although I am an ardent supporter of the South”, noted one British Confederate re-enactor, “strangely enough, I believe the outcome was right. It’s very weird.”<sup>3</sup>

This, however, was not at all weird. In keeping with the argument that the British learnt about the Civil War chiefly through the agency of its different representations, their romantic views were unsurprising and their sources were clear. The Lost Cause, as was best demonstrated by the analysis of *The Birth of a Nation* in

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Blackett, for example, has compellingly argued that much of the British support of the North was based on British anti-slavery sentiments and on the gradual understanding that a Union victory will result in the abolition of slavery in the United States. See for example: Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2001), pp. 95-6.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London, 2003), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Anonymous, interview with the author, Belhus Woods Country Park, Essex, 30 Apr. 2011.

chapter four, conveyed exactly the notion and sentiments that the above re-enactor found difficult to grasp. According to this narrative, the South was right to fight for its independence whilst, at the same time, it wanted American unity and was part of it. The other narratives of the war presented their protagonists in equally romantic terms: Northerners fought for national unity and abolition; African Americans fought for freedom and equality in the United States. Ultimately, all narratives portrayed a moving picture of the Civil War as a moral and romantic and thus epic struggle for American values of unity, independence and freedom.

A second reason for the British interest in the Civil War was that it was a multifaceted conflict in a continuous state of flux, long after it had finished in practice, gaining in meanings and interpretations. As such, it generated and has continued to generate a wide array of lessons that the British could find relevant. For example, in the 1880s, when the Irish question became acute and began to challenge the integrity of the British union, Britons found the war's lessons about national unity and secession applicable and appealing. In a similar way, during the interwar period, when the memory of the Great War was still fresh and the coming of another major conflict seemed increasingly realistic, the military lessons from the Civil War took centre stage. During the Second World War, the American conflict became important as a war for democracy; and in the civil rights era, the questions of slavery and race in the Civil War came to the fore.

Within each of its various aspects – such as the military or political ones – the Civil War presented multiple lessons, which rendered it potentially relevant to an even wider array of positions and issues. Grant's and Lee's hammering and frontal strategy in the Eastern Theatre conveyed valid military lessons as did Sherman's

conduct in the Western Theatre and in the rear of the Confederate Army. That allowed Frederick Maurice, J. F. C. Fuller and Basil Liddell Hart to turn to the same American Civil War and still to draw different, often conflicting lessons. In much the same way, moderation and appeasement were part of Lincoln's legacy as were firmness and aggressiveness. It only depended on which of Lincoln's views on the various issues one wished to focus and at what period in the President's life. Lincoln was concomitantly the moderate appeaser that Denis Brogan sought in the 1930s and the irreconcilable fighter that Hugh Brogan sought in the 1970s.

The conflict's romanticism and perpetual relevance were important parts of the explanation of Britain's unique interest in the Civil War. To incorporate these sources of appeal into a fuller explanatory model, the thesis has analysed the broad and lingering British fascination with the war in both a British and a transatlantic context. That is, it has examined the place of the Civil War in Britain in relation to the British views of the United States and in keeping with that that the British often drew on American sources when they fashioned their view about the conflict. In addition, the thesis has examined the cases in which the British exported their views of the war to the United States. This methodology has unearthed two further sources that made the conflict uniquely attractive to the British.

First, the thesis has revealed that for many Britons, interest in the Civil War stemmed from a view of it as an American affair and a key event in American history that explained the contemporary United States and its place in the world. For Liddell Hart, Sherman's life were interesting also because through it he thought he could reflect and comment on both the pre-Civil War and contemporary United States. For the British military thinker, the war was interesting as the point in history where the

present-day vulgar and materialistic United States had risen from the ruins of the pre-war genteel America. Similarly, critics praised *The Birth of a Nation* also because through the story of the Civil War they could observe the entire American society and its rebirth into its modern shape; and round table members often took interest in the war because amongst other things it explained the character of the contemporary United States and the American rise to power in the twentieth century. Considering the immense influence of the United States on their lives, it is understandable why the Civil War, as modern America's date of birth and the mirror of its character, was engaging.

Second, the thesis has exposed that Britons took interest in the Civil War because of Britain's historical relation to the conflict, or because of the lack of such relation. Many amateur historians and Civil War buffs mentioned Britain's involvement in the war to be a primary reason for their fascination with the conflict. Some, as shown, took special care to preserve sites in Britain – from graveyards to dockyards – that feature a connection to the Civil War. For others, by contrast, the main appeal of the war was that it was specifically not British. Military thinker Frederick Maurice thought that the Civil War was a good source for lessons after the Great War just because unlike the recent conflict in Europe, it was not British and thus it was distant enough not to rouse bitter emotions. Similarly, some re-enactors turned to the Civil War because it allowed them to immerse themselves in an event that as not British was distant enough not to stir too strong emotions. The Second World War, as seen in chapter five for example, was emotionally too close, as was the English Civil War. Thus we have both sides of the coin – an event that held its appeal through its explanation of a foreign power alongside one that was described solely in

relation to the local. Binding them together was the complex balance at the heart of this thesis.

The above findings contribute to the understanding of the war's character and central place in British culture. For one thing, unlike many other wars that had a romantic dimension, unlike many other multifaceted wars and unlike any British war, the American Civil War was a uniquely American war. It was imprinted into the American and British consciousness as the date of birth of the modern United States and the beginning of the American rise to global power. Conversely, the War of Independence was seen as the conflict that gave birth to the pre-modern United States, which in many ways perished in the Civil War; the Spanish-American War demonstrated rather than accounted for the power of the United States; and so did the First and Second World Wars. The Civil War was an exceptional turning point in American history that explained the modern United States and its rise to prominence.

In addition, the Civil War featured a unique link between Britain and an American war. On the one hand, it was a distinctively American conflict. On the other hand, the war's impact in Britain was profound. This put the Civil War in a special place in the history of Anglo-American relations. As opposed to wars in which Britain fought alongside the United States, such as the world wars; as opposed to the War of Independence and the War of 1812 in which it fought against the United State; and as opposed to American wars in which it was not at all involved and that had a minimal or no impact in Britain, such as the Spanish-American War, the Civil War could be seen as either a British or an American affair, or something in between.

It can thus be summed up that Britons were interested in the Civil War because it was epic and romantic, because it was multifaceted and its lessons often

remained applicable and because it was an American war with a unique British aspect. These sources of British interest in the Civil War stemmed chiefly from the conflict's autonomous status as a major, ever-evolving historical event. However, the independent character of the American conflict was only part of the explanatory model that this thesis suggests as to the sources of the British fascination with it. Whilst the Civil War presented the British with a rich, in many ways unique material with which to work, it was indeed the British autonomous work with this material that ultimately rendered the conflict's place in British culture distinct. Put differently, to understand the Civil War's central place in British culture, one must understand how the British used the possibilities presented to them by the war.

## II

Britons found in the Civil War's many aspects raw material that they could use in diverse ways. Whilst, as argued above, in certain periods certain aspects of the war seemed more relevant than others were, the British understanding of the conflict was seldom one-dimensional. Britons' ability to connect the war's facets and assemble a complex interpretation of the historical events in America allowed them to exploit to the full the lessons of the war. British military thinkers, for example, appealed to the war also because it showed the connection between military lessons, political lessons and lessons about wars' social and cultural impact on society. As shown, part of Fuller's appeal to the conflict stemmed from the fact that it had demonstrated the close relations between warfare and the socio-political transformation of the United States. Similarly, British re-enactors, who paid significant attention to the military aspect of the war, often chose to join either a Union or a Confederate unit according to their views not about strategy but about the legality of secession, the immorality of slavery or about political independence. As sophisticated interpreters, Britons were

able to make use of the entire range of possibilities with which the Civil War presented them.

The Civil War has maintained its relevance to the British also because they were able to choose and translate its lessons and meaning. This thesis has distinguished between three methods used in order to make the conflict relevant to the British. First, as noted above, they chose the lessons and aspects of the war that they found relevant. Second, the British chose the representation of the war that they thought best reflected their worldview. As discussed in the introduction, the Civil War never had a single narrative, but rather multiple ones. Britons chose autonomously from this multiplicity. For example, Confederate re-enactors often propelled the narrative of the Lost Cause and represented the Civil War accordingly as a war that the Confederacy had fought gallantly for the preservation of their courteous way of life. This narrative served these re-enactors to buttress their stance on modern British politics for example. Conversely, *fin de siècle* military thinkers often drew on the reconciliatory representation of the war, even when they studied the life of Confederate generals such as Lee and Jackson. This allowed them to advance their views on modern warfare. An examination of the sources that the British used makes it clear that Britons were aware of the many ways in which the Civil War could have been interpreted and that they chose autonomously the narrative that they needed.

A third way in which the British adapted the war to their world was by altering the substance of the narratives that they sought to appropriate. That is to say, Britons could appropriate the ideals and notions that were embedded in the representations of the war without appropriating the context in which they emerged. The British de-contextualisation of the ideals that were embedded in the war could be further

subdivided in two. First, Britons often took the war out of its national, American context. In this way, for example, politicians who opposed Irish Home Rule could choose the representation of the war that emphasised the need for national unity and equate the Irish struggle for independence with the Southern secession, despite the differences between the American and British political systems. Second, the British took the war out of its historical, mid nineteenth-century context. Numerous British re-enactors joined a Confederate regiment because for them it symbolised the rebel spirit of the 1960s, despite the fact that the Southern rebellion in the 1860s was a conservative and counterrevolutionary act, as argued in chapter five.

As autonomously and diversely as they used the war's many aspects and meanings, Britons used the unique British connection to the war. This they used in order to express their nuanced, flexible and complex views of the United States and define their equally nuanced, flexible and complex relation to it. On the one hand, Britons often tried to tie their country to the Civil War through the historical bridges that the war could provide them. The people of Manchester in 1919 readily received George Grey Barnard's statues of Lincoln and celebrated their historical relations with the President also because they wished to demonstrate their support of closer Anglo-American relations. The British went to great lengths in certain cases in order to diffuse the charged history of Britain's response to the war and present a more amicable link. As seen in chapters one and three, Philip Whitwell Wilson and Lord Charnwood succeeded in such endeavours to an evident degree. This practice was understandable in light of the widespread desire to draw Anglo-American relations closer and stress common history and shared values with a now global power.

However, the British did not always want to draw the United States closer and nor did they always think its influence to be positive. In these cases, they could emphasise that the Civil War was not related to Britain or to British history and that it was a particularly American affair. The sphere of popular culture proved valuable since it provided ample evidence for this utilisation of the image of the United States and of its conflict. “This Civil War of theirs”, was how one angry Briton described the war in his cry for his fellow citizens to boycott *Gone with the Wind* because of MGM’s insistence to charge high prices for tickets.<sup>4</sup> As seen in chapter four, critics seldom sealed a review of a Civil War film without emphasising that as a film about an American war, the local audience might find it irrelevant and even boring. Considering that the British view of the United States was not always positive, certainly not all time and not in every aspect, their use of the Civil War also to highlight the differences between Britain and the United States was understandable as was their use of the war in order to draw the countries closer together.

Incorporating the conclusions from the first section above, it can be concluded that the Civil War presented the British with a romantic representation of an epic, multifaceted and flexible historical conflict that was almost equally British and not British, through which they could reflect on contemporary domestic affairs, whilst understanding and communicating with the modern United States – a global power that had an increasing bearing on British life – and position themselves in relation to it. No other war was the same and no other war enabled the British to express their autonomy in representing a historical affair to similar ends.

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<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 14 May 1940, p. 11.

### III

The case of the continuous British fascination with the Civil War begins to unearth the wide scope of the war's lingering impact outside the borders of the United States. In Britain, this impact was evident initially in the way Britons used the war at home in order to advance their views on local affairs and to understand their world. This manifestation of the Civil War's lingering impact was similar to a key aspect of the war's impact whilst it was raging. Between 1861 and 1865, the conflict in America influenced and cast light on several pressing issues in contemporary British politics and social life. For example, Richard Blackett has shown that Lincoln's re-election in 1864 in the midst of war demonstrated to the British the resilience of democratic institutions.<sup>5</sup> This, in turn, advanced the argument of those in Britain who supported democratic reform at home. The Civil War has continued to play this role in every sphere of British life in the twentieth century. For several Round Table members, the American war taught lessons about Britain's membership of the EU; Liddell Hart learned from the conflict about the British society that was torn from its past by the Great War; for British politicians the war presented a lesson about the Irish question and about their own national unity; and for many re-enactors, it taught a lesson about nonconformity and youthful rebellion in 1960s Britain.

The Civil War's lasting impact was evident also in the role that it continued to play in Anglo-American relations and in the way in which Britons used it in the transatlantic sphere. This, in turn, casts light not only on the war's continual impact but also on its role as an analytical tool for the historian to re-examine Anglo-American relations from a novel viewpoint. The Civil War and its representations became a tool of cultural diplomacy that both Britons and Americans used in order to

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<sup>5</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, pp. 12-13.

understand and shape the relations between them. From both British and American perspectives, the use of the war for what can be seen as conscious and unconscious public diplomacy proved at times beneficial and at other times less so.<sup>6</sup> To summarise this role of the Civil War, another look at how it was used in the Anglo-American world is helpful.

The British exported their views of the American conflict to the United States. As shown above, these exported views often presented British affairs and British opinions dressed in what in the context of the Civil War were American values. Lloyd George's analogy between the Southern secession and the Irish calls for independence was one lucid example. The analogy presented the Prime Minister's view on the Irish question through the American idea of national unity that was embedded in the legacy of the Civil War. As shown in chapter one, that made the British view on Ireland more understandable across the ocean. Americans found the British struggle to keep Ireland in the union more reasonable when they observed it – as the British asked them – through the prism of their own war and set of values. Similarly, as the reception of Lord Charnwood's biography of Lincoln has shown, it was easier for Americans to stand by Britain in the Great War and its immediate aftermath when seeing the British fighting for the same ideals for which Lincoln had fought, as Charnwood claimed and skilfully articulated.

The cases in which the British exported their Civil War representations to the United States demonstrated their profound understanding of the American symbolism that was attributed to the war as well as the war's pivotal place in American culture. For example, the power in America of Lloyd George's analogy between the Irish

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<sup>6</sup> On public diplomacy see: Joseph S. Nye, 'Public Diplomacy and Soft Power', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (2008), pp. 94-108. See also: Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, 1990).

question and Southern secession depended upon its representation of values with which Americans concurred. Lord Charnwood's success in the United States in conveying through Lincoln's biography that Britain fought a morally justified war in 1916 was rooted in the British peer's adherence to a narrative that was consensual at that time across the Atlantic. These cases indicated that Britons mastered the Civil War and were able to use it and its rich American symbolism in a way that served them in their relations with the United States.

However, the British use of the Civil War also proved problematic. First, as demonstrated in the third chapter, in order to use the war to cultivate American sympathies during the Great War, the British had to confront the popular narrative perpetuating the country's ruling elite's support of the Confederacy. Second, the British use of the Civil War was challenging because of its unresolved status in the American mind and culture. As chapter one has discussed, owing to the war's contested memory in America, Lloyd George's analogy between Irish independence and the South's secession generated antagonism in the South. Southerners also reacted negatively to Frederick Maurice's assertion, in his otherwise flattering biography of Lee, that history has proved the Confederacy's cause wrong. As one Texan commented angrily on Maurice's work, "History has proved – and can prove – no such thing."<sup>7</sup> He then moved on to re-iterate that Southerners were not secessionists. This almost paradoxical stance made sense within the narrative of the Lost Cause, which was familiar to Southerners and to Americans more generally. For foreigners, however, playing on the chords of American memory proved more challenging.

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<sup>7</sup> *Dallas Texas Hours*, undated, p. 86. Consulted at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London. One of numerous undated paper clips from Maurice's private collection.

From an American perspective, that the British looked to the west through the lens of the Civil War often resulted in a positive (or less negative) British view of them. Through the story of the conflict the United States could be presented romantically and its history as colourful, heroic and epic. This representation of the United States through its war struck roots in Britain. One MP, for example, cited in chapter one, noted in the House of Commons that, “we all know that if Lincoln had not fought for the Union, the strongest democracy in the world today would never have been born [...]”<sup>8</sup> In this case, the war was used to reflect on America’s might and democratic character. In other cases, Britons used the conflict to command American unity, patriotism, liberalism and progress. Furthermore, the positive image of the United States that was reflected through the prism of the Civil War often reminded the British of the benign side of the United States at times when Britons were critical of it. War representations helped Alistair Cooke to stress that although now over-materialistic, the United States was after all a nation of exalted ideal. It allowed film critics to argue that despite the war in Vietnam, the Americans knew also how to fight moral wars. It provided Liddell Hart with the prism through which he could emphasise that although currently grotesque, the true, “archetypical”, United States was chivalrous and genteel.

However, for the Americans, too, the Civil War proved to be a double-edged sword. Britons did not always interpret the war in a way that reflected positively on the United States. From an American perspective, *Gone with the Wind*, as seen in chapter four, aimed to present a benign image of a peace-loving and harmonious South. The British, by contrast, used this representation of the South in order to criticise the United States and present it as apathetic and immorally isolationist in the

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<sup>8</sup>HC Deb 14 Dec. 1976 Vol. 922 cc1249-486.

period preceding the American entry to the Second World War. Similarly, through the image of Lincoln the Americans sought to export a benign image of their country during the Cold War. The British, however, were able to see beyond the narrow American representation of Lincoln and of the United States and use Lincoln's image to criticise post-Civil War and contemporary America, especially regarding race relations in the United States. In a similar way, the British saw through the representation of American progress and modernity to the social inequality of the Gilded Age. In the 1920s and 1930s, they saw the danger to their culture from the growing hegemony of American popular culture, despite the colourful and amusing representations of the Civil War. In the 1950s and 1960, they saw through the reconciling narrative of the war to the racial prejudice in America.

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In keeping with the above three sections, it is now possible to adopt a broader perspective and assess how reading British culture through the prism of Britons' use of the American Civil War casts light on British and Anglo-American cultural history. For one thing, the British continuous interest in the Civil War is an example for the war's lasting impact in a place other than the United States. Whilst historians, from Paul Buck to David Blight, have demonstrated the conflict's cultural impact on the American society, it is now clear that the war had an enduring cultural impact in Britain as well. If, for clear reasons, not as widely as in the United States, in Britain, too, the war continued to play part in domestic politics, military thought, intellectual life and popular culture as well as in Britain's communication with the United States.

Additionally, that the war continued to be a tool used by Britons at home and in the Atlantic sphere, helps historians in depicting Anglo-American relations through

the prism of culture and historical consciousness more accurately than before. The Civil War was a nuanced cultural tool that enabled the British to align themselves with the modern United States and its values whilst simultaneously distinguishing themselves from the said values and history. Thus, unlike other diplomatic cultural tools such as the idea of Anglo-Saxonism and the Special Relationship, the British use of the Civil War allows the historian to examine how the British referred to the United States as concomitantly both familiar and alien. Building on existing literature on the subject, this exposes a more nuanced and reliable picture of the place of America in British mind.

Furthermore, an examination of the British interest in and use of the Civil War, helps to understand the place and role of American culture in Britain during the long era of transition from the age of empire to the American century. First, the British utilisation of the Civil War and of its American representations showed how Britons acted on American symbols and preserved their cultural independence when engaged with American culture. Bearing in mind Britain's descent from power and the United States' simultaneous rise to world primacy, this demonstrates how Britons operated culturally in an unbalanced relationship with a superior American power. Analogous to a judo warrior who uses his opponent's power to his own advantage, the British manipulated the American values and symbols that were embedded in the representations of the war in order to advance their interests with the Americans.

Second, British encounters with the Civil War allow for another insight into how Britons coped with their country's shifting place in the world. As shown throughout this work, Britons used the Civil War as a foreign event and an emblem of foreign values through which to observe contemporary domestic changes and relate to

their country's past, future but mostly to its present. Lloyd George turned to the war to reaffirm Britain's past as a united country; Fuller looked to the conflict to see Britain's future as part of a larger empire. In all cases, however, Britons reacted to changes in the present, such as the Irish challenge to Britain's national unity and the Great War's deep impact in Britain.

Thus, on the one hand, American culture, and the Civil War specifically as a symbol of the modern United States, was an apt and available tool for the British in order to preserve Britain's independence and power, especially with relation to the United States, the western world's new centre of power. On the other hand, the Civil War as a symbol of foreign American culture was a valid tool for the British in order to understand and cope with Britain's changing place in the world, again, especially with relation to the United States. That the British turned to an American symbol such as the Civil War was an indication of the cultural consequences of Britain's changing position in the world in relation to the United States and its rise to power. The British encounters with the Civil War thus suggest that American culture served the British as a tool to adjust to a new reality in an age of decline and Americanization.

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