



The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film

Bruce Chadwick

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During the late nineteenth century, magazines, newspapers, novelists, and even historians presented a revised version of the Civil War that, intending to reconcile the former foes, downplayed the issues of slavery and racial injustice, and often promoted and reinforced the worst racial stereotypes. **The Reel Civil War** tells the history of how these misrepresentations of history made their way into movies.

More than 800 films have been made about the Civil War. Citing such classics as *Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With the Wind* as well as many other films, Bruce Chadwick shows how most of them have, until recently, projected an image of gallant soldiers, beautiful belles, sprawling plantations, and docile or dangerous slaves. He demonstrates how the movies aided and abetted racism and an inaccurate view of American history, providing a revealing and important account of the power of cinema to shape our understanding of historical truth.



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