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ABC's *North and South (Book I and Book II)* Miniseries as an Expression of Reaganite Ideology

Abstract: The article examines the compatibility of David L. Wolper's adaptation of *North and South (Book I and Book II)* with Reaganite ideology. It discusses the modifications of the original text (characters and events) to demonstrate how a Civil War novel has been transformed into a mirror image of Reaganite America. Wolper's TV adaptation forms part of Ronald Reagan's governing narrative of building one and strong America. The positive investment in the past—sanitizing or eliminating socially divisive issues, such as slavery and promoting core values such as family—helps to reach the national consensus on history that everybody (Southerners and Northerners) can identify with. Wrapped in the 1980s aesthetics of opulence, Wolper's adaptation conveys a message of America's greatness, attainable under the Lincoln-Reagan rallying cry "we must all stand united as Americans."

Keywords: John Jakes, *North and South*, David L. Wolper, adaptation, Reaganite ideology

John Jakes's *North and South* (1982), *Love and War* (1984), and the ABC adaptation (1985–1986) expressed the perception of the past characteristic of Reagan's America. The neo-conservative times required a neo-conservative interpretation of history. The prefix "neo-" alludes to not entirely conservative values that Reagan marketed, such as consumerism. Debora Silverman states that "the purpose of the 1980s aristocratic movement is… to promote the transience, discontinuity, and novelty required by the engines of consumerism" (x). And not the pursuit of universal truths!

As Toby Glenn Bates correctly observes, the prosperous 1980s (however illusory this prosperity may have been because it had been based on Voodoo economics[1]) were particularly propitious for relativizing history (10). In his rhetoric, Ronald Reagan

1 Voodoo economics, as practiced by Ronald Reagan, implied cuts in tax rates to boost the economy. Contrary to what was expected, the measure increased the federal budget deficit. It was none other than Reagan's vicepresident-to-be, George H. Bush, who critically assessed the efficiency of Reagan's proposal and termed it "voodoo economic policy" ("1982 Voodoo Economics—www.NBCUniversalArchives.com," YouTube video, 1:34, posted by "NBC News Archives," March 8, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8hnM6xNjeU).

soothed what needed to be soothed—two failed presidencies and a lost war—and he emphasized what needed to be emphasized and had already been forgotten: the American ethos. Due to the Reagan agency, in Joseph Heller's terms, the Americans realized again that "it's better to *live* on one's feet than to die on one's knees" (315). To get up off her knees, the America of early 1980s relativized the *sasha*, the lost War in Vietnam and the veteran,[2] and clung to the *zamani*, the "old-timey days" of the Civil War.[3] After the passage of a century, the memory of the fratricidal conflict was less painful and commemoration served a purpose. While legitimizing a national reconciliation, the discourse of the American Civil War validated the local identity: it celebrated *e pluribus unum*. Ronald Reagan's rhetoric reflected masterfully the Civil War discourse: the Confederate narration (Reagan's long-standing commitment to fight the "big government" and promote the states' rights) and the Union rhetoric (determination to build one strong America) at the domestic and national levels. According to Gary Gallagher, Reagan's contribution to the resurgence of interest in the American Civil War stems precisely from his impact on "changing public attitudes toward the use of military strength as a tool of national policy" (4).

Television succumbed to the President's narration: it was, after all, "a gathering place for vast numbers of people" (Adams 119). Inspired by the Reagan discourse, the writer John Jakes and the TV producer David L. Wolper settled the score with the American history. They rewrote it so that it could accomplish one specific goal: reconciliation and the embrace of the Reaganite battle call: "when it comes to keeping America strong, when it comes to keeping America great, when it comes to keeping America at peace, then none of us can afford to be simply a Democrat or a Republican—we must all stand united as Americans" (Reagan). The positive investment in the past and the elimination of "disturbing issues" produced a salutary effect; it boosted America's deflated ego, this "overwhelming wish to think well of ourselves" (Chomsky and Herman 305).

Unwilling to appreciate the presence of Reaganite ideology in the miniseries, the critics unanimously dismissed David L. Wolper's[4] adaptation of *North and South*

2 John Rambo in *Rambo: First Blood Part II* was very explicit about the sense of alienation he felt, voicing his anger in a new wave of patriotism typical of Reagan's America: "I want, what they want, and every other guy who came over here and spilled his guts and gave everything he had, wants! For our country to love us as much as we love it! That's what I want!"

3 This is the perception of Tom, one of Bobbie Ann Mason's Vietnam War veterans in the novel *In Country* (1985). Tom's town, Hopewell, seems to be catching up to the Civil War period, at least in its collection of "antique" memorabilia: Tom's mother shows off an ox yoke on the living room wall and Lonnie's mother uses the horse collar as a frame for a mirror.

4 David L. Wolper was an executive producer involved in the production of such TV miniseries as *Lincoln* (1974–1976), *Roots* (1977–1978), *The Thornbirds* (1983), and *The Mystic Warrior* (1984). Interestingly, *The Mystic Warrior*, a loose adaptation of Ruth

(Book I). Gary W. Gallagher demeaned the value of the ABC adaptation due to the clichéd content and "steamy soap operatic dimension of the episodes" (8):

> which offered uncomplicated heroes and villains, in all the usual categories—attractive plantation owner, vicious slaveholder, wild-eyed abolitionist, lustful young woman, mixed-race heroine, and so on. A few minutes into the series, I concluded that the principal direction must have been something like, 'A little more over the top, if you please'—advise clearly headed by Patrick Swayze, Kirstie Alley, David Carradine, and, in an inspired bit of casting, Wayne Newton as a sadistic Confederate prison commandant. (8)

John J. O'Connor criticized the adaptation for its consumerist approach in his review for *The New York Times*:

> Offered by the network as a 'grand tapestry' depicting the lives and loves of two American families 'entwined during the stormy 20 years leading up to the Civil War,' this gaudy, silly, even insulting television adaptation of *North and South* is merely another example of TV producers playing with their blocks of audience research and constructing an entertainment toy that has less to do with American history than cheap titillation gimmicks filched from an average episode of *Dynasty*. (O'Connor)

Interestingly, not only "cheap titillation gimmicks" were filched from *Dynasty*: also the costuming extravaganza and the interiors of the *North and South* miniseries were reminiscent of the Reaganite-Carringtonian taste.[5] The promo photographs of *North*

Beebe Hill's novel *Hanta Yo*, fomented discord between the writer and the producer and made the former literally "foam at the mouth with rage" (Miller 11) over the differences introduced to her original story. Importantly, there was not any necessity to disguise animosity on the set of *North and South*; on the contrary, the congenial atmosphere, as Ron Miller pointedly notices, manifested itself in the fact that Rachel Jakes, John Jakes's wife, made a cameo appearance as Mary Todd Lincoln. As for the changes that scriptwriters introduced in the plot, they were done ad libitum. John Jakes proved to be very acquiescent as he believes that the book is larger than life and cannot be influenced by any adaptations. Moreover, in a truly Reaganite "cash in" spirit he stated that once he had traded the rights to a novel, he preferred to keep silent unless "he ha[d] something nice to say about the project" (11).

5 Belvedere (Calhoun Mansion), Mont Royal (Stanton Hall) and Carrington mansion (Filoli) are very much alike. Curiously enough, Resolute (Greenwood Plantation House) displays chinoserie-like wallpaper that Mrs. Reagan was so fond of. Nancy Reagan manifested her aesthetic preferences in the renovation of the White House bedroom in 1981, which she decorated with hand-painted Chinese wallpaper (Silverman 54).

and South and *Dynasty* casts represented an American white affluent family in their heyday. Conspicuously, Ronald Reagan's inclusive America provides but a tenuous representation of minorities. Were it not for Madeline (Lesley-Anne Down), "a mixed race heroine," the *North and South* promo picture would lack the presence of African Americans.[6]

In his scathing review, the thundering John J. O'Connor not only lambasted the miniseries for being a duplicate of the Reaganite prime-time soap opera, but also derided the oversimplification of the original story. O'Connor calls a spade a spade when he refers to David L. Wolper's television miniseries as "blatantly cheap nonsense":

> *Clearly eager to appeal to all sections of the country*, the production presents some of the most divisive and inflammatory issues of American history as some sort of difference of opinion between gentlemen. Orrie [*sic*] (Patrick Swayze), a Southerner, does confess early on that 'some of us feel slavery is outdated.' And George (James Read), a Northerner, agrees: 'Oh, I know. My family owns an ironworks and we've got labor problems, too.' Basic morality seems to be beside the point... when all else fails, Mr. Wolper and his staff are sure to come up with a fistfight, featuring the loud, juicy thuds of flesh hitting flesh or, as in *Roots*, the whipping or torturing of some slaves. For added spectacle, there are two duels, two West Point graduations with marching bands, and several weddings. (O'Connor, emphasis added)

Aware of the conciliatory tone of the adaptation, John J. O'Connor nonetheless failed to recognize that the emphasis on "fistfights, whippings, duels, West Point graduations with marching bands and weddings"—all in all, a mixture of action, adventure and rite—was not gratuitous. It served as camouflage. As George Lipsitz pointedly observes in his study of early network television: "In actions and adventure shows, no embarrassing retentions of class consciousness compromise the sponsors' messages and no social connections to ethnic history bring up disturbing issues that might make programs susceptible to protest and boycotts" (73). So action, adventure and rite constituted manifestations of conscientious subversion. Of the three, the time honored rite permeated the neo-conservative revision of the past, bypassing anything slightly hinting at *niebłagonadiożnost* (political incorrectness).[7]

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6 In *Dynasty* Blake Carrington's mulatto sister, Dominique Deveraux (Diahann Carroll), became a regular cast member in Season 5.

7 Compared to *Roots* (1977), the *North and South* adaptation is politically regressive for David L. Wolper. Wolper's recipe for a mega-hit ratings miniseries is very pragmatic: "It should be based on a major best-seller (a costume epic, if possible), be a story of major sociological significance and deal with a major historical event or character" (qtd. in John J. O'Connor).

David L. Wolper's opus generically meets all the requirements of a TV drama as defined by Peter Brooks for melodramas: "the indulgence of strong emotionalism; moral polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, action; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripety" (11–12). Moreover, in terms of structure, the adaptation of *North and South (Book I and Book II)*, concocted in a truly Proppean fashion, resembles Jane Feuer's matrix plot of 1980s made-for-TV populist trauma dramas. According to Jane Feuer, each populist trauma drama of the Reagan era juggles the following eight clichés:

1. The family represents the ideal and norm of happy American family life.
2. A trauma occurs.
3. The victims/parents seek help through established institutions.
4. The institutions are unable to help them and are shown to be totally inadequate.
5. The victims take matters into their own hands.
6. They join a self-help group or form a grass-roots organization.
7. The new organization is better able to cope with the trauma, often having an impact on established institutions.
8. Normality is restored (however inadequately). (25–26)

The properly defined self-help groups or grass-roots organizations in *North and South* are traceable in the ranks of the abolitionists and the secessionists that Virgilia Hazard and James Huntoon join respectively. Both instances suggests that the established institutions—the federal government in this particular case—fail to cope with the necessities of individual citizens and force them to "take the matters into their own hands" and remedy their problems elsewhere. Now this twisted reading is much against the political correctness of the 1980s. What is not politically incorrect, however, is definitely the emphasis put on the Reaganite family.[8] Jane Feuer's plot matrix constitutes a cycle: the movie begins with the picture of a happy family and, although never explicitly stated, the movie should end with one as well. That is precisely how the adaptation of *North and South (Book I and Book II)* is structured. The first five minutes of the miniseries (*North and South Book I*, Episode 1) introduce the audience into a non-John Jakes imagery. Two girls richly attired appear against

8 *North and South*'s *(Book I and Book II)* postmodernist reading à la Feuer shows how pro-marital the miniseries actually was: Wendy Kilbourne (Constance) and James Read (George) married in 1988, Genie Francis (Brett) opted for an older Hazard and she and Jonathan Frakes (Stanley) married in 1988. Although Kirstie Alley (Virgilia) was already married to Parker Stevenson (her little brother Billy), she confessed to Barbara Walters that she and Patrick Swayze (Orry) fell in love with each other on the set. Be that as it may, a careful viewer senses something more than hatred when Virgilia delivers one of her famous jeremiads in front of Orry.

an impressive mansion, jumping merrily, with their hands clasped together, to the rhythm of a lively "Eggs Ashton" tune. Frolicking, they take us on a tour of a bountiful plantation as they traverse the lodges and pass groups of neat slaves who go to their daily chores. The viewer even catches a glimpse of an overseer. The girls run past black field workers toward a river. This is when careful readers of the novel get on the track as they identify the scene with the incident that takes place some eighty pages into *North and South*, namely the egg episode. When the girls find a green heron's egg, little Ashton removes it from the nest, and when ordered by her companion to put it back, she retorts defiantly: "If I can't have it, nobody can"[9] and crashes the egg. In consequence, the fight ensues. Then the careful readers are at a loss again as the fight is being interrupted by a mammy-like character who hurries the sisters to say goodbye to their big brother. Only then do the captions emerge to inform us about the time and place: MONT ROYAL PLANTATION, NEAR CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1842. A young gentleman ("the attractive plantation owner") cantering on a Sport-like sorrel[10] is approaching the main house. Out from the main entrance come an elderly gentleman and a ladylike woman who gives instructions to a black young house servant on Mr. Orry's trunk. The young maid assures the lady that it has already been seen to and, dismissed, she resumes her place among other house servants. Outside, the whole family, broadly defined, has gathered together to bid farewell to the young gentleman. The lady gives some words of warning and the elderly gentleman, urged by his wife, voices his opinion on his son's achievement: "I want you to know I'm very proud of you. It's no small thing for a man to have a son at West Point." Finally, the two little girls arrive, empty-handed but for a violet flower that one of them hands to Orry who decides to treat it as a token of their sisterly love and, surprisingly, of his love of Mont Royal. He hugs his sisters, takes the bridle from Priam, the groom, and off he canters. Just before crossing the gate, he takes a final glance at his family and home and waves them goodbye. Riding the long and wide lane, he passes some other slaves who lift their caps to salute their master. All this happens as the music reaches a crescendo.

Despite its apparent naïveté, the scene carries a powerful ideological message. The *mise-en-scène* of Orry's farewell, nonexistent in John Jakes's trilogy, not only evokes an American normality preceding the outbreak of the Civil War (Feuer's *raison d'être* of picturing a happy family prior to a traumatic occurrence), but also reveals nostalgia for the lost past. From the beginning to the end, the scene depicts a bucolic idyll: the romanticized antebellum plantation reality. The children, little Ashton and Brett, jumping carefree in their pantalets among working slaves, serve more as tour guides than as anything else. Logically, the children represent the innocence and one would think

9 Little Ashton appropriated a good deal of "I want it all and I want it now" approach to life typical of Alexis Morell Carrington Colby Dexter.

10 Sport is one of America's four famous horses; the other three are Cochise, Buck and Chub.

they were introduced here to avert the audience's eyes from such a "disturbing issue" as "the peculiar institution" and relieve the tension as the audience mainly focuses on their behavior. However, this is not the case here because we do not sense any tension in the opening scene. On the contrary, we see an extremely ordered reality with a lot of purposefulness. The slaves perform their tasks dutifully, faced with as much control as the overseer's magisterial gaze can exercise. In fact, the overseer is just a passive observer, which only increases the impression that the slaves work willingly. Furthermore, Tillet Main, judging by his grandiose mansion, is not just a common planter; he represents the planter elite. With the house slaves and family members gathered around him, he assumes the role of a paterfamilias à la Rome, an ideal to which the New Right aspired, disappointed with the crisis of patriarchal authority caused by 1960s lax families. Tillet Main restores the patriarchal authority as he exercises power over the members of his extended family. He does not speak; he makes pronouncements. Even a short conversation with his son gives us an insight into the hierarchy of the Main family. Orry has a great reverence for his father as he addresses him briefly "Sir," positioning Tillet far behind such affectionate American father figures as Ben "Pa" Cartwright. What is more, David L. Wolper, for reasons best known to himself, manipulates Orry's motives behind going to West Point. We learn from Orry's conversation with George en route to West Point that he expects to receive the best available education there, while John Jakes informs us explicitly in *North and South* (the book) that Orry was determined in his pursuit of a military carrier: "He would be a soldier no matter what anyone else thought" (135). Without knowing that, however, we still see that Orry's reaction in the farewell scene from Episode 1 is not particularly convincing and we sense that he goes to West Point against his will and rather to fulfill his father's dreams. Still, he enrolls in the academy, in accordance with his father's express wish. Any generational conflict is but tenuously delineated, if not visibly suppressed, in the TV series. "I'll do my best for you" denotes an obedient son's pledge not to compromise his father's expectations. Lastly, the ever present love that permeates the farewell scene softens the autocratic character of the family. The mission has been accomplished—what we see is what we get—the portrait of a caring family, living harmoniously with an enslaved community, and it is the positive emotions thus evoked, if not circumstances, that we identify with. The first scene deplores the lost innocence of America and inspires nostalgia for the good old days, especially if contrasted with the last three minutes of *North and South Book II*.

Portraying pre-trauma normalcy, Wolper devotes a lot of effort to conveying the message of bonanza and prosperity of the antebellum elites, applying strictly Reaganite aesthetics of opulence (making the audiences oohing at it). While John Jakes's trilogy is populated with the well-to-do, Wolper's adaptation visualizes their magnate category through gilded accouterments. Ronald Reagan with his boyish admiration for the captains of industry contributed to the upgrading of the status of entrepreneur in

the 1980s. For Reagan, the wealth was "obtainable in American society through hard work and talent" and the display of wealth came as a package deal and was "a deserved reward" (Silverman 43). This is precisely the kind of comments that the female attendees of Ronald Reagan's 1981 inaugural balls made about Nancy Reagan's expensive wardrobe. Mrs. Reagan, "a Sunbelt beauty" (Silverman 43), showing off gowns by Bill Blass, Adolfo and Galanos (autochthonic couturiers), was but a mirror of her husband's success. Nancy Reagan—"a 'professional lady' who spent her days with Betsy Bloomingdale, Jean Smith, Mary Jane Wick, and Marion Jorgenson on the complex work of maintaining a youthful and elegant appearance" (Silverman 41)—sent a message of acquiescence to the invitees to the inaugural balls. And the message was duly noted: "Now we know it's all right to buy grand clothes again without looking out of place" (Silverman 43). Supported by his wife, Ronald Reagan liberated the haves from the guilt of wealth. In the 1980s it was in fashion to be rich and to show it off. Corporate social responsibility (the obligations as imposed by wealth and externalized by the old business aristocracy—the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, the Vanderbilts—in plentiful donations) was a minor issue.

Reagans' style served as a model to be emulated for Ronald Reagan's new aristocracy, the celebracy.[11] The ostentatious display of wealth produced a psychological effect. Leo Lerman of *Vogue* claimed that "People want to see well-being, which gives them a sense of security" (qtd. in Troy 57). Now Aaron Spelling was ready, willing and able to provide the sense of security to each and every single ABC's viewer by launching *Dynasty*. Emphatically, Wolper's miniseries (another ABC production, mind you) constitutes an ectype of *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. Therefore, the Hazard clan who rules Hazard Iron in the industrial Lehigh Station and the Mains, "the cotton kingdom magnolia" aristocracy, represent nineteenth-century variations of oil magnates the Ewings or the Carringtons. Curiously, this is where the adaptation departs considerably from the novel again: the careful readers remember the Mains as rice planters. Obviously, the change was not coincidental. Rice never acquired the status "the king cotton" did. Firstly, cotton typified the South, and secondly, it was symptomatic of wealth. The *crème de la crème* of the southern society, as understood by the producer, had to deal with cotton industry.

In his pursuit to demonstrate that the American wealth exists per se, Wolper dispenses with the ways in which the Hazards and the Mains achieved their affluence. This is precisely the case of John Jakes's "Prologue: Two Fortunes" which never was

11 Barbara Goldsmith in her 1983 article on "The Meaning of Celebrity" dissects the motley crew of a Manhattan dinner party: "a United States Senator, an embezzler, a woman rumored to spend $60,000 a year on flowers, a talk-show host, the chief executive officer of one of America's largest corporations, a writer who had settled a plagiarism suit and a Nobel laureate."

televised. The charcoal burner's boy and the aristocrat, the patricide and the trader of "halfbreeds," Joseph Hazard and Charles de Main, the founders of the dynasties, fall victims to strict censorship. Curiously, it is not the only time the inglorious past, not to say shabby beginnings, have never made up their way to the television screen or have been manipulated in the Reagan era. Susan Jeffords, in *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, gives an example of Marty McFly, a fictional character of *Back to the Future* (1985), who rearranges his past to secure a prosperous future:

> The film's opening showed a McFly family in which the father was a wimp who delighted in *Three Stooges* comedies, the mother was an alcoholic, the uncle was in jail, the brother worked at a fast food restaurant, the sister could not get any dates, and the house was a cramped collection of junk and trash.
>
> But after Marty's intervention in the past, he returns home to find an immaculate and well-furnished house, his parents returning from a morning tennis game, his brother dressed in a suit and tie and heading for his office, his sister not able to keep track of the many boys who call her, and himself with the truck he had coveted parked in the garage. (69)

What is it, if not the satisfaction of social mobility expectation inculcated into the minds of Americans by Ronald Reagan himself, the son of an alcoholic father who became President of the United States? The tale of progress and self-improvement as defined in Reagan's favorite book *That Printer of Udell's* (1903) by Harold Bell Wright constituted the pillar of the American dream. The McFlys, from a blue-collar, pathological family metamorphose into members of a privileged social group. By opposition, the Hazards and the Mains do not have any complexes to cure as their wealth is already there. Their rags-to-riches story being censored, the producer does not have to rearrange any "disturbing issues" that the past conveyed. He complies with the consensual requisite for representing the American history as "uninterrupted progress" which implies evading the questions of right and wrong regarding the American past.[12] The governing narrative of the 1980s required a successful American family whose conscience would be clean and whose wealth would not depend on slave trade.

Moreover, the adaptation of *North and South* draws from the long-lasting American tradition—starting with Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* (1939)—of romanticizing the South. Pre-trauma normalcy emphasizes the southern ethos: defending honor through duels (action, adventure and rite), mastering fencing and riding (action, adventure and rite), assuming paternalist attitude towards slaves (rite) and the presence of southern

12 According to James W. Loewen, the author of *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*), this is precisely how American history textbooks teach history in high schools.

belles (rite). Fifty years changed nothing as Americans still wanted to cherish what the majority could not: the aristocratic roots. Orry Main, as created by Wolper, is a panacea for this ill: blueblooded, chivalric to the bone, a terrific horseman and a fencer. Orry displays all these features in a cult scene of the saber fight with Elkanah Bent (Philip Casnoff) from Episode 1. Curiously, this time we appreciate Wolper's contribution as the saber fight has nothing to do with the original plot of the novel. Bent, having humiliated Fisk during fencing practice, seeks another victim and chooses Orry as his next rival. The first feint assures Bent that the fight will not be as easy as he thought. In the course of one minute and ten seconds, Bent Quickly passes from the offensive to the defensive and, as a result of unrelenting attacks and lunges, unable to riposte, he trips and falls down on his back. Orry assumes the same position as Bent did when he defeated Fisk: he stands over him, leaning the top of his saber on Bent's throat. The tension eases at the sound of a mess call, ordered by a West Point instructor. Saved by the bell, Bent stands up, collects himself, and dismisses the cadets. George approaches Orry and asks him where he learned how to handle a sword like that to which Orry simply replies: "My father thought it was something every southern gentleman should know so he gave me a lesson." Now there is nothing like a good southern education! Apart from providing us with an instant gratification for all Bent's wickedness, the scene mythologizes southern lifestyle and martial skill, flattering the audiences of the Sun Belt.

Jim Neilson, in *Warring Fictions*, defines literary culture as "an institution [that] is bound up in and dependent upon capitalist social relations, it has tended to aestheticize rather than elaborate the historical, social and political dynamics of literary texts" (15). Thanks to the aestheticization of the past, social historians focus on individual experience. In the case of the adaptation of *North and South (Book I and Book II)*, individual experience is limited to the love plot that involves Madeline and Orry. Moreover, as Nina C. Leibman pointedly notices in her analysis of *Peter the Great*, another historic miniseries of the Reagan period, "all political issues, historical failures and achievements are represented as *family* problems" (6, original italics). For this reason, any incident that ruptures the tranquility of the family can be identified as the traumatic occurrence according to Feuer's plot structure. This is why we trace multiple traumas in the adaptation of *North and South (Book I and Book II)*, among which two play key roles: George and Orry's quarrel at Lehigh Station, provoked by Virgilia, "the wild-eyed abolitionist," and the farewell scene at the outbreak of the Civil War. The quarrel scene is climatic as the bonds of the friendship are tested. Once George extends the olive branch to Orry already in Mont Royal, the friends make peace and only then can they face the trauma of the war.

Wolper pictures the Civil War as an internecine warfare, wreaking havoc mostly in the South. In the best tradition of *Gone with the Wind*, the intertitles at the beginning of Episode 5 of *North and South Book II* inform the viewer explicitly that: "Events have

slowly changed in favor of the North. The war has stretched the resources of both sides to their limits with the South suffering the most dramatically." Interestingly, the adaptation slowly changes in favor of the South. The South suffers the shortages of food and while men are away, women become the defenders and the breadwinners: Clarissa (Jean Simmons) protects at gunpoint the house from being burned by the Union cavalry and Brett and Madeleine—just like Scarlett and Melanie—cultivate the land. While Jakes was reticent to send his characters to the battlefield—of the four, only Charles Main and Billy Hazard were professional soldiers and of the two, only Charles engaged in combat action as a scout (whereas Billy was safe with "his gear in the rear" as an engineer)—Wolper, on the contrary, rearranges the plot so that the male characters face as much combat as possible, since battlefield heroism was highly valued by the audiences of Cold War Reagan-Era America. In the adaptation, Billy gets a transfer to a brand new elite Sharpshooters Regiment. When Billy (Parker Stevenson) explains his transfer to Brett (Genie Francis) in *North and South Book II*, Episode 1, he verbalizes the call of duty as understood by Ronald Reagan: "I'm a soldier. Soldiers are just supposed to fight. Our ancestors fought so that the United States could be a free nation. I have a chance to be a part of it, to make history." A few minutes later Orry states the southern cause in a way alluding to another set of Reagan values: "I never wanted this war. But we would be without pride, without honor if we let North tell us how to live. There are some things worth fighting for, Madeline, this land, our families, our way of life." Thus formulated, the northern cause and the southern cause are equally legitimate. Placing the characters in the thick of the battle serves the purpose of dramatizing the story: it makes the war plausibly fratricide. The effect is achieved already at Manassas when Billy spies Charles (Lewis Smith) in the Confederate cavalry and evades the confrontation by ducking down when Charles jumps over the log that Billy uses as a stockade. The war escalates and the characters become increasingly radical. When Billy and Charles next meet at Antietam, they aim at each other. The awful suspense ends with the canon explosion which interrupts the confrontation: Charles finally withdraws. But the most dramatic incident occurs during the Battle of Petersburg in which General Orry Main and General George Hazard finally encounter each other on the battlefield. They do not assault each other, but they vent their spleen on the enemy army in general.

The film's representation of war trivia resembles Ronald Reagan's celebracy world: "everybody knows somebody." Orry and George are on first terms with Presidents Davis (Lloyd Bridges) and Lincoln (Hal Holbrook); they are their confidants. The presidents, on the other hand, are father figures for Orry and George—unlike in the novel where they are casual acquaintances (in Orry's case, the relation with Davis is rather bitter). Now, George provides Lincoln with an expertise on Union generals and he personally recommends Ulysses S. Grant (Anthony Zerbe) as a commander-in-chief. George is also a special presidential envoy to Tennessee, communicating the appointment to Grant. Moreover, George's marriage seems to be modeled on the Reagan couple,

with the role of confidant reserved for the wife. When Captain Bradley visits George in Belvedere to talk about the investigation against defective weapons made by Axol (Stanley Hazard's side business),[13] George says explicitly: "unless it involves military secrets, I have nothing I wanna hide from my wife" (*North and South Book II*, Episode 5) and insists that Constance (Wendy Kilbourne) be present during the conversation.

According to Alicia R. Browne and Lawrence A. Kreiser Jr., "many audiences still want to hear the crash of gunfire and the roar of artillery" (66), so the Civil War is all about combat action. But the war, being a perfect mixture of action and adventure, sanitizes "disturbing issues," too. This is the case of Brett's and Semiramis's journey to the south in Episode 2 of *North and South Book II*, absent from the book. The bond between a southern belle and her black maid grows stronger as the two experience a series of hardships (loss of carriage, apprehension by the Union soldiers) during which they stand up for each other. We have an impression of equality which serves to deflect attention away from Semiramis (Erica Gimpel) who, by going south, in fact travels back to serfdom.

Faithful to the Lost Cause tradition, Wolper upholds the legend of Robert E. Lee (William Schallert) and his skills as a military commander in the miniseries. Additionally, he portrays Abraham Lincoln from a 1980s perspective: the president avoids vituperation by his political opponents—the "hag-ridden creature who haunts the Executive Mansion and daily heaps more disgrace upon his office" (Jakes 815), as the readers learn from *Love and War*—but he is the father of the nation, a man on a divine crusade, greatly respected by his fellow men.

To conclude, the Civil War mostly constitutes the background for the development of the relations between the Hazards and the Mains. The fratricidal conflict provides the characters with many crucibles, making them choose between state loyalty and ethics. This is the case of Virgilia, an abolitionist, who abhors the Southerners and has to attend to a wounded Confederate officer. This is also the case of Orry, a Confederate general, who betrays his country to rescue his friend George from Libby Prison. The war is wrong but the characters are moral victors.

Sexuality, considered definitely a "disturbing issue," is one of many instances that the Reaganite ideology takes its toll in the ABC adaptation. Pointedly, Wolper imposes Victorian morality upon his positive characters. Firstly, after his tête-à-tête with Alice Peet and prior to the intimacy with Madeline, Orry lives a celibate life, drowning his passion in alcohol. In the book, he does that too, but he also meets a mistress for sex. He has very little of the platonic lover that Wolper wants us to believe the protagonist to be. Moreover, Madeline Fabray also has a premarital liaison, which the producer

13 More explosive than its literary counterpart in *Love and War*—"disgrace to the cordwainer's trade": "two eyelets—only pegs twixt the sole and upper" (Jakes 98–99) bootees that hardly can survive the mud and snow.

prefers to suppress as she falls into a category of "long suffering martyrs," the first of the two available alternatives for female characters in the 1980s miniseries, according to Nina C. Leibman (7). Madeline fits this category perfectly: married to a sadist, she is one of many brutalized wives that made their way to the TV screen in the 1980s.[14] David Carradine, with his memorable cruel face, does more than justice to Justin LaMotte as conceived of by Wolper. As a matter of fact, David Carradine and Lesley-Anne Down were nominated for Golden Globes as best supporting actors in 1986. It proves just how much the audiences were concerned about domestic violence. With a view to dramatizing Orry's and Madeline's love story, Justin's presence in the miniseries is more prominent than in the book. In the book, he dies from a wound he incidentally receives in his bottom and a subsequent infection, while in the miniseries he falls down from a window after a fight with Orry. This is another climatic moment in the adaptation. In the best of styles of 1980s manhood, as epitomized by John Rambo, Orry storms the Resolute plantation, deals single-handedly with Justin's bodyguards, breaks the door to the main house and fulfils a promise once given to Justin: "If you ever try to take Madeline back, you'll have to kill me first. And if you ever set foot on my property again… I'll kill you on-site" (*North and South Book I*, Episode 6).

As a beloved of an *aristos c*haracter,[15] Madeline has to be equally virtuous. Wolper portrays chastity in an old-fashioned way. Lesley-Anne Down, with her constant blushes and flutters and dropping eyes, produces an effect contrary to the intended one; as Gordon Thompson puts it: "when a virgin blushes, she already knows too much." With Madeline's premarital affair erased from the script, it is Ashton ("the lustful young woman") who steals the show with a marvelous performance on her *prima nocta*. This could technically happen as Ashton (Terri Garber) had a libertine past too; by the time she left West Point, she had gathered seven fly buttons. Ashton falls into the second category of female characters, namely "back-stabbing nymphomaniacs," which refers to women seeking power and implies a "misplaced sexual role modeling" (Leibman 7). Thus, she incarnates the "1980s Reaganite fantasy" about women who exert "the influence… on men through their appearance and seductive behavior" (Silverman 63). The *prima nocta* scene has two goals: 1) to portray Ashton, according to the convention, as an effective manipulator, and 2) to portray James (Jim Metzler) as a cuckold husband. Cuckold though he is, James's pride is not injured as the whole truth about

14 The other being Nancy (*Independence Day*), Francine Hughes (*The Burning Bed*), Celie (*The Color Purple*) and Tracey (*A Cry for Help: The Tracey Thurman Story*).

15 Whose essence is best caught by Marti D. Lee in her article "Aristos or Aristocracy? Alliances in *Emma*," where she applies this term to protagonists that reveal: "compassion, mental and emotional strength, innate intelligence, an existential sense of responsibility, and high moral standards to measure a character's worth, a natural aristocracy rather than a social hierarchy imposed by civilization."

him is never actually exposed, and the whole truth is that James Huntoon was "an inadequate lover" (Jakes, *North and South* 519), the circumstance Ashton often points out in private in the book. Seen from this perspective, Ashton's promiscuity looks like an assertion of the female right to sexual satisfaction. This possibility proves to be subversive as it undermines male authority (a wife complaining about her husband's "bed inefficiency") in general, and the Reaganite patriarchal discourse in particular. Ashton challenges Orry, the head of the family after Tillet's death, on more than one occasion. With Huntoon's ineptitude glossed over, the morally outraged audience can pass a judgment on Ashton, "an adulteress with no respect for marital vows."

Virgilia Hazard (Kirstie Alley), her involvement in the Harper Ferry assault notwithstanding, falls into the category of "a back-stabbing nymphomaniac" literally. Undoubtedly, Virgilia was judged as a subversive character and she had to be punished for challenging patriarchal discourse of the 1980s. The adaptation visibly dramatizes her original story. She is shown as a fanatical abolitionist. As Orry epitomizes the South, she ostracizes him. Each time the Hazards and the Mains socialize, she disrupts the peace between the families. She therefore threatens the holy union between the North and the South. Virgilia Hazard challenges openly the nineteenth-century ideal of true womanhood,[16] still appealing to Republican voters in Reagan's era: she is neither domestic, pious, submissive nor particularly pure. Unlike in the book, in the ABC adaptation Virgilia marries Grady (Georg Stanford Brown), a former slave; marriage being more acceptable than concubinage, according to the network's judgment. By marrying Grady, not only does she give "a significant sexual twist to her politics" (O'Connor), but also she poses a threat of miscegenation to white America. After Grady's death, the force that rules her life is hatred. In abject poverty, she shuns the help of the sacred and unerring institution, the family. She becomes the protégé of Congressman Sam Greene (David Ogden Stiers) in order to secure her economic sustenance. Unfortunately, the relationship is not purely platonic and Sam starts prostituting Virgilia in exchange for his favors[17]; yet another LaMotte relationship based on abuse. Once she realizes that Sam lied to her, Virgilia shoots him. Crime has to be punished, and Virgilia is executed. Needless to say, Jakes had a different plan for Virgilia: in the novel, she survives the war even though she perpetrates more evil than in the miniseries. In *Love and War*, as an army nurse, she premeditatedly murders Confederate Lieutenant O'Grady (strange coincidence); in the adaptation, on the other hand, a wounded Confederate soldier bleeds himself to death after undoing the clamp. Virgilia's behavior—her disrespect for male authority and rejection of the family—was too much to tolerate for the conservative America of the 1980s. Additionally, Kirstie Alley's style of acting was peculiar to the point of derangement. Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood"

16 As elaborated by Barbara Welter in "The Cult of True Womanhood."

17 *Pretty Woman* was yet to be filmed.

is unequivocal on the issue of derangement: "the frequency with which derangement follows loss of virtue suggests the exquisite sensibility of woman, and the possibility that, in the women's magazines at least, her intellect was geared to her hymen, not her brain" (156). Thus, the final assessment of Virgilia is based on the recognition of an imprecisely defined sexual disorder, obscuring the big cause she stands for.

Elkanah Bent's role has also been considerably modified by Wolper. The feisty and flamboyant Georgian with an inflated ego, played by Philip Casnoff, has nothing to do with the pachydermic Ohioan we know from the novel. In the miniseries Elkanah Bent becomes a victim of gentrification à la Selznick, travelling quite a way from Ohio fields to Georgia parlors. Gentrification makes Bent eligible as Ashton's beau whose dominium of *ars amatoria* is never questioned. Interestingly, Bent's unflinching virility in the miniseries serves to mask his sexual preferences we know from the novel: his conspicuous bisexuality, with a tinge of pedophilia. Obviously, the emphasis on morality in the Reaganite ideology excludes any hint of sexual perversion. Particularly, in the period when AIDS took a heavy toll, especially of gay men, even the evildoers had to be straight.[18] Invented as he is, Bent represents another imperative of the Reagan era, namely the esthetics of opulence. In the Napoleon-Josephine scene, Elkanah Bent functions as a preincarnation of Gordon Gekko when he displays to Ashton all the luxury products he obtained through his successful contraband: "greed is good, indeed." Not coincidentally, Elkanah Bent reveals Mrs. Ronald Reagan's "unabashed appreciation of luxury" (Silverman 43) when he confesses to Ashton: "I'm so pleased to have found somebody whose dedication to the pursuit of luxury, pleasure and power is as singular as my own" (*North and South Book II*, Episode 2).

Furthermore, Wolper excludes Cooper Main, Orry's older brother, "a brilliant Charleston entrepreneur who comes to detest the proslavery secessionist point of view of his fellow Southerners" (Miller 11) from the adaptation. Although the reasons are never explicitly stated, it is assumed that the televised version of Orry is a mixture of these two characters. In the novel, Cooper Main is a strange character because he is not one-dimensional. Unlike his younger brother Orry, he realizes that the North represents progress. Cooper sees the backwardness of the South, with its reliance on unpaid labor secured by "the peculiar institution." He voices doubts about slavery and abhors the violence to which the slaves are exposed. He is openly critical of his own background. Erasing Cooper from the television (a propaganda medium by all means) adaptation constitutes an instance of self-censorship. Pointedly, Jim Neilson argues that "in the ongoing preoccupation with constructions of race, gender, and sexual identity can be

18 Esther Shapiro with her ambition to treat socially igniting issues had to succumb finally to the network sponsors and heal Stephen Carrington from homosexuality by marrying him to Sammy Jo. For the intricacies, please watch *Dynasty: The Making of a Guilty Pleasure* by Matthew Miller.

found a continuation of American literary culture's traditional concern for self-affirmation and democratic pluralism and its refusal to accede *to radical critique in any but a token manner*" (13, emphasis added). Cooper Main, who openly criticizes the status quo in the South, would subvert Wolper's intention to portray a monolithic South, proud of its separate identity. Cooper Main is superfluous because Virgilia contributes more than her fair share to denounce the evils of the South. Moreover, his presence would complicate Orry's portrayal as the only Southerner with whom the audiences sympathize from the beginning till the end. Lastly, Orry's "abilities of the son adequately to replace—though not to overturn—the father" (Jeffords 67) make him a more desirable character than Cooper from the perspective of the New Right discourse. Each time Cooper harangues his father about slavery, he undermines Tillet's *patria potestas*.

Finally, the plot takes us to Mont Royal once again for the denouement of the story where we witness the restoration of order. The final scene does not follow John Jakes's version and it clearly alludes to the opening scene. It begins with a shot of the burnt-to-the-ground Mont Royal residence and we look at it through Orry's eyes. He is visibly moved as he realizes that barely anything has been left of Mont Royal's former grandeur. George comes to offer reassurance, and Orry feels relieved that his father did not live to see the ruination of Mont Royal. He reminisces about the happiest day in his life, the day he got married in the residence. George comments on the difficulties that might arise from the restoration of the country as both sides suffered too much. However, he sees something good in the trauma of the Civil War: the survival of their friendship. With a sense of a universal mission, he states that the healing of the nation's wounds depends on him and Orry. He offers to make investment in their textile mill and asks Orry to use the profit to rebuild Mont Royal, drawing out from his wallet the half of a ten-dollar bill from the bet in Episode 1. Bill Conti's theme "North and South" accompanies the scene till the very end. Orry smiles and matches the bill with the other half. He confesses: "You're the best friend a man could ever have, George" (*North and South Book II*, Episode 6), and they embrace each other. The music reaches a crescendo. George replies: "We're family, Orry, you remember that." Again we see the ruins of Mont Royal against which emerge Orry, Madeline holding their son, George and Charles with his son in his arms. A few steps behind them walk Brett and Billy, the couple epitomizing the holy wedlock of North and South. They all leave the plantation walking along the same lane that Orry cantered in the opening scene. Interestingly, the only people who look back at what they are leaving behind are Orry and George.

Earnest, moralistic, sententious, therapeutic, the mise-en-scène of the departure from Mont Royal capitalizes on the Reaganite ethos. The big triangle that Nina C. Leibman describes in her article "Mini-Series/Maxi-Messages*:* Ideology and the Interaction between *Peter the Great*, AETNA, AT&T, and Ford" is visible here: the patriarchal family, self-sacrifice and progress (6). George Hazard assumes the role of a self-styled Prometheus, embarking on a top-to-bottom revival based on the acquisition of power.

He does it in a truly Reagan-like fashion as he preaches nothing less than the doctrine of Reaganite self-reliance and activism: "It's up to us and our ways to start healing the wounds of this nation" (*North and South Book II*, Episode 6). The ten-dollar bet is another example of Wolper's *licentia poetica* which can be hardly traced in John Jakes's novel. Yet the producer weaves it into the climax: the piecing together of the ten-dollar banknote symbolizes the piecing together of the whole country. Deregulated though it was, the American economy stood firm on the dollar in the 1980s, and the faith of neo-conservative Americans in its sustainability remained unshaken. In the closing scene, George and Orry assume the roles of patriarchs of the Hazard and the Main clans respectively, with the disruptive family members eliminated through execution (Virgilia) or excommunication (Ashton). George and Orry also symbolize the North and the South with all the gender implications, George, in a manly fashion, taking the initiative and Orry, in a womanly way, agreeing to be consoled.[19] The embrace represents a complete reconciliation. Orry survives the war precisely to march triumphantly out of the ruins of Mont Royal, the South rising like a phoenix from the ashes, and George, standing for the affluent North, hopes for a brighter future that self-sacrifice and the American dollar will finally provide. The scene is convincing because it is complete. According to 1980s cinematographic standards as delineated by Leibman, Wolper chooses to portray political issues, historical failures and achievements as "*family*" problems (6, original italics). The presence of emancipated slaves would be superfluous, therefore the scene does not include them. They are not part of the family in the strict sense of the word. According to Robert Brent Toplin, "the focus on reconciliation is in keeping with late-twentieth-century Americans' desire to emphasize their common heritage rather than their past differences" (qtd. in Browne 64). Bypassing the divisive race issue, the denouement emphasizes the common war experience. Ultimately, George's "we've all suffered too much" necessarily refers to the white majority, the principal victims of the Civil War.

Wolper's adaptation of *North and South (Book I and Book II)* is ideologically errorless. Structurally, it does not differ from other 1980s made-for-TV dramas. It represents a quest for truth and happiness in which good and bad characters, as judged by the Reaganite ideology, are either rewarded or punished for their deeds. It is the ideology that determines the fate of the characters. Not surprisingly, the publicity picture of George and Orry posing in their uniforms with the United States and Texas flags in the background, taken while shooting the Battle of Churubusco, was used as the artwork for the DVD collection. The picture is larger than life and provides a key to understanding the message that comes from Texas and lies in the subconscious

19 Blasphemous though it is, Patrick Swayze (Orry) fits perfectly the description of a "hothouse lily" (Jakes, *North and South* 56) and he actually does justice as a woman in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar.*

presence of the Alamo in the United States history. A Spanish-born Mexican writer, Paco Ignacio Taibo, considers the Alamo a much more crucial founding myth than the Pilgrim Fathers and the Mayflower (Taibo 11). What the Alamo reveals is that the mythology is shaped by common sacrifice. With the fratricidal Civil War as its context, the film conveys Reagan's imperial message "we must all stand united as Americans."

Much to John J. O'Connor's dismay, in August 2013 some websites announced that Discovery Channel commissioned a remake of the *North and South* miniseries from Lionsgate.[20] A blunder though it was, the word "remake" recognizes the quality of Wolper's adaptation. Furthermore, it proves that his formula of a successful miniseries turned out valid to the twenty-first-century television audiences. The remaking rehabilitates the producer entirely and acknowledges his understanding of the preferences not only of the Reaganite public. Contemporary audiences still list the ABC adaptation of John Jakes's novel among "Top 15 TV Shows" and keep writing enthusiastic reviews:

> Picture Patrick Swayze as Orry Main, wearing a cape and long hair, both fluttering in the wind as he rides his prized stallion through an avenue of moss-covered oak trees, on his way to West Point Military Academy where he will meet his best friend for life, George Hazard. Only problem is, Main is a plantation owner's son from the South, while Hazard's father is a steel factory owner from the North. You can envision the chaos that arises between the two families when the Civil War breaks out. Women in big dresses, mansions burning down in fires, the most dramatic theme song imaginable, David Carradine as Swayze's arch nemesis, Johnny Cash as John Brown, evil officers, malicious sisters, fanatic abolitionists, slaves with hearts of gold, family secrets, forbidden love affairs, betrayals, duals, revenge and, above all, everlasting friendships are at the core of this best soap-operatic mini-series ever made. (Mouskevitz.livejournal.com)

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20 Lisa de Moraes, "Discovery, Lionsgate Re-Making 'North And South' Miniseries"; Garth Franklin, "'North and South' Mini-Series Gets A Remake"; Lesley Goldberg, "'North and South' Miniseries in the Works at Discovery."

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