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America's Fascination With The Ku Klux Klan. "BlacKkKlansman" and "Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America"

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Because of the rich historical and cultural associations, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is a subject frequently represented by American filmmakers. After a short historical introduction about the group, this article explores the past and present shape of KKK's representation in film and relates it to the discourse on race and ethnicity representation in the United States. It conducts a comparative examination of two contemporary cinematic productions: Spike Lee's BlacKkKlansman (2018) and Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America (2016) directed by Matthew Ornstein. Both pictures tell the stories of a controversial close relation of a black man with KKK. The conscious aesthetic and meta-cinematographic techniques employed by the films are analyzed through the lens of the two related concepts: Brecht's reflective spectatorship and Shklovsky's defamilarization in art. The aim of these techniques is to create a sense of distance in the spectators in order to address them as conscious and reflective subjects. In this way the two films shock the audience with the question of what happens if a black person becomes a member or a friend of the Klan? The two stories challenge the long-established ideology and traditional image of the the white hood.

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America's Fascination With The Ku Klux Klan. "BlacKkKlansman" and "Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America"

The history of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the United States now stretches back for longer than 150 years. The meaning of the white hood within the American popular imagination today seems to be twofold. On the one hand, it has become an iconic part of the turbulent past of the United States, part of a tradition towards which some people still look with nostalgia. On the other hand, the organization remains the symbol and the most prominent executor of the ideologies of white supremacism and racism. Because of these manifold historical and cultural associations, the KKK is a subject frequently covered by American filmmakers. The Klan's appearance in cinema was initiated in 1915 by D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. This innovative Hollywood classic had a significant impact not only on the industry but also on American society, as it inspired the revival of the Klan itself. From the beginning, filmic representations of the Klan have been closely connected with the socio-political mood about race in the United States.

After a short historical introduction, this paper explores the past and present manner in which the KKK is depicted in film and relates it to discourse on racial and ethnic representation in the United States. It conducts a close examination of two recent cinematic productions: Spike Lee's *BlacKkKlansman* (2018) and *Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America* (2016), directed by Matthew Ornstein. Both films are examples of independent cinema. Even though they are different genres (action/drama and documentary, respectively), this paper finds numerous parallels between them. Both pictures tell the stories of a controversial close relationship between a black man and the Ku Klux Klan. *BlacKkKlansman* is based on the true story of an African American police officer who in the 1970s led the

infiltration of the Colorado Springs chapter of the KKK. *Accidental Courtesy*, meanwhile, depicts the life of an African American musician and activist who since the 1980s has been meeting with the leaders of radical white supremacist groups (especially the KKK), engaging in a dialogue with them. The unconventional, even shocking plots of the two films make a break from traditional race-related scenarios and stereotypes. They turn away from classical rhetoric and storytelling towards conscious aesthetic techniques that emphasize the process of perceiving an image (of race) and of constructing this image.

The aesthetic strategies employed by the films will be analyzed through the lens of two related concepts: reflective spectatorship, and defamilarization in art. The first term refers to the main framework applied in film studies to understand the relationship between a picture and the viewer. The concept was initiated by the German theater artist and theorist, Bertolt Brecht, who rejected sympathetic feelings built along a linear action (which he associated with dramatic theatre) and advocated the introduction of emotional conflicts and unexpected shifts (like in his vision of epic theatre). The second concept, also known as defamiliarization, was developed by the Russian literary theorist, Viktor Shklovsky, who in his seminal essay "Art as Technique" wrote that the "technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself."[1] According to both Brecht and Shklovsky, the aim of these techniques is to create a sense of distance in spectators in order to address them as conscious and reflective subjects.

The KKK in American History

Katarzyna Surmiak-Domańska, in her book investigating the present and past of the Ku Klux Klan, describes the functioning of the organization in the following words:

> Since the Klan was established [...] it has never really disappeared. It fades and then flourishes again; it sticks to the body of society like a virus able to perfectly assimilate and adapt to the changing environment.[2]

Historians track the origins of the Klan back to the period right after the Civil War.[3] The group was created by Confederate soldiers who were looking for some kind of entertainment. The name of their club, the titles of its members, and their white robes were all invented to provoke curiosity in anyone who was not a member of the Klan. The unintended power of the group arose due to its ability to keep up a sense of mystery and to instill fear. The struggles of Reconstruction caused African Americans to become a natural target for frustrated white soldiers. During this period the Klan committed its first acts of violence, which eventually gave way to hundreds of murders.[4] After Reconstruction ended, its activity declined. However, as described by Rory McVeigh and Kevin Estep,

> the 'idea' of the Klan spread far and wide, fanned in part by newspaper coverage that tended to exaggerate its size and cohesion.[5]

Scholars have identified two major revivals of the Klan's activity. The first was directly connected with cinema, as screenings of Griffith's film were accompanied by violent riots. The film promoted anti-black feelings and nostalgic longing for the old Southern order. It depicted the Klan as the savior of troubled white Southerners and thus inspired the rise of a new serious structure. The Klan's influence spread throughout the

whole country and started to creep into the political scene. McVeigh and Estep write that their "religious and ethnic prejudices mapped easily onto the economic and political transformations of the day."[6] The second awakening of the group occurred in response to the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. The KKK "linked communism to black militancy to conjure the illusion of coordinated attacks on white interests."[7] For most of the time their violence spread freely, as the Klansmen were protected by their fellow members and kindred spirits in police structures. Finally, by the end of the decade, the KKK's activity had decreased as a result of a counterintelligence program implemented by the FBI.[8]

Despite the Klan's several revivals and subsequent waning, the ideologies promoted by the organization have never actually disappeared. White privilege ideals are passed from generation to generation in many American families, communities, and even institutions. McVeigh and Estep connect the present political changes in the United States to past KKK's strategies: "Much in the same way that the Klan targeted communities hurt by the economic shifts of emancipation, desegregation, and industrialization, [Donald] Trump [in his presidential campaign] appealed to those on the losing end of the newly global economy."[9]

Recently, the American socio-political scene has witnessed a new rise of white supremacist ideology. The *New Hate and Old* report connects this phenomenon to the growth of the alt right and to the election of Donald Trump.[10] The hateful rhetoric of the new, extreme white-privilege movement and their often violent rallies (most famously in Charlottesville, August 11-12, 2017) have drawn significant media attention.

The KKK in the American Cinema

A brief historical overview of the KKK's (and their modern continuators') activities shows that the organization has become an integral part of American racial discourse. Despite the Klan's

historical and political significance, Nancy Bishop Dessommes claims that "most of what ordinary American citizens know about the Klan comes from their exposure to popular film."[11] On the one hand, cinema, from its early days, has had a strong potential to shape the general imagination in political and social ways. On the other hand, popular films—in order to satisfy their viewers-consumers—cater to the general taste and dominant ideologies (such as white supremacy). The film studies scholar Tom Rice argues that "[t]he Klan image, constructed and contested through cinema, remains one of the most loaded and recognizable in American popular culture."[12] Over time, cinema has shaped the vision of the organization in different ways: from idealization, through trivialization, to demonization. Rice, the author of "Hollywood in Hoods," emphasizes the fact that most of the filmic portrayals of the Klan have misrepresented its structure and authority.

Some of the first Hollywood productions engaged in Klan propaganda. *The Birth of a Nation*'s success was followed by, for example, *The Toll of Justice* (1916). The production of the latter film took place under the patronage of the Ohio chapter of the Klan. Rice shows that *The Toll of Justice*, advertised as "a Ku Klux Klan picture," clearly "reveal[s] the ways in which the Klan sought to represent and define itself, not only on-screen but also through the promotion and exhibition of film."[13] The group was represented as a guardian of morality and the purity of the white race.

The legend-like treatment of the Klan by filmmakers transformed during the interwar period. The author of *White Robes, Silver Screens* claims that pictures such as *Legion of Terror* (1936), or *Black Legion* (1937), exposed "the racket behind hooded organizations that . . . [were] infesting sections of America" and promoted "other patriotic organizations which stand for American democracy and Liberty."[14] While those pictures relied on a wave of exploiting the Klan, others preferred

to eschew any discussion of this controversial group. For example, Selznick's famous film adaptation of *Gone with the Wind* (1939) removed the Klan from its plot. The exploitative notion was still present a decade later in, for instance, *Storm Warning* (1951). The American studies scholar Rodney Taveira describes it as "a noir thriller that characterizes the Klan as cowardly and violent."[15] The picture's plot culminates in a showy undercutting of the group's activity. The operation is led by an energetic police officer played by none other than Ronald Reagan.

The post-Civil Rights audience required a more realistic depiction of the organization's impact. For instance, *Mississippi Burning* (1989) provides a rough portrayal of a community terrorized by the KKK's structures. Two FBI agents investigate the murder of three young Civil Rights activists in 1964 (the plot is based on a real story). Nancy Bishop Dessommes judges that "although both parties are made to look ridiculous at times, the image of the Klan is frank."[16] Other representations of the KKK from the end of the twentieth century tended to reduce the scale of their activity solely to the South and somehow exaggerated their authority (for example *A Time to Kill*, 1996). However, the films' focus on the reality of racial injustice in the United States prepared the ground for independent productions in the new century, such as *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy*.

BlacKkKlansman and *Accidental Courtesy*: A Theoretical Perspective

These changes in the cinematographic depiction of the Klan oftentimes reflected the social and political shifts going on in American history. Rice describes this dynamic relationship as the "ideological battle fought through the media, over the control and meaning of an image [of the Ku Klux Klan]."[17] This "battle"

merges with the larger discourse: of race and ethnicity as represented in the American film. Robyn Wiegman summarizes it thusly: "[from] genre to spectator, from directorship to narration, in the ideological as well as the material realm, race and ethnicity have a foundational effect on . . . Hollywood industry, representational practices, and spectatorial cultures."[18] The author emphasizes that all levels of any cinematographic production, and additionally the reception of such a production, are "highly political" and involved in the relations of "power and privilege in the United States."[19]

The two films discussed in this paper are, in the end, a part of the cinematographic tradition of the portrayal of the KKK (and race) in American cinema. However, the films' perspectives do not subscribe to the traditional depictions of the organization. Classical representations of the Klan were simplified and one-sided. Wiegman explains that the formation process of such stereotypical images shifts them between the "simple poles" of "good and bad," "noble and savage," "kind-hearted and villainous."[20] The image of the Klan changed from that of white patriots fighting against non-white outlaws (which started with *The Birth of a Nation*, or *The Toll of Justice*), to—more recently—a visual short-cut for white supremacism and American extremism that is challenged by the American authorities (for example *Mississippi Burning*, or *A Time to Kill*). Both Lee's and Ornstein's films render the division into black-and-white oppositions no longer valid. They shock the audience with the question of what happens if a black person becomes a member, or a friend, of the Klan? What happens to the ideology and traditional image of the group? The two infiltration stories challenge the long-established myth of the white hood.

To achieve this effect, *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy* become self-reflexive and they rely on conscious and distanced audiences. Both pictures aim to interest viewers in

their particular stories and to introduce them to race-related conflicts and injustices. The films employ the concept of reflective spectatorship (rooted in the theater philosophy of Brecht) and the theory of defamiliarization (conceptualized by Shklovsky) in their editing and stylistic strategies. The political rationale behind reflective spectatorship is to abandon the undemanding ideals of popular entertainment and, in turn, force audiences to reflect on real-life human experiences and societal problems. Shklovsky emphasizes that, as a result of constant exposure to repeated images and narratives, the audience's "perception becomes habitual" and "automatic."[21] Instead, he advocates for an independent art that aims to "increase the difficulty and length of perception."[22] The fact that both Brecht and Shklovsky favor an alienating effect does not mean that they ignore the role of emotions in the perception of films. They favor emotional unease and conflict over simple pleasurable sensations. Moreover, Michale B. Woal (who draws upon Shklovsky) points out a distinction "between *rhetorical* and *aesthetic* experience" of art.[23] The "rhetorical" concept regards the traditional representation of race in cinema, as it relies on "the establishment of categories" (the simple black-and-white perspective). Then, the "aesthetic" approach (favored by Shklovsky) is adapted by Lee and Ornstein, as it "draws attention to the processes of symbol construction and perception in which all persons are involved, whatever their ideological leanings."[24] Their films turn away from classical story-telling to focus on conscious aesthetic and meta-cinematographic techniques.

BlacKkKlansman and *Accidental Courtesy*: An Analysis

The main difference between the two films is their genre. However, *BlacKkKlansman* is not a traditional "cop movie," nor is *Accidental Courtesy* a typical documentary. Lee was inspired by

the memoir of Ron Stallworth, the first African American police officer in Colorado Springs, who got involved in a local KKK case. Moreover, the film includes several scenes that, despite being fictional, seem almost like scraps of documentary footage. The viewer is exposed to this formula from the first minutes of the movie, which incorporates a "Klan-inspired black-and-white mock-documentary of a racist tirade delivered by a white-power demagogue."[25] While *BlacKkKlansman* sometimes seems like a real-life record of events, *Accidental Courtesy* shows a narrative so unusual that the viewer may find it difficult to accept the authenticity of the footage. It touches upon Daryl Davis's personal life, musical career, and his extraordinary "hobby" of meeting the representatives of white supremacist organizations. The indeterminate realism of both of the films is a part of what Carl Plantinga describes as "putting on a show."[26] The Brechtian theatricality of the movies catches the viewers in the process of questioning what they see and trying to relate it to America's reality.

At times, both directors allow the viewer to even be entertained by their films. Some of the scenes in *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy* consciously correspond with earlier representations of the Klan, especially from the early twentieth-century exploitative wave that relied on excitement and mystery, as well as, the more brutal pictures from the end of the century. Lee's and Ornstein's stories adapt the strategy of investigating, deconstructing, and undermining the Klan. In *BlacKkKlansman* "the Organization" does not use its official name; the members meet incognito in their private homes, unpopular pubs, or isolated landscapes where they plot cross burnings and a raid against black student protesters. The viewer is brought closer to the secretive, dangerous group by following Ron Stallworth (John David Washington) as he infiltrates the group.
The black officer contacts Klan members over the phone, while his white, Jewish, colleague Flip Zimmermann (Adam Driver)

impersonates him in the actual meetings. The performances of both officers and their clever acting with the Klan are the main source of the suspenseful and amusing scenes in the film. In *Accidental Courtesy*, a narrative of mystery and excitement is constructed out of stories recalled by Daryl Davis himself, by former or present members of the Klan, and via visual materials. Images of burning crosses and white-hooded figures appear in the very first minutes of the film when Davis's mission is introduced. His strategy to undermine the KKK's structures is to face individuals and ask them the provocative question: "How can you hate me when you don't even know me?" The tropes of action/melodrama films, present in both *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy,* are there so that they look not like niche independent productions, but like products that might appeal to broader audiences.

Certainly, the Brechtian "show" never allows its viewers solely pleasurable emotions. Along with their entertaining narratives, the films maintain their connection with non-fictional, historical discourse. They incorporate real-life footage and clips from Griffith's picture. This outside material disturbs the fascinating scenarios of the movies. In *BlacKkKlansman*, the screening of *The Birth of a Nation* is enthusiastically cheered by Klan members and their families. It is intercut with a moving speech given by an elderly witness to a lynching, Jerome Turner (Harry Belafonte). The elderly man's audience is composed of black students. Some of them carry large reproductions of actual photographs that documented the lynchings. Turner recalls that some of the pictures were turned into postcards for the excited participants in the executions. The distant memory of the white lynchers and their audience seems dangerously similar to the present (from the point of view of the plot) view of the Klansmen, exhilarated by Griffith's picture. In *Accidental Courtesy* , *The Birth of a Nation* appears alongside Davis's brief overview of the origins of the Ku Klux Klan. "As shameful as it is, it's part of

our history," he laments. The film also uses some historical material to illustrate, for example, the efforts of Civil Rights activists. A significant proportion of the footage is devoted to Martin Luther King Jr., and especially to his iconic "I have a dream" speech in Davis's hometown, Washington DC, and to the shocking moment of his death. Davis's narration describes his personal, emotional memories, and the unifying impact that those events had on the American nation.

Both of the movies show that the Klan, and ideologies associated with the organization, constitute a substantial element of the American national heritage. Moreover, the most powerful sequences in the films aim to connect the past and popular imagery with contemporary, current events. Spike Lee, interviewed about *BlacKkKlansman*, declared that he "wanted to find things in [this] period piece that would connect stuff so it was not just a history piece—that what you see in this film is really about the world we live in today."[27] For the final sequence in the movie the director decided to suddenly cut into Stallworth's narrative. The film suddenly switches to footage of events that took place during production: the alt right rally in Charlottesville, the tragic death of Heather Hayer, and President Donald Trump's controversial response to the situation. Ornstein chose a similar finale for his piece. *Accidental Courtesy,* produced two years earlier, ends with news reports from the results of the 2016 presidential election. This is followed by Davis's disturbing and highly provocative reflection: "Not all people who voted for Trump are racists, but all racists voted for Trump." Both films suggest that the course of real life dictated their endings, or alternatively that the same racist structures are constantly repeated in America.

As mentioned before, *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy* refer to previous, melodramatic representations of the Klan. However, the protagonists in the two stories are not typical main characters that would be dictated to by this mode. The

characters are living rejections of the old stereotypes of African American males that were traditionally featured in Hollywood cinema. Ron Stallworth is a fashionable and good-looking young man, dedicated to pursuing his goal, even if he has to come into conflict with his white superiors and co-workers. Daryl Davis has a distinctly energetic and friendly personality with a fascinating musical career behind him.[28] Both men are neither "hypermasculine and hypersexual," nor "socially feminized, passive and helpless."[29] Their professional and private relationships suggest the potential for integration.[30] Traditionally, one of the methods in which the masculinity of black males was displayed was based on their physical strength and brutality. Both Stallworth and Davis, however, choose to conduct their activities in a manner that does not involve violence and both films view this choice favorably, as it is endowed with a significant degree of effectiveness.

This depiction corresponds with the two films' suggestion that radical and aggressive attitudes represented by the oppressed do not lead to improvements, instead only intensifying conflicts. The combative and hostile posture of the students portrayed in *BlacKkKlansman* seems to be inherited by the young activists shown in *Accidental Courtesy.* For the final meeting depicted in the documentary, Davis invites two representatives of Baltimore's Black Lives Matter. He fails to reach an agreement with them. Their emotional conversation ends with the two activists' accusing Davis of wasting his time. They passionately claim that Davis "believes the wrong people can change" because "the white supremacists *can't* change."



Fig. 1. Polaroid picture of David Duke, Ron Stallworth, and Jesse Nayyar. Still frame from *BlacKkKlansman* (2018).

This seems to be the most pessimistic point in either of the films and it leaves the audience unsatisfied and uneasy.

In the aforementioned scene, Davis's provocative method is criticized by the black activist community. Similarly, in the finale of *BlacKkKlansman*, Stallworth is rejected by his girlfriend Patrice Dumas. This female example of black student protesters cannot tolerate his involvement with the inherently racist institution of the police. As a result, both Stallworth and Davis are isolated in their actions. Their individualist posture is vividly displayed in scenes of photograph-taking. In one of these scenes, Stallworth asks Grand Wizard David Duke to pose for a picture together as proof that they really met during an elegant reception held by the Klan. Ironically, the black police officer is present at the celebration as Duke's bodyguard. The shocked leader agrees, not expecting Stallworth's plan: the black man puts an arm around Duke just before the photo is taken and then quickly hides the picture (see Figure 1.). Plantinga describes this moment as one of "the most aesthetically intriguing and surprising segments of the film."[31]



Fig. 2. Daryl Davis and Frank Ancona of the Traditionalist Knights of the Ku Klux Klan pose together for a photo, holding a "Certificate of Friendship." Still frame from *Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America* (2016).

The scene can be directly paralleled with Davis's "meeting" with Frank Ancona, the Imperial Wizard of the Traditionalist American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (TAK). The men have known each other for three years and they both declare their mutual friendship. Ancona wears a traditional robe and hood for the talk. He declares that he joined the group because of its value as American heritage and because of the "mystery." The TAKs stand against miscegenation, but they strongly reject neo-nazi ideology. Even though Davis, obviously, does not agree with their separatist ideology, in several interviews he corrected

information about the TAK s' extremism. As an expression of the group's gratitude, Ancona gives Davis an official "Certificate of Friendship." Davis helps Ancona fix his robe and they pose together for a picture holding the document (see Figure 2.). These scenes from both films are unusual not only because they show close contact between African Americans and Klansmen. The idea to take a photograph also makes black men symbolically gain control over the image of the Klan. This paradoxical shift undermines the original power structure claimed by the KKK. The act of taking a photograph has one more function: it makes the viewer aware of the camera. This effect, in accordance with Brechtian theory, distances the audience from the plot. Wiegman in "Race, Ethnicity, and Film" explains that such scenes direct "attention to the use of a camera as a representational practice and to cinema as an economic and political apparatus that circulates ways of interpreting and consuming the world", in this case, of constructing the concept of race.[32]

At the same time, if the outcomes of the photograph scenes (Figure 1. and 2.) were decontextualized, they could be interpreted as a betrayal of the black community. These are not the only scenes that teeter on the risky border that is misinterpretation in both films. They arouse contradictory feelings among the audience. For instance, the repeated sight of the black police officer chatting with the KKK's representatives over the phone constitutes one of the most amusing and disturbing motifs in *BlacKkKlansman*. Stallworth pretends to be a white supremacist who is trying to become a member of the Klan. He imitates the insulting rhetoric used by followers of extremist racist ideologies. The scene when the black officer finishes a phone call with the refrain "God bless white America" may strike the viewer as absurd. A similarly shocking scene in *Accidental Courtesy* is Davis's presentation of his rich collection of Klan robes, memorabilia, flags, and cards.

He acquired the items from former members of the organization who quit under the influence of their meetings and talks with Davis. The black musician reveals that he is thinking of establishing a museum to display his collection. A misinformed viewer could be surprised and even distressed by an encounter with such an unusual owner of a collection that reeks of racist ideology. Eventually, both of the films represent the disruption of the boundary between hatred and the object of the hatred. The discussed scenes show that such representation seems strange or extreme and that it might be interpreted as deviant.

Conclusions

The films discussed in this paper draw on the long tradition of America's fascination with the Ku Klux Klan. Lee and Ornstein show that the simple mechanism of arousing curiosity, which the organization has used since its establishment, has been maintained in its popular imagery until the present day. At the same time, the image of the Klan remains inseparable from its weighty political meanings and ideologies. The unusual plots of the two films skillfully play with those meanings. *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy* tell stories that "[have] to be seen to be believed,"[33] but, at the same time, never fully allow the viewer to believe them. This paper has argued that both films address their beholders by employing Brecht's and Shklovsky's formulas: they build a distance between the viewer and the images shown on screen. The core aesthetic features of the two films—the theatricality of the events and of the characters, the empowerment of the black main characters, the self-awareness of the camera, and the incorporation of contemporary and historical material—all contribute to the effect of defamiliarization.

Viewers of *BlacKkKlansman* and *Accidental Courtesy* are not only encouraged to ask about the original rationale behind the racial hatred but also to consider the consequences of such

representation. Non-violent yet direct confrontation is indeed a core tenet of contemporary social movements. However, the individualist and empowered posture of the main characters could be taken as being distanced from the community they intend to stand up for. This judgmental perspective adds to the emotional unease, rooted in Brecht and Shklovsky. The audience is forced to realize that racial injustice in the United States goes far beyond the Ku Klux Klan's reach. Yet, the symbolic achievement of Stallworth and Davis is to show that the political image (and ideology) of the white hood can be effectively unsettled and that the power of this image can be neutralized without the use of violence.

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2 Katarzyna Surmiak-Domańska, *Ku Klux Klan: Tu Mieszka Miłość* (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2015), 25.

3 Rory McVeigh and Kevin Estep, "THE KU KLUX KLAN IN AMERICAN HISTORY," in *The Politics of Losing: Trump, the Klan, and the Mainstreaming of Resentment*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019, https://doi.org/10.7312/mcve19006, 21-22.

4 Historian David Chalmers in *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan, Third Edition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987) explains that the group "threatened, exiled, flogged, mutilated, shot, stabbed, and hanged. It disposed of Negroes who were not respectful, or committed crimes, or belonged to military or political organizations."

5 McVeigh and Estep, "THE KU KLUX KLAN IN AMERICAN HISTORY," 24.

6 McVeigh and Estep, "THE KU KLUX KLAN IN AMERICAN HISTORY," 32. The new capitalist model of business left many small entrepreneurs in crisis and the Klan appealed to them. McVeigh and Estep enumerate the changes at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as mass immigration, the migration of African Americans to the North, and women entering the workforce as the main reasons for this situation.

7 McVeigh and Estep, "THE KU KLUX KLAN IN AMERICAN HISTORY," 41.

8 COINTELPRO investigated, infiltrated, and discredited domestic organizations that were considered to threaten the American government's policies.

9 McVeigh and Estep, "THE KU KLUX KLAN IN AMERICAN HISTORY," 50.

10 "A Report from the Center on Extremism: New Hate and Old: The Changing Face of American White Supremacy," ADL, accessed March 23, 2020, https://www.adl.org/media/11894/download. According to the ADL the alt right has successfully developed due to its extended activity in online forums. The presidential campaign of Donald Trump motivated them to actively and publicly demonstrate their support for the candidate.

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24 Woal, "Defamiliarization in Television Viewing: Aesthetic and Rhetorical Modes of Experiencing Television," 30.

25 Herb Boyd, *BlacKkKlansman* Review in *Cinéaste* 43, no. 4 (2018), accessed May 7, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26532847?seq=1, 41.

26 Carl Plantinga, "Brecht, Emotion, and The Reflective Spectator: The Case of BLACKKKLANSMAN," *NECSUS* 8 , no. 1 (2019), https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/4192, 161.

27 Bugbee, "It Happened Here."

28 Daryl Davis grew up in a diplomatic family. He received a musical education. His career as a blues performer enjoyed success. He played with such musical icons as Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, and B. B. King. In the documentary, Davis says that he has always seen Chuck Berry as a civil rights hero, because during his concerts people played and danced together, no matter what their skin color.

29 Ana Kocić, "From The Violent 'Black Buck' Stereotype to The 'Black Hero:' Representations of African Americans and Black Masculinity in American Cinema," Facta Universitatis: Linguistics and Literature 15, no. 1, (2017), https://doi.org/10.22190/FULL1702085K, 87.

30 For example, Stallworth, in the racist environment of the police, develops several friendly relations with his white and Jewish co-workers and earns the respect of his white superiors. Davis introduces his white wife and numerous friends who were, or are, members of the Klan.

31 Plantinga, "Brecht, Emotion, and The Reflective Spectator: The Case of BLACKKKLANSMAN," 161.

32 Wiegman, "Race, Ethnicity, and Film," 165.

33 Bill McGarvey, "Radical Reconciliation: One Black Man's Outreach to the Ku Klux Klan," AmericaMagazine.org, accessed February 28, 2020.

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