UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Department of Film

THE WAR AS IT WAS: HISTORICAL RECEPTION OF THE GREAT WAR IN AMERICAN POPULAR CINEMA, 1918-1938

by

Ryan R. Copping

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2016

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Film Studies

Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE WAR AS IT WAS: HISTORICAL RECEPTION OF THE GREAT WAR IN AMERICAN POPULAR CINEMA, 1918-1938

Ryan R. Copping

This thesis is an examination of the reception of selected films from the United States concerning the Great War during the interwar period. Despite the influential nature of these films at the time of their release, relatively few studies have been conducted on the response of contemporary audiences to these texts. Given the significance of the Great War as a critical event in modern history and culture, it is important to study the responses of audiences to works concerning the war during this period.

Taking the war as a cinematic subject as opposed to a genre, I analyse both the content and reception of significant war-related films, using the movies themselves and contemporary newspaper and magazine articles and reviews, advertising and internal studio memoranda. I use this method in reference to the following films: *The Heart of Humanity* (1918), *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse* (1921), *The Big Parade* (1925), *What Price Glory* (1926), *Wings* (1927), *Hell's Angels* (1930), *Journey's End* (1930), *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), *Men Must Fight* (1933), *The Road Back* (1937) and *Three Comrades* (1938).

I argue that audiences often interpreted what they perceived to be honest portrayals of war trauma as 'realistic', there was no uniform definition as to what constituted an 'anti-war' film, Great War films from this period tended to blame Germany or humanity in general for the war, sometimes both, and that most war films performed a memorial function for audiences.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Ryan R. Copping

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

THE WAR AS IT WAS: HISTORICAL RECEPTION OF THE GREAT WAR IN AMERICAN AND BRITISH POPULAR CINEMA, 1918-1938

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;

3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;

4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;

5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;

6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

7. Parts of this work have been published as: "If You Have No Men, You Have No War!": A Critical Overview of Edgar Selwyn's Men Must Fight (1933) in the December 2014 issue of *Cinesthesia: The Grand Valley Journal of Cinema*.

Signed: Ryan R. Copping

Date: 04/04/2016

Acknowledgements

Like any PhD thesis, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to my supervisors, Dr Michael Williams and Dr Michael Hammond. Both of 'The Michaels,' as I would refer to them on my calendar, have given me a great deal of wise commentary on my work, sage advice, and good humour in the four years of this thesis.

I also need to thank Professor Lucy Mazdon, without whom it is doubtful I would have applied to the University of Southampton. Professor Mazdon has made herself available to me several times over the course of this thesis, for both personal and professional encouragement. Among my few regrets about this PhD was that I was unable to work with her more closely in film scholarship.

In terms of my research, I need to thank my friend Kristen Gorlitz, who allowed me to stay at her apartment during my sojourn to the Margret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills, a trip that I would have otherwise been unable to afford. Edward Comstock of the University of Southern California very helpfully allowed me electronic access to material concerning *Men Must Fight* and *The Road Back* while USC's archive was physically closed for renovation during my visit.

In terms of preparing this manuscript I must thank those who "offered" to proofread different chapters, and make sure they were written in British English: Lelia Ashard, James Barnes, Kate Cook, and Katherine Dantalus Hickey. Though he is not English, my father, Ronald Copping, also proofread a chapter as well as allowing me access to materials at Western Michigan University, which was enormously helpful.

More generally, I want to acknowledge Dr Toni Perrine of Grand Valley State University, who helped guide my passion for film history as an undergraduate and encouraging me to continue on the postgraduate level.

Too many people to name performed acts of kindness that helped me with this PhD over the years, but Carlene Metcalf and Laura Metcalf specifically come to mind for allowing me commandeer their kitchen for an entire day when a blizzard knocked out my internet access at my home and nearly caused me to miss a deadline.

Finally, it was impossible to research the Great War for four years and not become moved by the tremendous courage it must have taken for many of the veterans to share their painful and traumatic stories of their war experiences through the various memories, novels, plays, films and other media mentioned here. Their sacrifice allowed future generations to at least begin to understand the war experience, something as an observer in the early 21st century I am eternally grateful for.

Introduction

At the end of Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), Paul Baumer, the protagonist and last surviving member of his high school class, is shot dead by a French sniper while reaching for a butterfly, the first thing of beauty he has seen in months, perhaps years. In a silent postscript, footage of his group of comrades marching off to war is superimposed over a soldier's cemetery. They had been encouraged to enlist by their nationalistic teacher, a representative of a warmongering society. The duplication of this shot, shown earlier in the film, is now ironic: these naive boys, once so excited about the heroism of battle, have now reached their ultimate destination.

Nine years earlier, director Rex Ingram and screenwriter June Mathis ended their magnum opus *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) with a scene at a similar cemetery, as friends and relatives of a single soldier mourn his passing among the graves of thousands. A mystical prophet sees the literal Four Horsemen- Conquest, War, Famine, and Death- return to heaven as he warns the audience 'Peace has come- but the Four Horsemen will still ravage humanity- stirring unrest in the world- until all hatred is dead and only love reigns in the heart of mankind. This poetically phrased intertitle, coming after a film of inter-family conflict and suffering, suggests that humanity as a whole sent these men to their graves.

Eight years after the release of *All Quiet,* on the brink of an outbreak of an even more deadly war in Europe, American audiences were treated to Frank Borzage's *Three Comrades* (1938), a film about a war-scarred German who falls in love with a half-English woman, only to watch her die of a meaningless, unstated disease. This movie, sombre in tone, would be praised by critics for its love story, but also for its commentary on the destructive effects of war. It was a commercial success, even as another European conflict looked more than inevitable.

This thesis is a study of the cultural reception and influence of films concerning the Great War in the United States between the Armistice of November 1918 and the end of 1938, the last year before the war began in Europe traced through the films themselves, as well as contemporary sources as to their production and reception. It begins with a discussion of the audience reception of the portrayal of overwhelming loss of *Four Horsemen,* continues that

analysis into the cynicism and emptiness of *All Quiet*, the centrepiece for all subsequent war films, through the understated drama of *Three Comrades*.

This study is unique in its emphasis and methodology. Although there have been many studies on the First World War and popular culture, most famously Paul Fussell's seminal *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975)[1], mine is the first from the viewpoint of historical reception studies and the first to focus on contemporaneous sources as my primary points of data. As my thesis is a work of cultural history, I am studying how the varied receptions of contemporary individuals formed and changed popular culture.

Aims and Methodology

As this is a study of the historical reception of American World War films of the inter-war era, some discussion of historical reception studies as a method is warranted. In terms of my methodology, I was particularly influenced by four scholars, Barbara Klinger, Janet Staiger, Lea Jacobs, and Martin Shingler. In her article 'Film History\ Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies' Klinger provides an overview of historical reception studies, the primary critical approach that I will use in this thesis. As she states:

> Those engaged in reception studies typically examine a network of relationships between a film or filmic element (such as a star), adjacent intertextual fields such as censorship, exhibition practices, star publicity and reviews, and the dominant or alternative ideologies of society at a particular time. Such contextual analysis hopes to reveal the intimate impact of discursive and social situations on cinematic meanings, while elaborating the particularities of cinema's existence under different historical regimes from the silent era to present.[2]

Later, she states: 'Reception studies scholars almost exclusively come to terms with a film's meaning by considering the impact that its original conditions had on its social significance.'[3]

Staiger, in an essay on the reception of Jonathon Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), defines the process more succinctly: 'This research attempts to illuminate the cultural

[1] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Kindle edition.
[2] Barbara Klinger, "Film History\Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies," *Screen* 38 no. 2 (1997): 108.
[3] Ibid., 111.

meanings of texts in specific times to specific circumstances, and it attempts to contribute to discussions about spectoral effects of films by moving beyond text centered analysis.'[4] She then describes five notable features to this method, for which I will provide explanation and commentary. Although this method is applicable to any form of media, I will use the example of a key film this thesis, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930).

1. **Immanent meaning to a text is denied.** Historical reception studies operates under the assumption that there is no a single, clear 'objective' or 'correct' reading of a text. Readings (in this case meaning any interpretive affect) are provided by spectators). *All Quiet on the Western Front* does not have a meaning. It has a meaning ascribed to it by a spectator.
2. **"Free Readers" do not exist either**. Just as texts themselves do not have an 'objective' or 'correct' reading, no spectator can be considered to be 'objective' or unbiased, because all spectators are influenced by culture, the historic era in which they live, their personal psychology and life experiences, and other factors. Anyone who watches *All Quiet* brings to it their own expectations, cultural surroundings, personal experiences and so on. Everyone who will ever see *All Quiet* will bring to it their own unique set of demographic traits and personal experiences. As Staiger explains in her book *Interpreting Films* : '…the spectator cannot be generalized into some idealized subject, devoid of networks of sexual, cultural, political, ethnic, racial, cognitive, and historical differences. Such versions of idealized readers fall into the fallacy of assuming meaning resides in the text rather than in the relations of spectators and films across history and differences.'[5]
3. **Instead, contexts of social formations and constructed identities of the self in relation to historical conditions explain the interpretation strategies and affective response of readers. Thus, receptions need to be related to specific historical conditions as *events.* [**Emphasis Staiger's]. When a viewer watches *All Quiet on the Western Front*, their experience of it and reaction to it becomes a historical event.

[4] Janet Staiger, "Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of *The Silence of the Lambs*," in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies: Cultural Analysis of Contemporary Film*, ed. Jim Collins et al. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 143.
[5] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 138.

4. **Furthermore, because the historical context's discursive formation is contradictory and heterogeneous, *no* reading is unified**. The concept of the discursive formation or 'discursive surround' is a central one to this thesis. The discursive surround refers to the interplay of the various cultural sources at play during the time of the historical event of the viewing of the film
5. **The best means currently available for analysing cultural meanings exist in poststructuralist and ideological textual analyses. These methods, of necessity, draw upon multiple theoretical frameworks and perspectives such as deconstructionism, psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology, linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies Marxism, and feminist, ethnic and minority, lesbian and gay studies. They do so with a clear understanding that the connections and differences among the frameworks must be theorized.**[6] No one approach is used in analysing a text. Instead, numerous theoretical perspectives are used where deemed appropriate by the person doing the analysis, in this case, myself.

This is an approach discussed at length by Staiger in her book *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. A few quotes are helpful in defining and explaining this approach: 'First of all, reception studies has as its object researching the history of the interactions between real readers and texts, actual spectators and films…As a history, and not philosophy, reception studies is interested in what has actually occurred in the material world. Reception studies might speculate about what did not happen, and why that was; in fact, part of the project is to explain the appearance and disappearance of various forms of interaction. But, overall, reception studies does not attempt to construct a generalized, systematic explanation of how individuals might have comprehended texts, and possibly someday will, but rather how they actually have understood them.'[7]

An example of this approach applied appears in Martin Shingler's essay 'Interpreting *All About Eve: A Study in Historical Reception*', in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby's edited volume *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences* (2001).

[6] Janet Staiger, "Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of *The Silence of the Lambs*," 143-144.
[7] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, 8.

Shingler describes his goal as '…to relate events portrayed in the film, and the comments of reviewers, to wider cultural concerns at the time of initial release, and particularly to public debate in the 1940s and early 1950s on gender, sex roles and the 'women problem.''[8] After a theoretical discussion of historical reception studies, Shingler presents a brief summary of the plot of the film, followed by a longer account of the reception among selected American and British critics, noting that '…the majority noted that the film was about the Broadway theatre and that it featured some 'magnificent' performances from the principal actors, most notably, Bette Davis.', and finds only one contemporary review, notably an elitist film journal, which discussed the film from a gender issues standpoint[9]. After a discussion of the discursive surround of feminist and gender politics from the 40s to the 60s, noting that the widely held patriarchy of American culture discouraged women from the belief that they could find meaningful lives outside of marriage, as exemplified through the approach taken in Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg's anti-feminist *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947). Shingler notes that Farnham's and Lundberg's assertions were not the only ones circulating at the time, using Margaret Mead's *Male and Female* (1950) as a counter example.[10]

Shingler then moves on to a discussion of Bette Davis' star persona and the perceived difference in its reception by her male and female fans, and then to a discussion of Lawrence J. Quirk's 1973 article 'The Cult of Bette and Joan: The True Reasons Why They Drive Homosexuals Wild', which, as the title suggests, discusses the eponymous star's appeal to gay male audiences. Shingler tends to dismiss the piece as 'highly individualistic and sheds very little light on the real reasons why gay men have become such devoted fans of Bette Davis and her films…' but notes that '…his essay does foreground the subject of Davis's gay appeal. It also suggests, at least implicitly, a desire for Davis to be reclaimed by heterosexual audiences since the article itself seems rooted in Quirk's personal frustration that his own favourite films should also appeal so strongly to what he calls the 'lunatic fringe of flamboyant "queens"'.[11] Quoting Vito Russo's celebrated 1981 book *The Celluloid Closet*, Shingler then demonstrates

[8] Martin Shingler, "Interpreting *All About Eve*: A Study in Historical Reception," in *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 2001), 47
[9] Ibid., 47-49.
[10] Ibid., 53.
[11] Ibid., 56-57.

that the movie had gone on to, in the 80s and 90s, be seen as a heavily gay film, with describing that discussions of the movie 'came to feature prominently in gay textbooks but also in other media texts, including three cinematic gay reworkings of the film: an avant-garde short by American gay film-maker Jerry Tartaglia; a gay pornographic video pastiche called *All About Steve*, and a Spanish art-house homage by Pedro Almodovar called *All About My Mother*.' He concludes by summarizing his findings- that the initial reception of the film seemed to studiously evade discussions of the 'the woman problem' and mostly refrained from discourse on gender politics in their reviews, something Shingler thinks is '…tantamount to removing the film from its social and cultural context.' He argues that 'In other words, a historiographical approach to film reception that is dependent upon reviews and journalistic features in mainstream publications is limited to revealing the construction of dominant or 'preferred' meanings.'[12] A popular and acclaimed film *about* gender issues was rarely discussed in this context in mass print upon its release, because the individuals writing said texts favoured a different reading to those in other groups.

Shingler's work is emblematic of the approach of historical reception. He does not engage in a semiotic discussion of the film's formal elements, and only discusses the plot to the degree that is necessary for his audience to understand how the response texts he looked at discusses it.

Another major influence on this dissertation is Jacobs' book *The Decline of Sentiment* (2008). In this tome, Jacobs analyses a cultural move from Victorian sentimentality to the cynicism of the 20s and 30s. Though there is some overlap in terms of the post 20s disillusionment, her topic does not directly correlate to mine, as Jacobs is discussing the history of taste, whereas I am looking at the nature of thoughts on war media. Rather, it is her method that I take as a model. In her book, she combines contemporary cultural commentary, along with accounts from the trade press, under the assumption that it shaped the way the public interpreted the

[12] Ibid., 57-59.

films. She also incorporates her own readings of texts of appropriate films in addition to the analysis of contemporary documents.[13]

My incorporation of production history into this thesis stands in the most marked contrast to the typical use of the historical reception method. As historical reception seeks to understand the historical event of a spectoral interaction with a film, most scholars who adopt this approach do not feel that modes of production to a particular film is relevant. I argue that it is, conditionally, so much as it A) refers to the discursive surround regarding the films in question, and B) another crucial question this thesis seeks to address- the *studios own non-scholarly engagement with historical reception studies.*

To explain point A the vast majority of filmgoers do not select a random movie to see knowing almost nothing about it going in. Having seen advertising and commentary on both the novel and the film it is based on, a spectator would be well aware that, *All Quiet on the Western Front* is being marketed as a realistic and hard-hitting account of the war experience, as well as a faithful adaptation of the source novel. In addition to running ads for the film, many newspapers have written articles describing its production, including interviews with Universal President Carl Laemmle, producer Carl Laemmle Jr and director Lewis Milestone. These advertisements and articles on the film's production have added to the discursive surround that the movie is being received in and also serving as a framing function to audiences, cueing them as to what kind of film they are going to see. They are, thus, relevant to how audiences interact with them. For example, in Chapter VI, I will demonstrate that knowledge of the stormy post-production of James Whale's *The Road Back* (1938) caused critics to understand that they had seen a version of the film altered for political reasons, and thus affected their response to it.

The second point, that production history of the films in question is important because it is itself a case of historical reception requires more elucidating. Just as the historical reception studies scholar is interested in the event of a spectator's interaction with a text (hopefully) out of a desire to better understand the culture of the past and the work/spectator interaction, a

[13] Lea Jacobs, *The Decline of Sentiment: American Film in the 1920s*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2008).

film studio or producer has the same motivation, but for a different reason- to understand what kinds of motion pictures will sell to audiences and how to advertise said films . Although these economic actors are not using an academic or scholarly methodology, they engage in historical reception studies to determine what kinds of Great War material to commission based upon the success of a previous one. For this reason, a history of production is important in understanding the reception of Great War cinema during this period, as a goal of this thesis is to show the progression of the cultural reception of the portrayal of the Grea War on the American screen. Therefore, how the studios themselves interpreted the reaction of audiences is important.

My method for discussing each film can be reduced to three steps: production history, reception history, and the interpretation of such reception history, which must include some interpretation of the film itself. More elaborately, the structure of each chapter is:

Understanding the discursive surround in which the film was made through historical research – I begin each chapter with a discussion of each film by researching the specific cultural and relevant events in the USA in the period the films entered pre-production as well as any relevant accounts on the creation of the source materials on which the picture was based on. This includes reading novels, plays or short stories the works were based on, as well as historical research into the actual historical events the films portray.

A Production and Advertising History. Research into historical background on how, and most importantly, why, the film was made. Next, I discuss why a studio or executive believed that they could make money from a Great War film. In other words, I am looking at why financiers thought that audiences would pay money to see these texts, which entails understanding why audiences bought tickets to previous war films or predicting how audiences might respond to other new ones. As stated earlier, accounts of the production were often published in newspapers and thus potential audiences of the film would have read them, adding to the discursive surround of the film. In addition to the published production notes in newspapers, I also look at internal studio memoranda, to assist in my attempt to understand why studios made decisions they did. When appropriate, I also discuss the advertising

campaigns of the films, as this is an indication of what marketers believed would be the most appealing selling points to audiences.

A close reading of contemporary audience and critical response to the film. I discuss how audiences in the United States responded at the time of the picture's release, as evidenced by accounts in newspapers and trade journals. I will analyse historical reception, from accounts from six sources: the newspapers *The New York Times, The Chicago Daily Tribune, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *The Los Angeles Times,* as well as two trade publications: *Wid's Daily* and *Variety*. In accordance with Klinger and Staiger's descriptions above, I do not seek to interpret the film from my own perspective, but rather to understand and interpret how audiences read them.

At the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, I was able to view clippings from the personal notes of some of the people involved with the production, Production Code Authority (PCA) information, telegrams and inter studio memorandums, rare michrofiche and microfilm material, as well a seemingly inexhaustible supply of unfortunately unsourced clippings from Audrey Chamberlain, a movie fan who created a huge number of scrapbooks during the period in question. I am fortunate that for many of these movies, a wealth of contemporary material is available. One of the likely reasons is that most of the films I am studying are considered hits. Therefore, they are more often in the public sphere and thus, more likely to be written about. I noticed a comparative dearth of information about *Men Must Fight* (1933), an apparently financially unsuccessful picture, whereas there was a telling cornucopia of material relating to *Four Horseman* and *All Quiet*. I felt it was important to include *Men Must Fight* in Chapter V despite its lack of box office success. Its didactic discussions of issues of masculinity and the nature of violence, as well as the responsibility of individual soldiers, do not often appear in other works. It is also a strong example of the kind of Great War film made in the thematic wake of *All Quiet*. In my Chapter on the film, I argue that it encapsulates many of the attitudes of the time, such as pacifism, feminism, and the fear of the possibility of a Second World War.

Evidence Base: Newspapers

I have chosen mainly newspapers because I believe that they are the best extant way of gauging the response of some viewers: the people who wrote the articles as well as the people

they observed while attending the film. I believe that the best way to understand how audiences of the time perceived these films are reviews, related essays, and letters to the editor from contemporary newspapers and magazines. At the time of publication, newspapers were the dominant source of information about the world and society for most people in the United States and Europe. For much of the teens and early 20s, radio was seen more as an esoteric technical pursuit as opposed to something that had mass appeal. I will not focus on radio in my discussions of film in the 1930s, as many 30s radio programmes do not exist and I have found surprisingly little Great War-related content in this medium.

Audiences often relied on movie newsreels for visual contextualisation of events they had heard about, but for most, it may be presumed they were not a primary source. Although the news could be sensationalistic (as evidenced by the many 'yellow' Hearst papers), newspapers during the period in question had a massive distribution, with many papers appearing once a day, far more often than the vast majority of people went to the movies. Even at the time, the limitations of newsreels must have been apparent to their audience. In comparison to contemporaneous newspapers, silent newsreels can seem limiting to the discussion of a complex issue (or making it difficult to convey something like the speech of a politician.) Another problem was the fact that it is difficult, due to the variant distribution networks for newsreels, to tell how long after an event had occurred it would be shown in a particular community. For my purposes, I have often found movie newsreels to be problematic and I have not relied heavily on them. Movie newsreels were unreliable sources for many reasons. One reason is the fact that as they were not the main feature of the programme, and thus, had far fewer reviews. Also, newsreels do not have as much of the long 'paper trail' of documentation that occurs in research libraries and archives.

In terms of this thesis, newspaper reviews of the films provided critical information, not only about the ideological and industrial perspectives of the reviewers, but of the audience. In the early part of the 20s, it was not standard to provide special screenings of films to critics. I can discern this from the fact that critics in the early 20s often discuss the reactions of the general public in their reviews, while later in the decade references to special screenings ahead of the public are more prevalent. Reviewers usually attended the film with regular audiences, as theatre critics did. For this reason, critics often describe audience reactions when they saw

their pictures. Although exegetical readings of descriptions of audience responses are helpful, it should be stated that there are some problems with relying on their records. The first is the fact that the sample size is not large enough to be considered representative, at least to scientific standards. The second is the selection bias of the reviewer. He or she is reliant upon what he or she notices most obviously, which is likely to be their own strong reactions. There is also an inherent subjectivity when it comes to assessing a person's response to the film, especially in the dark. Nonetheless, biased and perhaps unrepresentative as they may be, these accounts of critical reaction represent the best available accounts of audience reaction without the advent of extant preview test cards. Such descriptions must be placed within their appropriate historical context, but when they are, the information stated is exceptionally valuable. Despite the open question as to whether films were art, American publications were not averse to publishing relatively lengthy reviews and essays about films in the 1920s. In addition to reviews and essays about films found in newspapers, I also occasionally reference news articles or commentary pieces that refer to the war but not directly to films themselves. I do this to help provide evidence about the cultural milieu of the period. *The New York Times* was selected for its status as the premier paper of the cultural capital of the United States and *The Los Angeles Times* for its privileged coverage of the head of the American film industry. The Chicago and Atlanta papers were selected for their status as major Mid-Western and Southern cities. All of these papers had a great deal of material on each studied film, with the exception of *Men Must Fight.*

Evidence Base: Trade Publications

The second primary source documents I reference in terms of cultural reception are trade publications: *Variety* and *Wid's Daily.* These sources provide the best direct evidence as to the how profitable studios and exhibitors thought these films would be before release. As these texts often discussed economic realities for exhibitors and how to advertise discussed films, these sources can often be explicit in why or why not industry insiders felt a film would appeal to viewers. Unfortunately, these publications are far less numerous than newspapers and fan magazines, which admittedly does play a helpful role in limiting the scope of this study. As the audience is that of theatre owners and distributors, people who have an economic interest in accurate information and good advice on booking and advertising

practices, it stands to reason that trade publications would be honest and try to be as accurate as possible in their advice, as they have an economic incentive to do so – the more accurate the prediction, the more trusted the paper. For this reason, I tend to, more than most other sources, take the writers of trade publications at their word.

Evidence Base: Industry Records

I occasionally refer to internal studio documents. Many of these were obtained from resources at the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles. Others have been published in the works of other researchers. These sources are helpful in attempting to understand why film studios felt that the war could be profitable cinematic subject, such as Carl Laemmle's devotion to buying the rights to *All Quiet on the Western Front* despite the depressing subject matter. Censorship documents from the PCA help to shed light on many of the cultural concerns regarding what people at the time thought about issues relevant to my thesis, such as violence in films, portrayals of other nations (something that was under the purview of censors in the 20s and 30s) as well as military issues and war trauma. The advantage with studio documents is that they were not written for public consumption, and thus were intended for a private audience. There is often no evidence as to how these documents were received at the time, except that someone felt they were important enough to preserve the correspondence. Internal studio correspondence can provide an excellent insight into the minds of people making the films from an artistic standpoint, but they can be an even better source for information on the practical issues associated with making films, as well as what the studios believed their target audiences were when deciding whether to finance a picture.

PCA documents also can be extraordinarily helpful in my discussion of the portrayal of trauma, in that they often discuss how much violence it is thought that audiences could emotionally endure viewing. In addition, some municipalities simply felt that some films were generally too intense for audiences to endure. As it was also the practice of local censorship boards to sometimes prevent politically sensitive films from being screened (ostensibly to prevent riots) these documents provide a cogent look into how the films were received by society elites at the time (and how those elites believed the general public would react).

Evidence Base: Literary Sources

As films are cultural artefacts influenced by many sources, it is also necessary to acknowledge (though not focus on) the portrayal of the war in other popular cultural contexts, such as songs and novels from the period. This thesis will not focus on a study of these works, but must acknowledge them in order to portray the general cultural milieu of the time. Novels and memoirs about the war were often very popular in the decade after the Armistice. Some of these novels that are either set during the war or afterwards (such as Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* [1929] and *The Sun Also Rises* [1926], respectively) discuss the idea of 'a lost generation.' As explained by Robert Wohl in the introduction of his book *The Generation of 1914* (1979), '...close your eyes and a host of images leaps to mind: of students packing off to war with flowers in their rifles and patriotic songs on their lips, too innocent to suspect that bloody rites of passage awaited them; of trenchfighters whose twisted smiles and evasive glances revealed their close companionship with death; of pleasure-seekers in the 1920's, cigarettes hanging from the corner of their mouths, defiance and despair showing in the directness of their stares and the set of their faces...'.[14] Others, such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), *The Road Back* (1931) and the aforementioned *A Farewell to Arms* were directly adapted into motion pictures. *Plumes* (1924), a novel by Lawrence Stallings, a veteran himself, was a partial inspiration for the film *The Big Parade*, for which Sterne served as screenwriter. Other novels and memoirs not mentioned above that I will read in this project are Erich Maria Remarque's, *The Road Back* (1931), and *Three Comrades* (1936), Vincente Blasco Ibanez's *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse* (1916), Eddie Rickenbacker's *Fighting the Flying Circus* (1919), R.H. Mottram's *The Spanish Farm* (1924), Arthur Gould Lee's *Open Cockpit* (1969), Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), Robert Graves' *Good-Bye to All That* (1929), Helen Zenna Smith's *Not So Quiet: Stepdaughters of the War* (1930), Thomas Alexander Boyd's *Through the Wheat* (1923), Rebecca West's *Return of the Soldier* (1918), and F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story 'Babylon Revisited' (1930).

[14] Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 1.

I selected the discussed films for the thesis carefully. As mentioned in Chapter One, Leslie Midkiff Debauche estimates that at least 54 films pertaining to the Great War were released in 1919 alone, so there were a great many to choose from.[15] Since I was looking at cultural reception, it made sense to mostly focus on films that were box office successes of the period, since the movies seen by the most people would have the most cultural impact. For this reason, the inclusion of *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse*, King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925), William A. Wellman's *Wings* (1927) and Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* were essential. Lesser hits such as James Whale's *Journey's End* (1930), Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory* (1926) and William Keighly's *The Fighting 69th* (1940) were also included along these guidelines. However, I also selected movies that would seem to serve as an example of particular trends in the industry's approach to the Great War. Edgar Selwyn's *Men Must Fight* (1933) was neither a critical nor commercial hit, but its subject is perhaps, the best cinematic example of the fear of a Second World War, a key feature to the geopolitical situation of the 1930s.

Historical Background

Many historians have argued that the major historical and cultural concerns of the 20th Century can be traced back to the Great War, marking the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 as a dividing line between the old and the new. It is difficult to think of what we know as the philosophical and cultural issues of the 20th century- the existential nature of extreme suffering, the justification of war, the rise of Communism, and the role of the solider, and the rights of the government to control mass media in wartime without the start of this conflict.

All forms of art and media were affected by the Great War, including film. The conflict made fundamental alterations to the production and distribution of movies, as well as, inevitably, their content. The capital of the film world in 1914 was Paris, not Hollywood. French film production was severely damaged by the conflict.[16]

---

[15] Leslie Midkiff-Debauche, *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War One* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 165.

[16] Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 9, 12-13.

It may at first glance seem that the study of the First World War from a cultural standpoint is a self-evidently fruitful field of academic study, but this point does deserve elucidating. In the United States, cultural studies of the Great War are dwarfed by those of the Second World War. Although no one can plausibly deny that the Second World War is an important topic of study, isolating the Great War to the status of a historical 'also ran' is fraught with peril. British historian John Keegan has noted that 'The Second World War, five times more destructive of human life and incalculably more costly in material terms, was the direct outcome of the first.'[17] As the later chapters of this thesis will show, American audiences often thought of the Second World War in relation to and in historical continuity with the earlier conflict. This shared cultural background had real world symbolic consequences. When France surrendered to Germany in 1940, they did so in the same railway car in which the 1918 Armistice was signed.

Many other geopolitical conflicts of the 20th Century were exacerbated by the Great War, such as the Irish Revolution, its subsequent Civil War and independence; the Russian Revolution and the turmoil in the Middle East. To understand popular attitudes towards political conflicts, issues of extreme suffering, war and peace, and military violence in the 20th Century, it is necessary to understand the Great War.

Although the trend in modern historical study is to explain changes as gradual and evolutionary instead of sudden and cataclysmic, I believe it is defensible to argue that the Great War was one of the rare cases of sudden and rapid change. The title of a well-remembered memoir by British writer Robert Graves is emblematic of the concept that the war was a clear break with the past: *Good-bye to All That.*

Literature Review

Although research on the cultural reception of Great War cinema during the interwar period is surprisingly not extensive, there are nonetheless many major texts in this field. This literature review will include most of the major works on this topic from the late 1970s to the time of writing. There was not a great amount of academic interest in the cultural reception of the

[17] John Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1998), 3.

Great War until the 70s, perhaps because that was when the generation who fought it began dying of old age. The works included in this literature review were selected for their utility as historical overview, theoretical relevance to my thesis, and relevance to my methodology.

The first major overview of Great War cinema was provided in Michael T. Isenberg's *War on Film: The American Cinema and World War I, 1914-1941* (1981)[18]. However, the author, who did not have an academic background in film or other communication research, frequently uses somewhat dated theoretical approaches in his analysis. Isenberg also does not often provide helpful textual examples for his readings, with a focus on 'de-coding' the films from a New Criticism standpoint. Though he acknowledges that there are problems with the concept of 'knowing' with certitude how audiences were influenced by a particular text, he later argues that 'The process and the product, not the media or the audience offer the most concrete evidence at present on the representation of ideas in motion pictures'[19]. In my thesis, I do not argue that a text says a particular thing; I argue that audiences perceived a text to say a particular thing. Even in cases where the filmmakers in interviews didactically stated their intent, it doesn't necessarily mean that a given audience member read the film in the way that was intended, or even that the statement is an accurate presentation of a directors' views. I will demonstrate an example of this in Chapter IV, where I indicate that R.C. Sheriff stated that he never intended *Journey's End* as a work arguing against war. Despite this, a dominant theme in the printed reception was that the film argued against war. Isenberg's book remains, however, a useful overview on the general subject the Great War in film and the author was among the first to research the production of many of the films, discussing many obscure texts that are not covered in other sources.

Leslie Midkiff DeBauche's aforementioned book *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War I* (1997) serves a useful role, accounting how the American film industry responded to the war during its duration in the United States, and thus serves an important function in 'setting the scene' for my thesis. I share her methodological technique of using production histories, advertising and newspaper and magazine reviews to describe the contemporary reception,

[18] Michael T. Isenberg, *War on Film: The American Cinema and World War I, 1914-1941* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: 1981).
[19] Isenberg, 54

although most of her book covers the period during the war, as will be discussed below, and her work provides a useful model to me. DeBauche's final chapter, 'The War Film in the 1920's' is very helpful in that the final chapter covers some of the same material of my first, using the historical reception studies model. Michael Hammond's *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War 1914-1918*, accomplishes a similar role in 'setting the stage' for Great Britain.[20] In this book, Hammond gives an account of the kinds of Great War films popular in British cinemas during the war, such as *The Battle of Somme* (1916). Debauche's work is also featured in Michael Paris' *The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present*[21] (1999), a collection of essays focusing on Great War screen culture from a national cinema standpoint. Individual essays on many of the films found in this thesis are contained in the *Hollywood's World War I: Moving Picture Images* (1997), edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor. I cite many of these sources throughout the thesis, such as Michael Isenberg's essay on *The Big Parade* in Chapter II.[22] Michael Hammond's and Michael Williams' collection *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (2011)[23], contains a series of helpful essays, broadly classified into two subjects- the effect of the war on the aesthetics of the growing medium, and the remembrance of the war in British cinema, the latter which is particularly relevant to my studies.

As I often discuss the ambiguity in the reception of war texts, Modris Eksteins' article 'The Cultural Impact of the Great War', which appears in Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp's collection *Film and the First World War* (1994)[24], is a source that, along with Joanna Bourke's *An Intimate History of Killing* (2000)[25], describes how many soldiers found the war to be a positive experience, one that I will argue was sometimes reflected on the screen. Although Bourke's study has some major analytical flaws (discussed in Chapter III), both

[20] Michael Hammond, *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War 1914-1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006).
[21] Michael Paris, ed., *The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
[22] Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, eds., *Hollywood's World War I: Motion Picture Images* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
[23] Michael Williams and Michael Hammond, eds., *British Silent Cinema and the Great War* (Baskingstoke: Palgrave Macmillion, 2011).
[24] Modis Eksteins, "The Cultural Impact of the Great War," in *Film and the First World War*, ed. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 202.
[25] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Granta, 1999).

Eksteins and Bourke demonstrate present strong evidence that the war was not the totally negative experience that it is often portrayed as in both current popular culture and some forms of academia. The standard text on the cultural impact of the Great War is Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (2000). In his landmark study, Fussell makes a strong claim as to the cause and nature of war disillusionment, which he sees as the war contributing a sense of irony to most of the subsequent discourse about it and to popular culture.[26] He also argues that in many ways the war was paradoxically a source of myth and became in some ways a spiritual experience.[27] I also make specific use of several biographies and production histories to individual films and filmmakers. Two that are worth mention specifically are from Andrew Kelly: his book-length account of the making of *All Quiet on the Western Front*[28] and his cultural history *Cinema and the Great War*[29], which discusses many of the pictures included in this thesis, including *Things to Come.* Finally, the introduction of Ruth Vasey's *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939*[30] provides a helpful model of explanation as to how Hollywood films were conceived for and marketed to foreign audiences.

Themes

Remarque, and others became widely popular with the general public and eventually spilled over into cinema. Disillusionment is the most common idea associated with the Great War in contemporary popular culture, and is discussed extensively in Chapter III, where I argue that *All Quiet on the Western Front* is the film most responsible for embedding these themes in the public consciousness. My findings confirm that it is indeed in a major aspect of Great War art during the period in question. However, although it is a true that a large portion of the American and British populace were highly sceptical of their leaders' motives and had an intense fear of a second World War in the 30s, a large number of veterans and non-veterans felt the war was necessary for a variety of reasons. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, many veterans had an ambiguous view of the war, and felt it was a partially or mostly positive

[26] Fussell, 19-22.
[27] Fussell, 123-124.
[28] Andrew Kelly, *All Quiet on the Western Front: The Story of a Film* (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1998).
[29] Andrew Kelley, *Cinema and the Great War* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[30] Ruth Vasey, introduction to *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

experience. The war cinema of this period reflects this ambiguity, offering many examples of honour.

While virtually all war films after the early 20s focused to some degree on the negative aspects or negative results of war, many movies also reflected the belief of some soldiers and members of society that the war had positive aspects. The large amount of anti-German propaganda found in such films as Rex Ingram's *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse* and Howard Hughes and James Whale's *Hell's Angels* (1930) indicates there was a sentiment in popular culture that the war was not an entirely bad thing. Many of the films that I will discuss contain the theme that the war was a terrible trauma unleashed by the governments of all involved parties, German militarism was also a blight on the world that needed to be defeated. Convergent with this idea is the only concept that is near-universal in all the films I am studying, with the major exception of Edgar Selwyn's *Men Must Fight* (1933): that individual soldiers are not to blame for the war. Therefore, I argue that elements in most of the discussed films serve to celebrate the sacrifice and bravery of the individual soldiers, while sometimes having ambiguous or negative political ideas on the actual conflict. An example of this is in Whale's *Journey's End* (1930).

Concurrent with this theme of patriotism is the war trauma, which is itself tied to realism. A common motif that I encountered repeatedly in the reception accounts was the perception by the writer(s) that each new film was a breakthrough in terms of realism, usually because it featured new and disturbing ways of portraying trauma. Often, I would notice that a media text chose to print an account of a soldier indicating that the latest war film outdid all the others in terms of realism and that he could show his spouse or non-veteran friends and family what the conflict was really like, along with an indication that all previous war films paled in their approach to realism compared with the current one. Then, the next war film would be greeted with a similar response from other veterans. The most obvious of this is the reception of *Journey's End* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. As I will discuss in Chapter IV, the former film was released to heavy commercial success and critical praise, with many praising its authenticity and realism. Despite the strong acclaim, the movie was almost forgotten a few months later, after the release of *All Quiet* which received a very similar reception. Throughout much of the documented reception I observed, there was an implicit assumption

that the more an audience became involved emotionally in a film, the more realistic it was perceived to be. The main exception to this trauma-realism connection was when audiences observed films as spectacle, such as in *Wings* (1927). Here, the innovative images of aerial combat, never before portrayed on screen this fashion, were seen by many audiences as authentically documentary the exhilaration, and physics, of flying. The 'realism' described in reviews usually referred to the air combat sequences, much of which had never been seen before and were breaking new cinematic ground, as opposed to the human story.

Theoretical Concerns

Definitions of Terms

It is necessary to define my criteria for a 'war film.'

From the early days of cinema, wars and battles have been a popular subject for cinema. Films based on the Spanish American War and the Boer Wars were produced as actualities. As Michael Hammond has indicated in his book *The Big Show*, many audiences enjoyed film footage of the Great War during the conflict.[31] As shown above, any discussion about genre film inevitably implies isolating and identifying certain tropes and characteristics (sometimes clichés) of film. Some have correctly argued that the genre of film changes from war to war. A Great War film (usually) has very different archetypes and themes as does a World War II film, as does a Vietnam picture or a film about the Crusades.

My thesis is not concerned with the war or the Great War as genre, but as a subject. I am interested in films *about* the Great War, not necessarily films that directly involve combat. *The Road Back* and *Three Comrades* are about the after effects of the war, and *Men Must Fight* and *No Greater Glory* are in part about the potentiality of a Second World War. As one of my goals is to understand why producers felt they could make money with films concerned with the Great War and how audiences responded to war-related content, I do not focus solely on films about battles or soldiers, although most of the included pictures do. I am interested in films about the Great War as a cinematic *subject*. For this reason, some of these pictures are not principally concerned with the experiences of soldiers at war, but the effects of society at

[31] Hammond, 126.

war at large, and may in fact only be implicit in their war commentary. As my primary focus is not textual analysis of films themselves but of texts *about* the films, I feel that this is a more complete approach than merely limiting myself to the portrayal of the experiences of soldiers. I also tried to read whatever production histories and textual analysis existed. Andrew Kelly's book on the making of *All Quiet on the Western Front* proved invaluable in this regard.

Throughout the thesis, I refer to films about the conflict that is now generally referred to in the United States as 'World War I' and in the United Kingdom as 'The First World War' as 'The Great War.' My reason for doing so is that this was one of the most common terms for the conflict during the era in question. It was not the only one, however- there are many references to 'The World War' and sometimes to 'The European War.' Referring to this conflict as 'The Great War' helps to place the terms of reference in the 20s and 30s, when the hindsight that it would not be only world war did not exist.

As this is a thesis about American reception I will often use the term 'theatre' or 'movie theatre' to refer to a building where movies are exhibited, which in the United Kingdom would be called a 'cinema.' I also use the terms 'movie', 'film', and 'picture' interchangeably to refer to the feature in question for the sake of variety. As I use quotes from many sources with different punctuation, capitalization and formatting styles, I have adopted to maintain the original style within quotes as opposed to reformatting these American journalistic documents into contemporary British academic English, which would cause some of the original context to be lost.

It is important for me to acknowledge two obvious but important ideas at the beginning. First, all films, including documentaries and actualities, are constructed realities. No film can be reasonably expected or construed to represent the war experiences of every soldier, an entire society, or every civilian. Every film reflects the cultural biases and attitudes of those that made it. The second concerns attributing authorship. It is not an overstatement to say that the question of authorship is the single most academically debated issue in the history of film. The primary reasons these movies were produced was to make money, not to make an artistic statement (although, in the case of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Carl Laemmle Jr. believed that he could make money *by* making an artistic statement). Although, as stated earlier,

textual analysis plays a secondary role in this thesis to industrial history and cultural reception, it is important to understand that I will argue that the authorship of a text tends to be the director and not by the producer or another entity unless otherwise stated (for example, June Mathis is clearly a co-author of *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse).*

A surprising number of films referenced here contain either unknown actors or borderline stars (at least at the time the movie was produced). One of the arguments I will make for many of the films when the subject turns to marketing is the fact that the main draw for most of the pictures discussed is the subject- the war itself, as well as the cinematic spectacle and excitement inherent to battle scenes. This is critical to understanding the importance of the war to 20s and 30s audiences. A central question that led to my interest in this topic is the fact that on paper, the Great War would seem to be an uncommercial subject for movies, as the Great War was to many a traumatic subject and thus seemingly not a good economic prospect for a popular cinema built upon escapism. There is a long history of the glorification of war in popular media, but there was widespread agreement that something about the Great War made it different. Time and again, I will discuss the extent of the trauma experienced by average soldiers. People on the home front, even in America and Canada, were not denied suffering due to the large number of war injuries and deceased and in England, many air raids occurred.

The Hollywood film industry has been predicated from almost the beginning on the economic bedrock of sending positive, palatable messages to appeal to audiences, and indeed, nearly every cinema trade designed to make money on a mass scale has followed the same principle. Mainstream audiences like to be presented with non-threatening, non-offensive, upbeat stories. How could a Great War film be perceived as honest and convince people to see it? *All Quiet on the Western Front* was felt by most audiences as being profoundly disturbing and depressing, yet it was a commercial success. In Chapter IV, I try to understand why.

Summary of Chapters

In Chapter One, after describing the geo-political situation upon the immediate close of the war, I move into a discussion of *The Heart of Humanity* (1918), a propaganda film made during the war but released shortly after its ending. I then discuss the first Great War hit, *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse* (1921). I argue that both of these films are examples of

attempts to explain war trauma mostly through a metaphysical or Christian lens, with *The Heart of Humanity* arguing for a triumphant nationalism against an evil nation (Germany) an explanation shared by *Four Horseman*, but expanded to include human sin as a war cause itself.

In Chapter Two, I discuss what I call two films of the mid-20s, King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925) and Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory?* (1926), both which are based on source material by then-popular writer Laurence Stallings. Both pictures were major hits and I argue that their popularity was in part due to the fact they accepted for granted that fighting in the war was a traumatic experience, something that many audiences wanted to see. As part of the discursive context of the times, I begin the chapter by examining the discursive surround of the war from this era by discussing contemporary events in American culture, such as the death of President Warren G. Harding and the election of 1924, and examine Stalling's novel *Plumes* (1924) which discusses some of the themes found in both films.

In Chapter Three, I will discuss 'The Dark Adventure', arguing that by the 20s and 30s films about the air war were sold to audiences as spectacle but the ever present prospect of random death prevents these films from being described as typical Hollywood adventure epics. I argue that, while the prime appeal of these pictures is spectacle, a kind of seriousness crept in. The 'Dark Adventure' therefore, refers to war cinema that emphasizes traditional elements of adventure and spectacle with a commentary on more serious subjects such as the effects of war trauma and spectre of death, which is found in both of the discussed pictures about the air war, *Wings* and *Hell's Angels.*

In Chapter Four, I will discuss the concept of 'The Black Void', using two pictures, *Journey's End* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* as examples. Both of these films describe efforts of the characters to psychologically escape the war through which intensify the portrayal of trauma for the audience. The two movies are also exceptionally serious in tone but were very popular with audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. I will argue that the film studios believed that they could make money by making downbeat and somewhat disturbing cinema, using many accounts of emotionally drained audiences.

In Chapter Five, I look at two films about a potential second world war, *Men Must Fight* and *No Greater Glory* (1934). I argue that both of these films demonstrate cultural anxiety about current societal institutions and mores which seem to be unable to stop another mass conflict. They are the only films in this thesis that discuss the reasons *why* individual soldiers choose to fight, building on the framework of *All Quiet* in its emphasis on war as a meaningless concept that does not solve problems and only benefits the small amount of elites who cause it.

In Chapter Six, I will conclude my thesis with two movies about German soldiers after the conflict, both based on novels by Erich Maria Remarque: *The Road Back* and *Three Comrades*. Both from American studios with mostly American actors, I argue that these movies constitute a 'Universal Fraternity'- the idea that thought individuals may be swept up against their will in events of a particular society, there were not essential or spiritual differences between Germans, Americans and the English. These movies, both planned as prestige pictures were moderately successful but quickly forgotten. I argue that this indicates that audiences were not as interested in Great War cinema due to the rapidly increasing crisis in Europe and the likelihood of a Second World War.

I begin my thesis with a description of the cultural climate at the conclusion of the war, which opens the next Chapter.

Chapter 1: *The Heart of Humanity* and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the early post-war period, using Allen Holubar's *The Heart of Humanity* (1918), a film produced during the war but released a month after the Armistice, as an example of the kind of discourse associated with the Great War in the public mind in this period. I will then move on to a production history and analysis of the reception of Rex Ingram's and June Mathis' *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), the blockbuster Great War film of the 1920s. Using my reception sources as evidence, I discuss the reception of the film from its standpoint as pro-war and anti-German propaganda. The reception of *Four Horseman* indicates that it was a major event in American culture in 1921 and a highly emotional experience for many audiences, despite the fact that at least some in the film industry felt that audiences were suffering from 'war fatigue'. I argue there is little evidence that such war fatigue actually existed due to the success of several war-related films. Finally, I argue that *Four Horsemen*, like many films in this thesis, was perceived as being 'realistic' or authentic due to its portrayal of war trauma. I also assert the film explains both the trauma and the causes of the war in terms that were palatable to American audience at the time- the war is both caused by the evil of Germans and by human sin from a Christian perspective.

The post-war period was an uncertain time in the United States. When the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, the country was in the midst of the influenza pandemic (known at the time as the 'Spanish Flu') that would take more lives than the war itself, causing many public buildings and thus, movie theatres, to be closed. The effects of this pandemic, about which Nancy K. Bristol reports 'Experts today estimate that as many as one-third of humans around the globe, perhaps 500 million people, and over one-quarter of Americans, roughly 25 million people, where infected by this new incarnation of influenza…'[32] have been often been

[32] Nancy K. Bristol, *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3.

said to have been forgotten in popular memory. In Alfred C. Crosby's book on the subject, the author speculates on some of the reasons for this. He writes: 'The very nature of the disease and its epidemiological characteristics encouraged forgetfulness in the societies it affected. The disease moved too fast, arrived, flourished, and was gone before it had any but ephemeral effects on the economy and before many people had time to fully realise just how great was the danger.'[33] Nevertheless, it is clear the numerous closings of schools, churches and theatres must have had a major effect on a populace already used to wartime rationing. The surreal sight of people carrying on everyday life while wearing gauze surgical masks, pictured below, is enough to visually demonstrate the peculiar nature of the influenza. As many cinemas, or as they are called in America, movie theatres, closed due to the outbreak, it is logical to infer that there was an effect on film distribution, delaying the speed at which movies were disseminated across the country.

Figure 1 A baseball game during the Spanish Flu pandemic.

Just days before the Armistice, on 5 November 1918, the country gave a huge victory to the Republican Party in the midterm elections, despite the fact that the war was going strongly. The Democratic Party lost twenty-five seats in the House of Representatives, expanding the Republican majority and six in the Senate, losing control of the chamber. Historian David M. Kennedy discusses the consequences: '…everywhere Republican satisfaction abounded. The party had been effectively reunited for its first national victory since the disastrous [Theodore] Roosevelt-led schism of 1912. The hated Wilson, even as he was about to grasp the palm of

[33] Alfred W. Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), loc 5922, Kindle edition.

military success, had been denied his full measure of glory as a conquering war leader. A Republican Senate would now have a strong fulcrum on the President's treaty-making power.'[34] Wilson decided to leave the country for France to take part in the exhausting peace negotiations personally. The Versailles conference in 1919 went on much longer than expected, and was highly controversial and divisive. A *Chicago Daily Tribune* editorial called it 'The fertile seed plot of future wars.'[35] After the signing, President Wilson returned to America and went on a national tour to try to sell the treaty and America's entry into the League of Nations to the public, only to suffer a severe stroke he never totally recovered from. Although the public was never informed of the full extent of his illness, they were aware that he was incapacitated. A 'Red Scare', led by terrorist attacks on post boxes and the homes of many government leaders, led to a wave of wave of anti-immigrant paranoia. Finally, as often happens in post-war environments, the economy had entered recession.

Many Americans must have been nervous during this period of international chaos and an incapacitated and ineffectual leader. Significantly, Ohio Senator Warren G. Harding, the Republican nominee for President in 1920, ran a campaign based on the concept of a 'Return to Normalcy'. Although, like many effective political slogans, the term was vague and thus allowed voters to read what they wanted into it, it clearly indicated that the current national situation was *not* considered to be normal. The League of Nations debate eventually became a larger concern about America's role in the world. During the 1920 campaign, Harding stated in a speech: 'It's fine to idealize, but it's very practical to make sure our own house is in perfect order before we attempt the miracle of Old-World stabilization. Call it the selfishness of Nationality if you will. I think it's an inspiration to patriotic devotion to safeguard America first, to stabilize America first, to prosper America first, to think of America first, to exalt America first, to live for and revere America first. Let the Internationalists dream and the Bolsheviks destroy.'[36] Conversely, his Democratic opponent, Ohio Governor James M. Cox, who favoured ratification, stated 'Shall we act in concert with the free nations of the world in setting up a tribunal which would avert war in the future? This question must be met and

[34] David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 233, Kindle edition.
[35] "America and the Treaty," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* May 25, 1919.
[36] Warren G. Harding, "Americanism," © 1920 by Columbia Gramophone Manufacturing Company, 78 RPM.

answered honestly and not by equivocation. We must say in language which the world can understand, whether we shall participate in the advancement of a cause which has in it the hope of peace and world reconstruction, or whether we shall propose to follow the old paths trod by the nations of Europe -- paths which always led to fields of blood.'[37] In the election, Harding crushed Cox with the largest landslide in American history up to that time, winning 60.3% of the popular vote and 404 electoral votes to Cox's 127. During this period, America was in the midst of an overwhelming rejection of Wilson's leadership and the turbulent times the nation had found itself in. It was this environment, with the nation celebrating and recovering from a victorious conflict, political upheaval and public health crisis, that the first post-war films were released.

The Heart of Humanity

The Heart of Humanity, a Universal film from director and co-writer Allen Holubar, is a clear example of a war film that was at least regionally popular. Produced during the war, the movie's release is often inaccurately given as 1919, but a *New York Times* review indicates the film premiered on December 18th of the previous year.[38] The movie was one of Universal's 'Jewels', bigger budgeted movies that provided a contrast from its usual programmer fare, which the studio referred to at that time as 'Red Feathers' and 'Bluebirds.'[39] The picture has an epic scope.

The narrative begins in rural French Canada, and follows the exploits of Nanette (Dorothy Phillips), a compassionate woman who is engaged to John Patricia (William Stowell), one five sons of the Widow Patricia (Margaret Mann). Nanette is briefly menaced by visiting German Eric von Eberhard (Erich von Strohiem), but John comes to her rescue. After the war breaks out, the five sons enlist in various branches of the armed services and Nanette also joins as a war nurse in France, where she takes care of orphaned refugees. The war goes badly for the Canadians, and some of the Patricia brothers are killed in the fighting, which is telepathically felt by the Widow, via her 'heart of humanity' of the movie's title. As the Germans invade the

[37] James M. Cox, "Prevention of War," © 1920 by Columbia Gramophone Manufacturing Company, 78 RPM.
[38] "The Screen," *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1918.
[39] Bernard F. Dick, *City of Dreams: The Making and Remaking of Universal Pictures* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1997), 46.

French city, von Eberhard attempts to rape Nanette. When she resists, the officer murders a baby by throwing it out the window, rendering Nanette temporarily insane. American forces break in just in time and kill von Eberhard. Nanette returns home to Canada with the remaining refugee children, and urges mothers who lost children in the war to adopt them. The movie closes with a message of hope for the League of Nations and a patriotic montage of the Canadian, American and British armies.

The Heart of Humanity repeatedly emphasises the role of women and children in the suffering of the war. As the movie was targeted towards home front audiences that would have been disproportionately female as many males were fighting overseas, this is not surprising. Holubar continually contrasts the female characters, who are portrayed as mystical figures of grace and love with the militaristic, somewhat robotic Germans. The Patricia brothers are also portrayed as sensitive, loyal, and emotionally available. They are exceptionally devoted to their mother. The scenes of one or more brothers interacting with their mother are presented in an almost archetypal manner. The characters, like most in silent cinema in general, are not motivated by psychology, but by archetypal passions. Holubar is less interested in portraying specific persons, but rather telling a broad story whose characters represent all that is good in humanity, as indicated in the title.

The emphasis on the sexually violent Germans provides a clear message- it is necessary to fight and defend women and children against the Hun menace. The portrayal of Germans is commonly found in Great War films of the 20s- that of harsh, militaristic men (usually bald or with very short haircuts) who espouse Nietzsche might-makes-right philosophy. In *The Heart of Humanity* this portrayal is contrasted with Christian imagery. An illustration of the picture's attitude toward Germans occurs when von Eberhard meets Nanette while she prays in a forest grotto. The German states: 'What a beautiful picture you make-you almost convert me to your weakness.' The innocent replies: 'Weakness? My religion is my *strength*'. The German argues: 'Strength needs no religion- it is a religion unto itself. Might is right. There is no place for weakness in the world.' To visually emphasize the point, Holubar cuts to a visual metaphor of a large spider crawling towards a statue of the Virgin Mary. The image of the perfect mother in Catholicism is being threatened by a malevolent creature.

Figure 2. Still from *The Heart of Humanity*.

Much of the film reflects a work of wartime propaganda. There is didactic American flag waving and the movie clearly presents the idea that Americans are going to save the other Allies, such as the scene in which the US army comes to the rescue of a French city at the last moment. Intertitles also express that the Allies are fighting for democracy. However, there are some elements in this didactically propagandistic movie that are counter-intuitive. The first is that four out of the five brothers die. Given some of the unusual editorial choices at the end, such as a scene where the Widow imagines her dead children are at dinner with her, it is possible that John was also intended to die and but was saved in post-production after the Armistice. The film reinforces the idea that the sacrifice of all five brothers, though extreme, would have been necessary at the time due to the statements by the mother that her sons have been 'glorified'. The movie is also very violent, featuring a number of battle scenes. Part of the commercial appeal of this may be explained by spectacle, but Holubar films many of the war scenes with smoke, and the visual effect is one of chaos. The director does not use visual strategies to indicate that the Allied armies are more ordered or regimented than the German ones. Instead, the battle scenes appear to be highly destructive on all sides. The war is never presented as an adventure or as a pleasurable experience. The film argues that the war is necessary and those who honourably fight on the side of morality will attain glory in death, but that the experience of the conflict is terrible.

At the 18 December 1918 New York premier, a reporter indicated the reaction of the invited audience: 'Their interest was held from the first scene to the last, and more than a few times they burst into applause much too enthusiastic to be discounted as perfunctory or polite. They

liked the picture. There was no doubt about that.'[40] The movie ended up running for six weeks in New York, an impressive achievement when many films played only a single week.[41] A later *Los Angeles Times* review indicated that it would run for eight weeks in that city[42], indicating that movie was popular outside of the nation's cultural capitol.

Reviews of the movie were also strong. A notice in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* is worth special attention. Dated 10 February 1919, the review is titled 'A War Picture, Yes! But You Must Not Miss Seeing It!' The critic, writing under the paper's standard pseudonym of Mae Tinee (matinee), goes on to state 'First, last, and all times a war picture, had it been produced before the signing of the armistice it would have created an immense stir. But even now-when most of us are sick and tired of war pictures- it grips you and compels respect. Allen Holubar has certainly reason to be proud of his endeavours.' After praising many elements of the film and describing the plot, Tinee concludes, 'I'm tired of war pictures, too. But I do think *The Heart of Humanity* should be seen by all lovers of good film.'[43] The implications of such a review are significant. Tinee clearly believes the public is tired of seeing war films. She mentions this fact three times in a medium length review, including in the title. The language that she uses is so casual it seems to indicate that the belief in war fatigue from audiences was not controversial. Yet, as discussed above, audiences did not need much encouragement to see and apparently enjoy the movie. Tinee's review, which is not atypical of the others I will discuss, leads to an obvious question: what was it about war cinema during this period that audiences disliked? The most likely answer, evidenced by the numerous examples of publications referencing a perceived tiredness with war content, discussed above and below, is that audiences were tired of war propaganda, and possibly to a degree tired of the war itself. Tinee does not provide evidence to prove his or her assertion that audiences were tired of war movies. Rather, it is merely assumed to be true.

War films, including newsreels, fiction features and shorts, played an important part in the cinematic consumption of filmgoers during the war. When the conflict ended, the response of

[40] "The Screen," *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1918.
[41] "News of the Film World", *Variety*, Feb. 07, 1919.
[42] Antony Anderson, "Heart of Humanity," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 17, 1919.
[43] Mae Tinee, "A War Picture, Yes! But You Must Not Miss Seeing it !" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 10, 1919.

audiences would be clear, though deceptive, based on a casual reading of available literature. The general response found in much discussion in 1919 and 1920 is that films about the war were undesired by audiences and unlikely to make money. I repeatedly found this concept, which I have called 'war fatigue,' in many the articles and reviews that I will discuss below. It seems very clear that both audience and distributors believed that war movies were an uncommercial prospect that would not make money. However, Leslie Midkiff-Debauche states in her book *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War One* '…the war was never a taboo subject for film narratives- as it was never taboo for published fiction and nonfiction-nor was it absent from newspaper headlines.'[44] In a related article, she also reports that many apparent non-war genres, including the Western, had Great War elements inserted into them during this period.[45] There was certainly a great deal of war-related media in the years in question. Midkiff-Debauche lists several successful war memoirs and novels, and states 'Thus, in 1919 and through the early 1920s, war and the peace remained in the headlines, on the bookshelves, and in the minds of the American public. The fresh memories of the battlefield and the home front fostered contemporary interest in the political results of the Great War.'[46] Even two popular songs, 'Till We Meet Again' and 'How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em on the Farm?' (both hits in 1919) dealt with leaving or returning soldiers. It is in this environment, in which the lives of practically all Americans were culturally enveloped with the war and its aftermath that the two films I will discuss in this chapter were released.

In his book *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928*, Richard Koszarski notes the difficulty in estimating the economic success of domestic American films: 'Even in the crudest terms, estimates of the number of paid admissions [to movie theatres] are not reliable before 1922.' He goes on to argue that the state of film distribution in the era compounds the problem. For many years, no distribution records were kept, and when they were, they did not take into account several important factors, such a regional disparities, or commissions paid for selling films in theatres not owned by the

[44] Leslie Midkiff-Debauche, *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War One* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 166.
[45] Leslie Midkiff-Debauche, "The United States' Film Industry and World War One," ed. Michael Paris (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 153.
[46] Leslie Midkiff-Debauche, *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War One* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 160-161.

studio.[47] Therefore, while it is obvious that such films as D.W. Griffith's *Way Down East* (1920) were very popular, it is difficult to quantify how popular they were or with what demographic groups. Some film historians, such as Michael T. Isenberg,[48] have stated that the war was not considered an economically viable subject for films, stating 'The immediate postwar climate continued to treat the war film as a pariah.' As has been argued earlier by Midkiff-Debauche and will be demonstrated below, many popular films concerning the Great War were made during this period, even while there was a perception among at least some that audiences were tired of the subject.

Furthermore, the closing of theatres caused by the flu pandemic had an effect on film distribution. This meant that movies, which at the time did not 'open-wide' as they do today, but slowly trickled out to the public throughout the country, were delayed even more. Thus, a propaganda film that may have been perceived to fit audience demand in August of 1918 might seem to be anachronistic in February 1919, even if there was still a market for films that dealt in some way with the war. The news itself was moving so fast, and the concepts to be dealt with so political and abstract, that filmmakers and studios may have found it difficult to keep up. However, even given these factors, it is definitely not true to say that Hollywood ignored the conflict. Many war-related features were in production during this period, even by such respected directors as D.W. Griffith (*The Girl Who Stayed at Home*, 1919). It cannot be said that Hollywood had a boycott on films of the Great War. Midkiff-Debauche cites 54 films about the Great War released in 1919 alone, though many were in production at the time of the Armistice.[49]

As box office records from this period are either non-existent or questionable, the question of the existence of war fatigue in cinema audiences will probably never be definitively answered. It is likely that it is more complex, with some demographics wanting material and others tiring of it (or never wanting it to begin with). However, even setting aside the delay in nationwide

---

[47] Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1990), 33.
[48] Michael Isenberg, "The Great War Viewed from the 1920s," in *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 140.
[49] Leslie Midkiff-Debauche, *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War One* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 165

exhibition in cinema made during the war, the question remains- why would Hollywood produce so many films about a topic the public was supposedly tired of? One possible explanation may come in a *New York Times* review of an August 1919 re-release of D.W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World*. The critic describes: 'Although announced as a 'peace edition,' the picture is practically unchanged, except in some the subtitles and by the addition of several scenes at the end.' He or she again then discusses the difference in the post-war audience: 'People have not forgotten the war, but its issues are no longer boiling within them, and this has not been shown more strikingly than in the reception of the picture last night. The spectators applauded its spectacles regardless of their military meaning, they laughed more freely and easily at its spontaneous comedy, they were held by the story and the people of the story, rather than by the war in the film. 'Hearts of the World' had not changed, but they had.'[50] In other words, audiences were not necessarily interested in the political ideologies of the war, but they were entertained by melodrama for spectacle, and presumably, action and excitement.

Universal must have been pleased by the film's notice in *The Los Angeles Times*. The paper's critic, Antony Anderson, raved about the film:

> For "The Heart of Humanity" will hold us and grip us, compelling us, thought its sheer power and beauty, to praise and applaud. A big thing has been done in a big way. Another director is mounting towards the seats of the mighty, to take his place beside Griffith, and [Maurice] Tourner, and De Mille and the rest. / One hardly knows which to praise the most in "The Heart of Humanity'- the breadth and scope of its theme, the vitality of its characters, or the artistic charm of many of the pictures and the delicacy of their details. All these qualities of good art are found in Holubar's photoplay, though it must be confessed that now and again he falls down in the matter of composition. The trench scenes are wonderful though all of them were made near Los Angeles. They appear absolutely authentic, because, departing from realism, they remain faithful to a high idea of life and art. The subtitles are illuminating and concise. / There are some scenes in "The Heart of Humanity" that are too tragic, too poignant to be looked at twice. One of these shows us the little children of France wailing for food while the unspeakable Huns are emptying into the streets the cans of milk sent from America.[51]

[50] "The Screen," *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 1919.
[51] Antony Anderson, "Heart of Humanity," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 17, 1919.

In the above review, Anderson describes the aesthetic reasons why he believes the film is a great work of art. However, it is also clear that he found the movie to be a very moving experience. He only alludes to one narrative or thematic element of this story in this regard- the scene where the Germans waste the milk. Nevertheless, this review and the responses in *The Atlanta Constitution* below indicate the likely reasons that audiences of the time found the picture so moving- it emotionally justified American participation in the conflict, the human sacrifices and hardships on the home front of the war using the best highly emotional imagery- the suffering of civilians, specifically women and children.

From very early in the conflict, a main argument for American intervention was the necessity to stop German barbarism. This began with the 'Rape of Belgium'- atrocities committed during Germany's violation of Belgium's neutrality by treaty in order to race to France in the early days of the conflict, and continued after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, in which many Americans, at that time non-belligerents, perished. The idea that women and children, inherently innocent, must be protected at all costs is a common one at the time.

A letter to the editor of *The Atlanta Constitution* signed by 'A Movie Fan' described his family's reaction to the picture: 'I want to say that it is the best picture I have ever seen. Its heart interest is compelling and its war scenes stupendous. My wife, my daughter and I went to see the picture Tuesday night and after we had returned home sat up until 2 o'clock in the morning discussing its gripping scenes.'[52] Another article tried to explain the appeal of the film, describing it as 'an unbounded success, crowded houses have been the rule and on many days the house has been completely sold out in advance of the starting time.' The writer describes:

> And the suffering, the heartache of the women of the world was increased a thousandfold. The women themselves did not realize the process of change within them; they felt only a great fear and a glorious renunciation. Back of all this feeling, this fearing, the "mother-heart" of all woman-kind was slowly asserting itself, forcing them as it did Dorothy Phillip's Nanette in Allen Holubar's latest picture, to leave their children, their mothers, their sisters and their small brothers that they might minister to the sterner sex that fought for an exalted cause.[53]

[52] "Movie Fans Are Enthusiastic Over "The Heart of Humanity," *Atlanta Constitution,* Feb. 20, 1919.
[53] ""The Heart of Humanity" Held Over at the Tudor," *Atlanta Constitution,* Feb. 23, 1919.

Although the presumably male writer is clearly idealising women and femininity, his analysis of the film is insightful. Unlike most of the other films discussed in this thesis, most of the portrayal of suffering in *The Heart of Humanity* is that of civilians-women and children. Even when the Patricia brothers begin to die, the emphasis is more on the suffering of their mother than on their own loss or torment. Thus, *The Heart of Humanity* uses gender as a means of supporting the war- men must fight in the conflict to protect the pure and innocent from the cruel and barbarous. This was a very common trope of war propaganda, as evidenced by the poster below, and helps to reveal the film as it was intended during production, as a pro-war propaganda picture.

Figure 3. A typical propaganda poster from the war, comparing Germans to apes and emphasizing their sexual threat to women.

Another *Constitution* story tied the film to peace negotiations, stating:

> …the movie at this particular moment of the peace negotiations makes those who see it realize that we must not forget too soon what has been done to the world-what the world all innocent has been made to suffer. / This movie makes us see again the atrocities to which women and children and helpless people have been subjected, and emphasizes the reparation that must be done. / Despite all that has happened, we must

> see, and see clearly, that there is not yet even an expression of contrition from the offenders.'[54]

Clearly, although designed as a wartime propaganda film, the movie had relevance to post-war audiences.

The anonymous critic of the trade publication *Variety* spent most of his or her review comparing the movie to Griffith's *Hearts of the World*, describing 'The roles of Dorothy Phillips in "The Heart of Humanity" and Lillian Gish in "Hearts of the World" are almost identical, both fighting off Prussian officers until rescued by their sweethearts, who rush from the fighting in time to save their sweethearts.' Although most of the review was devoted to a plot synopsis, the critic did describe the movie's perceived realism: 'Some of the scenes which seemed realistic make you grip your chair and wish you could leap into a trench to help destroy the Hun. The fighting as waged on both sides is a wonder scene.'[55] The critic does not speculate on whether the film will be a commercial success or encourage theatres to book it, but the statement regarding the 'realism' does indicate the environment the movie was initially released into- patriotic post victory America, which saw the Germans as violent aggressors and acknowledged them as perpetrators of heinous crimes against civilians.

Many war films aside from *The Heart of Humanity* received positive notices during this period. Intriguingly, just two months after her strong praise of *The Heart of Humanity*, Tinee gave another extremely positive notice to *The Unpardonable Sin* (1919). Now apparently lost, the movie, directed by Marshall Neilan, depicts the experiences of three women in Belgium, and according to Tinee's plot synopsis, involves Germans as sexual predators.[56] Like *The Heart of Humanity*, the movie was also a huge hit, breaking attendance records in Detroit.[57] The *New York Times* critic, however, argued that 'Whatever may be the propriety of stirring up the memory of German atrocities in Belgium, certainly a photoplay without the character of greatness, presented for public entertainment after the war is over, is not the proper medium.'[58] The memories were apparently too fresh. Three months later, in July, Tinee again gave a positive review to George Fitzmaurice's *The Profiteers*, what she calls an 'after-

---

[54] Isma Dooly, "The "Heart of Humanity" and the Peace Problems," *Atlanta Constitution,* Feb. 14, 1919.
[55] "The Heart of Humanity," *Variety,* Jan. 03, 1919.
[56] Mae Tinee, "Blanche Sweet "Comes Back" in Great Picture," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 21, 1919.
[57] ""The Unpardonable Sin" Attracts Huge Crowds," *Detroit Free Press*, Mar. 5 1919.
[58] "The Screen," *New York Times,* May 3, 1919.

the-war drama.'[59] Her use of the phrase 'after-the-war' implies that there were many similar films at the time, and that this was a context the public would be familiar with. Although many war pictures performed well with audiences during 1919, at least some of them also did so in 1920. *Civilian Clothes*, another possibly lost film directed by Hugh Ford about the struggles of a returning soldier, was released to moderately positive reviews in August of that year, although no sources cite whether it was successful with the public or not.[60]

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse was, by almost any standard, one of the most significant and influential American films of the silent era. Although, as stated above, box office records are not extant or consistent in their methodology, there is no doubt that the film was one of the highest grossing of the decade and heavily influential in popular culture. It demonstrated that films about the Great War could be profitable, made Rudolph Valentino one of the biggest stars in Hollywood and significantly advanced the career of its director, Rex Ingram.

Spaniard Vincente Blasco Ibanez had been a critically popular writer in America through translations of his Spanish language works (he never learned English), though his books were not particularly successful with the public, as evidenced by Burton Rascoe's article on the sudden success of the novel, discussed below. His status with American readers quickly changed upon the publication of *Los Cuatro Jinetes del Apocalipsis*, originally published in Europe in 1916, and then extremely popular with readers in the States in an English translation. One contemporary source proclaimed the novel 'the most widely read book of all time, excepting the Bible'.[61]

The success of the novel was so unexpected that Burton Rascoe of the *Chicago Tribune* later devoted a special column to explaining its surprise appeal to the public. He somewhat solipsistically concludes that Blasco Ibanez was popular because he had become 'fashionable,'

[59] Mae Tinee, "Showing Miss Ward Expertly Emotionalizing," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul. 7, 1919.
[60] Mae Tinee, "Great Game- Teaching the "Mrs." To Heel!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 25, 1920.
[61] "Adult Population of City of 60,000 Helped in Filming Four Horsemen," *New York Times*, Jun. 3, 1923.

but later notes: 'It is one of those strange turns of destiny whereby an author of real merit suddenly finds himself favoured by the caprice of the public.'[62] Under a translation by Charlotte Brewster Jordan, *Four Horsemen* is a mostly plotless novel about the entanglement of an Argentinian family in the European war. The disjointed and somewhat rambling narrative follows various members of the Desnoyers family at several points in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The protagonist is Don Marcelo Desnoyers, a Spanish immigrant to Argentina who later moves to France and is almost executed after the Battle of the Marne, falsely accused by the Germans of being a spy. His son, Julio, enlists in the French army, only to die himself. Among the many subplots are Julio's love affair with Marguerite, who is already married to would-be soldier Etienne Laurier, and the cultural contrast between the family lines of Julio's Spanish father, French mother, and German uncle.

It is tempting to attribute the novel's contemporary success on Blasco Ibanez's extreme didacticism. The novel, like its author, is explicitly and unashamedly anti-German, as evidenced in a long scene in which Don Marcelo's German son-in-law gives his relatives a racist lecture on the superiority of the Aryan race, with propagandistic dialogue such as '…although the German race may not be perfectly pure, it is the least impure of all races and, therefore, should have dominion over the world.'[63] This dialogue conforms with the propagandistic views of Germans obsessed with might, militarism and racial superiority. Rascoe, the literary critic for *The Chicago Tribune*, called the book '…the most scathing indictment of the German people that has appeared in fiction…'[64] The idea that the novel's explicit anti-German stance led to its success is echoed by an intriguing article in the 1 September 1918 issue of *The New York Times*. Entitled 'Neutral War Fiction,' the unnamed writer argues the best war novels have taken the British side. He/she then goes on to state that Blasco Ibanez, 'a recognized master of fiction, who comes from a nation that has so far preserved neutrality, has chosen the war for his theme, and has given us, in some respects, a novel that, for descriptive interests, knowledge of national character, conflicting national

[62] Burton Rascoe, "Publishers Puzzled by the Problem of Public's Preferences," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 8th,. 1919.
[63] Vicente Blasco Ibanez, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, trans. Charlotte Brewster Jordan (Dodo Press), 99.
[64] Burton Rascoe, ""The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" by V. Blasco Ibanez,"
Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct. 19, 1918.

feeling and motives, deserves a place with the foremost of its contemporaries.' In other words, instead of focusing on the experience of an individual soldier, the novel conveys political complexity and confusion, while maintaining an anti-German viewpoint. The writer later concludes that the book expresses '…in a sense, an authoritative Spanish view of the war…'[65] The fact that Blasco Ibanez came from a neutral country but was still intensely anti-German may have also been an element that led to the novel's success. Although he certainly could not be said to speak for all of his countrymen, it is not unreasonable to think that members of Allied nations would have been sympathetic to a public figure from a neutral country who so explicitly supported their position. More importantly, Blasco Ibanez provides a sense that the war is of epic, almost Biblical significance. In the novel, the idea that the is war horrible is implicit in the work and briefly mentioned, but consistently present in the background, as if it does not even need to be indicated to the readers.

Four Horsemen appears to be the first American spectacle epic made about the war after the Armistice, but this cannot be definitely said in the inability to view the lost *The Unpardonable Sin*. Like many huge super-productions, a great deal would be riding on it. However, the success of Blasco Ibanez's book meant that there would have been a built-in audience for the film. There is evidence that film studios sensed that the property was valuable. Although many of the original negotiations for the rights of the novel have now been lost, Ingram's biographer Liam O'Leary reports that Fox was rumoured to have offered the author $75,000 and that Metro had to make two offers, finally purchasing the novel for $20,000 plus ten per cent of the profits. Presumably, Blasco Ibanez would have never taken a 'back end' deal such as this if the film was really expected to be 'box office poison.'[66]

Upon reading the book, it becomes apparent that the novel naturally lends itself to the silent cinema. The novel's several exotic (to American audiences) settings, the natural cinematic possibilities of filming war, the turgid love story, and finally, copious amounts of anti-German content, would all have appealed to American audiences. The episodic narrative would work to a silent film's advantage, meaning that events and incidences could be easily deleted, added, or re-arranged by both writer and editor. Metro assigned the project to their most

[65] "Neutral War Fiction," *New York Times*, Sep. 1, 1918.
[66] Liam O'Leary, *Rex Ingram: Master of Silent Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 71.

trusted screenwriter, June Mathis. Mathis was one of the most respected scenarists in Hollywood, and one of its most powerful women. Although she would only be credited as screenwriter, her role in the film was really one of a powerful producer, overseeing from a general standpoint the entire production.[67] Mathis would later claim that she was uncomfortable with handling a film concerning war, finding it too masculine. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Mathis stated 'War is not for women, in spite of the showing we had made during the great conflict. I had worried lines into my head attempting to unravel little details that had to be provided for before a crank could be turned on the battle scenes.'[68] This statement is compelling for a number of reasons. Besides the obvious fact that it is rife for a feminist critique, it also implies that her collaboration with Ingram was far greater than that of a typical screenwriter, as she was apparently concerned with visuals and logistics that would usually be the realm of the director.

However, despite her reservations, whether genuine or simply stated for the press, Mathis' handling of the adaption was adroit. She streamlined Blasco Ibanez's convoluted narrative, providing more thematic consistency throughout the film. She changed the central concept of the Four Horsemen from a briefly stated metaphor to a more literal representation of hell released on the world. Understanding the visual nature of the movies, she played up some of the more cinematic aspects of the book, such as the Argentine tango. Perhaps most importantly, she altered the protagonist. Instead of Don Marcelo Desnoyers (played in the film by Josef Strickland), the observer of the destruction of Old Europe, the protagonist of the film would be his son, Julio. This alteration would be crucial to promoting the film to a younger audience. Instead of an old man watching as society disintegrates and his children are endangered, audiences could watch as the cultured but somewhat naïve Julio responds to the war, providing an audience surrogate to youth. Living in Paris as an Argentine citizen, Julio is not eligible for the draft, but feels pressured to fight anyway. This must have provided a way of visualizing the ambivalence that many Americans must have felt, having watched the horror emerge for three years and then suddenly to be in the midst of conflict themselves.

---

[67] Andre Soares, "Pioneer Female Producer June Mathis: Q & A with Author Allen Ellenberger." *Alt Film Guide*. accessed April 1, 2007 http://www.altfg.com/blog/classics/june-mathis/.
[68] "Screen Soldiers Are Real," *Washington Post*, Sep. 4, 1921.

Paradoxically however, Julio has absolutely no difficulty in determining which side is right. This is one of the logically inconsistent messages the film seems to endorse- the war is a result of human sin and folly, for which everyone is partly responsible, but there is no question as to which side must win.

In addition to her screenplay, Mathis' two most unexpected and influential decisions would be her choice of director and star. Rudolph Valentino was an unknown bit player at the time. He would be an inspired choice for Julio- his exotic, un-Anglo-Saxon looks meant that he could convincingly play a descendant of a Spaniard (the actor was born in Italy). Valentino could also project a unique combination of strength and vulnerability, exuding sexual confidence, while being more sensitive in other areas. Ingram was a Great War veteran himself, an immigrant to America from Ireland, then part of the United Kingdom. A contract director at Metro, he had made critically and commercially successful films, but nothing on the scale of *Four Horsemen.* Strangely, especially considering the large role of Mathis in the production, Ingram was also given a 'supervisor' credit. Thomas Slater notes in *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalized Voices* that Mathis often included detailed directions on specific camera setups in her scripts that at least occasionally her directors found helpful. It is worth remembering however, that director Ingram would go on to be one of the most successful Hollywood filmmakers of the 20s, and was clearly a capable film artist in his own right. Many of the film's mystical themes are in line with the director's other work, such as *The Magician* (1926). Given the documented close nature of the working relationship between Mathis and Ingram, I argue that the film may be best considered an artistic collaboration between the two from an artistic standpoint.

Until the 1930s, Ingram did not extensively discuss his religious beliefs in public forums. His biographer Ruth Barton indicates that he was from a Protestant family.[69] After his retirement, the director said that he believed the world's ails would be cured by religion, though not the faith one might expect- the director changed his name to Ben Aalen Nacir ed' Deen and converted to Islam.[70] Seen in this context, and the spirituality that occurs in many of his films,

[69] Ruth Barton, *Rex Ingram: Visionary Director of the Silent Screen* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 5.
[70] "Famous Motion Picture Director Sees World Cure in Islam Faith," *Washington*

it is not surprising that the memorable scenes of the Four Horsemen emerging from a literal pit of Hell would be included in the film. Merely a metaphor in the novel, these scenes serve to increase the sense of scale in the picture. In a literal sense, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* does not just portray events on two continents, but in Heaven and Hell as well.

The film was planned as a significant Metro production. If the studio's statements to the press can be believed, the movie cost somewhere between a then remarkable $1.2 and 1.5 million. Principle photography lasted six months in an era when many important 'A' pictures were shot in less than thirty days. Ingram employed fourteen assistant directors.[71] To recreate the Second Battle of the Marne, detailed streets of a French village were re-created and then destroyed. Up to fifteen cameras were also manned and operated for certain sequences. At times, Ingram gave in to near Von Stroheim levels of excess. According to a press interview, all of the participants of the recreated battle were actual overseas veterans, stating 'The reason [our film was authentic] is that we used service men exclusively, and some of these were men who actually participated in the battle. Incidentally, it was necessary to give these men the drilling usually required to prepare a raw recruit for work before the camera. They were able to take military orders and they were amendable to discipline.'[72] Whether this is true or not (and it is doubtful that it is), this emphasis on realism and the experience of actual veterans would be a traditional trope in advertising and publicity of war films. Although only a very small percentage of the movie involves scenes of actual soldiers, and then almost all of them were French, this quote indicates that being seen as realistic was important to sell the film to audiences. In addition to stressing realism, this also emphasises spectacle, that is, the idea that audiences could see exciting and epic images that they would not see in typical films. Going along with the idea that the movie was an important production, it was reported that Ingram exposed more than half a million feet of film.[73] The director would continue the practice of shooting large amounts of coverage throughout his career.

Post, Sep. 10, 1933, 58

[71] T.R. Ybarra, "Blasco Ibanez, Movie Fan," *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1921, 49.

[72] "Screen Soldiers Are Real." *The Washington Post* [Washington D.C.]. 4 Sep 1921.

[73] "Breaking Film Records." *The Washington Post* [Washington DC] 19 Feb 1922, 56.

Much of the publicity for the movie was based on the film's alleged fidelity to the novel. A poster billed the film as 'by Vincente Blasco Ibanez' over a cover of the book, as shown below:

Figure 4. The marketing campaign for *Four Horseman* emphasised fidelity to the source novel.

A *New York Times* article that strongly reads like a publicity puff piece emphasized how the author approved of the changes to his novel when screening rough scenes in New York, and then asked and was granted permission to see the film being shot in California.[74] Even the film's title card reads 'Metro Presents Rex Ingram's Production of Vincente Blasco Ibanez' Literary Masterpiece The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.' Focusing the marketing campaign on fidelity to the book allowed the studio to sidestep the question of how to

[74] T.R. Ybarra, "Blasco Ibanez, Movie Fan," *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1921, 49.

tastefully portray the psychological ramifications of the conflict. All Great War films of the silent era had a fundamental problem- a tragedy had taken place in the lives of millions of people. This trauma needed to be represented in a tasteful way without being so depressing that audiences would decline to purchase tickets for the filmic text.

Although exact box office records as to the film's ticket sales are not available, there is no question that *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* was a success beyond what few other films had accomplished by industrial standards up to this time. The American film industry anticipated the overwhelming popularity of the movie. A 1921 entry in the industry trade publication *Wid's Daily* is telling. The anonymous writer raves about the picture's artistic quality with one caveat- 'Were it not for the heavy and at times gruesome picture of devastated France under the heel of the German invasion and what at times seems an unnecessary amount of footage devoted to the incidents of the Great War, this production might go over with a tremendous bang. As it is, the question arises whether or not your people want to see what the exhibiting business generally terms "war stuff".' The writer goes on state that the film is worth booking, even though it may be too downbeat for audiences, as it plays an important social role in remembering how lucky they are not to have lived in Europe. In the paper's typical 'Box Office Analysis for the Exhibitor', the analysis is titled 'Just One Question: Is This Offered Three Years Too Late?' The writer argues that the success of the novel, the artistic quality of the film and the expensive production are in the movie's favour. He\she goes on to say: 'But the big question is whether or not a production with such an extensive amount of war incident is desired at this day. Possibly had this production been released three years ago, it would have been one of the greatest financial clean-ups in the history of pictures. If you think they will appreciate a splendid story regardless of the war background, get them in and they certainly will be pleased.'[75] This piece offers clear evidence of the industry perception of war fatigue among audiences, even as the war was never out of the news. The film had its New York premier on March 6th, two days after Harding succeeded Wilson in the presidency. The war was still in the news through Harding, even if it was within the context of how the country would forget about it and move on.

[75] "Ingram's "Four Horsemen" A Pictorial Triumph," *Wid's Daily* (New York, NY), Feb. 20, 1921.

Film distribution in the 20s was far different than it is today. Instead of 'opening wide' across a nation or indeed, the world in one day, films would open in individual cities and regions and slowly trickle their way across the country. Each film, even in major metropolises, would usually only play in a single theatre. Also, due to a lack of a standard, industry-wide censorship policy, individual cities and counties would make cuts and edits to the movie, which can make it difficult to determine what cut of a film a particular audience screened. However, upon its initial release, the censorship problems the film faced were not with its violence or political messages, but with the sexual innuendo, not the last time for a Valentino picture. In Chicago, one of Valentino's dances and a kiss was cut, oddly leaving Julio's sessions with scantily clad models intact.[76]

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse had its world premiere on March 6th, 1921 at the Lyric Theatre in New York. A critic (given no by-line but probably Mourdaunt Hall) reported 'A large number of spectators, many invited for the occasion, gave it [the film] hearty approval.' The critic heaped praise on Ingram, but spent, not surprisingly, a large amount of column space comparing the film to the novel. Significantly, the only alterations the critic complained about are addition of the spiritual element to the film, as well as the comic relief. The review concludes by saying the movie is '…an exceptionally well done adaptation and an extraordinary motion picture work to boot.' The tone is positive, but not overly enthusiastic.[77] Clearly, the critic did not anticipate, or at least express, the film's huge financial success or cultural impact. *Variety* would describe the success of the premier in much more quantifiable terms and explained its financial success. Stating the film

> …has started its run at a $15,000 a week gait. Receipts for the first two days of the showing-Monday and Tuesday-were in excess of $4,500, and Wednesday afternoon an advance sale of $10,000 was reported at the theatre. / A few seats, some held at $10, were sold for the opening performance and the house was jammed. The same condition was reported to have prevailed at the subsequent regular shows. Monday, it is said, 15,000 persons were turned away, and about the same number on Tuesday. The producers of the picture had taken about 50 tickets out of the rack because the seats did not permit a fair view of the screen, and, when the demand became so great, would-be purchasers were given the option of taking them and, if not satisfied,

[76] Mae Tinee, "Famous "Best Seller" Makes a Fine Photoplay," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* May 5, 1921.
[77] "The Screen," *New York Times,* May 7, 1921.

> returning for their money. All of these, it is said, were sold at the first four regular performances, the purchasers remaining in.[78]

A later *Variety* story would state 'The success of the "Horsemen" is one of the surprises of the picture world.' This demonstrates that in an industry that believed war fatigue existed, films about the conflict still be successful.[79] The film would receive much stronger critical admiration outside of the *Times*. Mae Tinee of *The Chicago Daily Tribune* stated '…that Rex Ingram, a young man and little heard from, deserves to be bowed into the front rank of all directors. He has made a splendid picture.'[80] In an unusual move, the *Tribune*'s theatre critic, Percy Hammond, asked for space to discuss the film and called it '…the greatest picture I ever saw, made from one of the best novels I have ever read…' Hammond later noted 'Its merciless anti-German slant, of course, retards its prosperity. The producer would have made a wiser, if not a more literal, photograph of the book had he tempered its black with a little grey.'[81] Presumably, Hammond means financial prosperity, but the film did very well with, and probably because of, its anti-German stance. On March 27th, two weeks after the New York premier, the *Times* ran a lengthy opinion piece by John Corbin, clearly indicating that the film was at the forefront of the public consciousness (at least where it was playing). Corbin was clearly a partisan of the film, arguing 'It ranges the world, sums up an era into the space of two hours or so, as no modern play has ever done.' Intriguingly, Corbin argues that the film is artistically successful because it does *not* focus on the experience of the common soldier. Contrasting Ingram's film with war material made during the conflict such as 'crude letters home from the doughboy…hasty sketches penned by press correspondents; our theatres teemed with crude melodramas of heroic private and sacrificial trained nurses at the front…' He makes what must seem to be an unbelievable declaration to modern scholars and audiences- not to mention audiences just four years later- 'The humours of the trench and the tedium of the dugout, the shock of battle and the thrill of victory- all that is the mere mechanism of war, void of deep and permanent interest. Blasco Ibanez [and, by extension, the film] had the clairvoyance to see that the real war was fought in the souls of contending

[78] ""Four Horsemen" Starts Off at $15,000-Week Gait," *Variety*, March 11, 1921.
[79] "Producers Not Troubled by $2 Picture Special Scare," *Variety*, April 22, 1921.
[80] Mae Tinee, "Famous "Best Seller" Makes a Fine Photoplay," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1921.
[81] Hammond, Percy. "The Theaters." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1921.

nations.'[82] Corbin makes an intriguing point. Although *Four Horsemen* was extremely popular, as war epics *The Big Parade* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* would be after, Ingram's film is different from almost all subsequent war pictures in the sense that the film does not concern itself with the experience of the individual soldier, as much as it does with the politics and morality of the conflict. Of course, it would be specious to argue that most audiences paid to see the movie due to their interest in socio-political issues or a theological depiction of the 'just war' argument. Audiences still identified with individual characters, but it cannot be defensibly argued that Ingram made a film *about* the combat experiences of soldiers. If he had, the protagonist would have gone to war long before the third act. The two prominent images used to advertise the film in posters were a copy of the novel and Tchertoff's initial vision of the Four Horsemen, downplaying the element of soldiers' experience of war.

It is likely that many of the experiences of the soldier were so commonly known that they were not considered to be significantly novel, as evidenced by Corbin's article. *Four Horsemen*, on the other hand, is concerned with the suffering of the world, or of the human race. The 'bigness' Ingram skilfully demonstrates may be the same awe that people felt when their daily lives, even in faraway rural areas, were disrupted so that they, or their brother or son, could go overseas and fight. Corbin complains that the movie spends too much time showing the peaceful life before the outbreak of the war and then observes: 'One has only to look around him here and now, in this world that was never to be the same again- today tomorrow and for indefinite years to come.' He later comments '…the true background for a picture of the war is not that vanished yesterday of 1914, but this so-called year of grace.' The war had not been forgotten. The public was trying to adapt to a new normal in a post-war world. The movie was the vanguard of a new public understanding of the conflict: 'What gripped the audience, as if with a new revelation, was the casting off of frivolity at the summons of war, the instinctive response to the call of duty and service, the still joy of souls that found themselves amid the ruin they had once held dear.' Recognizing the perspective of the film, Corbin refers to its politics as 'allied propaganda,' an astute observation. If the novel and wartime films made during the conflict existed to encourage the audience to win the war,

[82] John Corbin, "An Epic of the Movies," *New York Times*, May 27, 1921.

the film existed to explain why the war happened, and to an extent justify decisions and actions already taken.[83]

Across the United States, *Four Horsemen* was seen as something more than a just another movie. A private screening was arranged for President Harding.[84] Unfortunately, there is no apparent record of his reaction. At the Washington D.C. premier, the Spanish Ambassador and several military dignitaries attended. The film was preceded by a Marine band concert .[85] Rex Ingram was given an honorary degree at Yale, specifically because of the movie.[86] Respected sculptor Lee Lawrie created a bronze statue of the four horsemen.[87] The following year, *Photoplay*, an American fan magazine, published a letter from an anonymous reader. He or she argued that *Four Horsemen* was the best film of the year, stating 'I have seen it five times and if it had any faults, they would have cropped out about the third time I saw it.' Referring to the downbeat material that exhibitors had found so troublesome, the fan praised '...a denouement that it is logical and artistic.'[88] Like so many others, the fan also stated that the movie '...should firmly establish motion pictures as one of the high arts....' In Superior, Wisconsin, Methodist pastor Reverend T. Harry Kelly publically stated 'If everyone could see this picture 'disarmament conferences' would hardly be necessary to end the possibility of a future world conflict. May I add that if pictures of this kind were made the rule by people that produce and show them they would have the commendation of the churches instead of criticism.'[89] The religious and cultural conservatives may have enjoyed the movie for its overtly spiritual imagery and the implication that the war was a result of human sin.

Audience interest in spectacle as well as the fact that it was based on a popular novel would get audiences to purchase tickets for a first viewing, but a massive hit like *Four Horsemen* is dependent on repeat business, begging the question of why so many people went to see it, many more than once. The movie offers the audience a chance to identify with characters whose lives are disrupted, and face their own fears and uncertainty during the conflict. Edwin

[83] John Corbin, "An Epic of the Movies," *New York Times*, May 27, 1921.
[84] O'Leary, 82.
[85] "Film to Feature Party," *Washington Post*, Aug. 10, 1921.
[86] "How Ingram Rose," *Washington Post,* Jan. 8, 1922.
[87] "Backfire on Inspiration" *Washington Post,* Washington DC, 26 Feb 1922, 56
[88] "Letters to the Editor," *Photoplay* , September, 1922, 114.
[89] Roy Marcotte, "Screen Close-Ups," *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 15, 1921.

Schallert's review in the *Los Angeles Times* explicitly expresses this concept. Schallert finds the movie positive but slightly flawed, complaining the end of the film is anti-climactic after the Second Battle of the Marne. However, in a review entitled 'Notable Realism,' he describes at length what he feels to be the picture's greatest achievement- the authenticity he refers to in his title: 'In the realism of its characters and the quality of its "atmosphere," the "Four Horseman", [sic] reflects superlative credit on its makers. An interest that would otherwise be remote, is pertinent simply through an accuracy of delineation, [sic] that causes you to fall under the spell of actuality. The feature bears the stamp of authority which grows out of the fact that its [sic] represents expert work…The scenes in the Argentine and those in Paris will positively take you to those places. The characters are so typical that you know their viewpoint even before this is expressed.'[90] It is clear that Schallert sees the film as accurately representing the essential and authentic truths of the conflict through the film medium.

The coverage of the opening of the film in Atlanta in September of 1921, long after the late winter premier in other cities, demonstrates the impact the film had on popular culture. In the lead up to the release, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that 'Mail orders are pouring in and inquiries for reservations from an area of fifty miles around Atlanta indicate unusual interest in the coming engagement of this gigantic film drama.'[91] Fuzzy Woodruff, the paper's critic who also served as a sportswriter, raved about the picture:

> An Atlanta audience sat rapt at the Atlanta theatre last night and had unfolded before its eyes a realization of prophecy. For a decade or more we have been told that the motion picture machine was to create an art to which literature and painting, drama and sculpture must extend the right hand of fellowship. Up to last night I had never seen the machine grind out anything that did more to than amuse, or instruct, or thrill, or entertain. "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" does all these things and then "The Four Horsemen" goes a step farther. It inspires…But I doubt if there was a soul in that audience Monday night- it was a good, big, hard-thinking receptive audience, too- who didn't leave the theatre with a new idea of the power and possibilities of the screen…the audience filed out, uplifted, inspired, ready to cheer or weep or fight, or give itself to sacrifice…They [the audience] were prepared to remark "oh, it's another of those old war pictures" as the beating drums signalled the marshalling of French soldiery. / And then the picture got them and held them. They saw the rest of the

[90] Edwin Schallert, "Notable Realism", *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 10, 1921.
[91] "The Four Horsemen," Biggest Film Drama, Coming to Atlanta", *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sep. 7, 1921.

> picture-as pictures should be seen-in silence. No more glowing tribute could be paid the production than the deathlike stillness with which the later and more dramatic reels of the film were received.[92]

The above reviews indicate that most audiences found the film to be both a thrilling spectacle and an emotionally moving narrative. This assertion can be backed up by the film's 'blockbuster' status, which is usually dependant on audiences returning to see the film multiple times. This emotional response would be different for various members of the audience, but an analysis of the film in reference to the culture of the period can be undertaken. In Ingram and Mathis' film, the war is entirely the Germans' fault, but it is also the fault of humanity in general, a paradox because the Christian morality the film explicitly uses extends sins to all peoples. Most people from any belligerent country would have known the stated reasons why their government fought in it, but *Four Horsemen* served a greater role, as a kind of psychological debrief of the conflict. It was a chance for individuals, and, by extension, entire cultures to deal with latent pain and unresolved stress caused by the war. The movie used emotionally laden imagery and symbols, such as the mass cemetery, that were easily understandable to American audiences, even if none of the characters were American. In contrast to the novel, one of the film's major set pieces depicts the conflict starting at the bottom of Hell and reaching up from there. Ingram and Mathis literalised the Four Horsemen, spoken from the Christian Book of Revelation. Even the title cards are written in a King James translation-like air: 'For fourteen ill-omened days the scorching breath of the Beast had searched the earth as nation rose against nation.'

There are references to apples- original sin- and an intertitle states that an apple shorn of its skin is like 'a woman bereft of her cloak of virtue.' This scene immediately follows with a love scene between Julio and the married Marguerite (Alice Terry). The implication is clear- private sin has caused the world to go into a catastrophic conflict. Just as many in the Middle Ages believed that the Black Death was caused by God punishing humanity for sin, the film implies the Great War may have been caused by the hedonism and extravagance of Old Europe- a particularly appealing message for Americans. Instead of following one Everyman

[92] Fuzzy Woodruff, "'The Four Horsemen' Marks Arrival of New Screen Era," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sep. 13, 1921.

character and seeing his perspective, the movie is almost told from the point of view of God, following various characters across the world.

The contemporary audience of *Four Horsemen* would be one that lived through a conflict of literally untold violence, death and tragedy. As mentioned earlier, the influenza pandemic of 1918, which occurred just as the war was drawing to a close, was the worst disease outbreak in the history of humanity in terms of the sheer quantity of people affected. Every civilian, no matter where they lived would have had to deal with rationing and other shortages, the threat of political instability and military censorship, and almost everyone in America would have known someone who had been lost to the flu. A film that discussed such metaphysical issues, masked as spectacle must have been very appealing to audiences.

Figure 5. The final scene *of Four Horseman*.

The final scene in the movie, a summation of the film's themes, bears close scrutiny. Beginning with an intertitle that tells us, significantly: 'The aimless path fades with life's span. Nations mourn, while memory glorifies the brave.' After the end of the war, the Don Marcelo, his wife (Bridgetta Clark), Marguerite (Alice Terry) and Etienne (John St. Polis) visit Julio's grave in a huge war cemetery strewn with crosses. Notably, Don Marcelo has a war injury, a reminder of the problems and injuries plaguing survivors. Collapsing at the grave of his beloved son, the old man is visited by the mystic Tchernoff (Nigel de Brulier), who introduced the Four Horsemen earlier in the film. Don Marcelo asks if Tchernoff knew Julio. 'I knew them all!' is the reply, making explicit the metaphor that the young soldier is representative of all like him, a thematic device that will be used time and again in WWI cinema. Pointing to the sky, the Prophet and the Centaur notice the spectral Four Horsemen riding through the clouds, returning to Heaven (somewhat inconsistently, as they emerged from Hell). The prophet proclaims – 'Peace has come- but the Four Horsemen will still ravage humanity- stirring unrest in the world- until all hatred is dead and only love reigns in the heart of mankind.' As Tchernoff stares into the camera, warning the audience, the film ends.

This scene re-enforces many of the themes of the film, and indeed, of most war films until 1939:

1. Human sin and/or evil is the root cause of the war.
2. The war's damage and wrath was massive.
3. Millions of innocents died or were left scarred, both literally and figuratively, by the conflict.
4. Horrifyingly, this could happen again.

There is a very significant alteration in this final scene from the novel. In the book, Don Marcelo is so emotionally drained and exhausted that, in a moment of temporary insanity, he merely hallucinates the Four Horsemen, as opposed to actually seeing them. Mathis and Ingram audaciously make the characters, and the audience watch this literal religious image and end the film on a surprisingly downbeat note, avoiding a typical Hollywood happy ending.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse would be re-released twice, the first time in 1923. It had not been forgotten by the public. Richard Koszarski reports a survey taken the same

year.[93] of 37,000 American high school students found the film was voted 'Best Picture They Had Ever Seen' by boys and the second best by girls, defeated in that group by *Way Down East.* Broken down regionally, *Four Horsemen* was the most popular film in every part of the country except New England (where it was again bested by *Way Down East*) and the South (where support was split between *Birth of a Nation* for boys and *Way Down East* for girls).[94] The picture would be re-released again in 1926, this time to exploit the death of Rudolph Valentino. Much had changed in the world since 1921. According to an intriguing article in *The Washington Post*, acting German consul general Gustav Heuser complained to Will B. Hays that the portrayal of his countrymen in the film was anti-German. Heuser was correct, but that was the aim. The anti-German content was central to the theme of the film in the early post-war era. That was beside the point, however. The snippet notes that 'All scenes depicting the Germans as cruel and barbarous in the film…will be eliminated.'[95]

For a film of such artistic and cultural significance, *Four Horsemen* is relatively unseen today, even by cineastes. The film has never been given a proper American VHS, DVD or Blu-Ray, and is now mostly remembered, if it all, as the movie that made Valentino a star and as a statistic on lists of 'Highest Grossing Silent Films.' The original is remembered more than the big budget 1962 remake starring Glenn Ford, which relocated the setting to World War II and was a major bomb at the box office, another indication of the decline of MGM's status as a major Hollywood studio. However, along with the novel, the original movie played a significant role in Western culture. It showed cultural commentators that memories of the Great War would not be repressed in popular consciousness and that there was a market for media that dealt with the conflict in an honest or at least earnest manner. Ingram and Mathis's achievement of demonstrated the public was indeed interested in the war as a cinematic subject. *Four Horsemen* was the first major cinematic statement on the war in the early twenties, a culture trying to understand and cope with a great tragedy and loss. The next chapter will discuss the cinema's response to much more explicit portrayals of war trauma to

[93] It is impossible to know which respondents saw the film on re-release.
[94] Koszarski, 28.
[95] "Four Horseman Film Deleted for Germans," *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 1926.

specific individuals, using major hit *The Big Parade (1925)* and the less successful but still very popular *What Price Glory* (1926).

Chapter 2: 'Ghastly Realism' and Lawrence Stallings

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss two American films from the mid-20s, King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925) and Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory* (1926) and the war novel *Plumes* (1925). All of these works are emblematic of trends of war media in the mid-20s and feature the artistic involvement of Lawrence Stallings, a Marine veteran who was wounded in the Battle of Belleau Wood. Continuing the methodology of examining reception through contemporary newspaper and trade paper articles, I will argue that these two films played a crucial role in re-contextualizing the war in the public discourse, framed through a lens of realism provided by the participant of war veteran Stallings. The discussion of Stallings' participation in the making of the films and his relationship (real or supposed) to them provides insight into war's place in the popular culture of this period, which often emphasized the supposed authenticity of a war experience. The success of both films helped to establish to the film industry that the war was a very viable subject economically. I will also discuss the portrayal of the trauma of the conflict, arguing that both of these films, which concern themselves with the war experiences of soldiers, represented a new kind of Great War cinema: an acknowledgement of the great psychological trauma upon those who fought it. This reading of trauma is crucial to this thesis, as I argue in the Conclusion that audiences often read portrayal of war trauma as a 'realistic' discourse on the war.

Due to the importance of this finding, it is necessary to briefly describe how I will understand and interpret concepts of realism and authenticity. Any discussion of these terms may at first seem to presuppose an 'objective' reality, which I will refer to as the idea that it is possible to record, replicate or reproduce an event on film accurately. However, it is important to remember that a film can only give the *illusion* of realism. There is no objective or quantitative way of measuring how realistic a film, even a documentary, is to an original experience, partially because that experience itself is subjective to the person having it. Therefore, instead of tapping into an objective reality, films use tropes, plotlines and stylistic techniques that indicate realism to the audience, or are understood by audiences to be so. It is

important to bear in mind that what techniques audiences perceives to be realistic change over time, and from cinematic culture to culture, and is of course, also subjective to the individuals. I am aware that I am unable to know with certainty the thoughts of any person or group of people. I can only record and interpret their extant statements. For this reason, I rely upon my method of researching contemporary audience accounts in fan magazines, newspapers and studio memoranda. Although each of these sources has their own biases, they are the best available indications as to audience reaction at the time and contemporary discourse relating to realism in cinema. Unless otherwise noted, realism and authenticity in this thesis refers to how audiences understood a film, based on their recorded reactions, not whether or not I think such films lived up to a non-existent 'objective' standard of authenticity. However, I will argue that the idea that the cinema could offer a way for audiences to accurately experience what the war was actually like, what I call a 'realistic diversion' is largely responsible for their popularity and why many audiences had such a strong reaction to them. This is itself paradoxical and ironic, as the very reason why many people go to popular films is as a form of escapism.

I should note that I do, however, draw a distinction between authenticity and historicity. At times, I will discuss the actual historical events that are portrayed in selected films (such as the Battle of Belleau Wood in *The Big Parade* in this chapter). In this thesis, the historicity of a certain event will refer to how accurately a film represents the event in terms of quantifiable historical information: dates, proper uniforms and equipment, and so on. Historicity does not refer to thematic ideas, or the feeling or cultural meaning of historical events. It is important for me to occasionally discuss the actual historical events portrayed or implied in the films as the pictures often concern themselves with socio-cultural and political statements. As we shall see, disputes about the proper role of the American and British armies in the winning of the war would be a major issue in the British reception of *The Big Parade.*

Plumes

It is not surprising that by the mid-20s, many Americans would have adopted cynical attitudes towards the government and the war. Most Americans did not support the Versailles Treaty, and it was not ratified by the Senate. Although initially popular, Republican President Warren

G. Harding's political standing sagged while in office, partially due to the fact that his party was dividing into factions. The 1922 midterm elections were an ominous sign for a party that seemed to have a clear mandate in 1920, with Republicans losing six seats in the Senate and a massive seventy-seven in the House of Representatives. The Veterans Administration scandal, referenced in the Laurence Stallings novel below, also provided problems and difficulties for the President. Suddenly, on August 2nd, 1923, Harding unexpectedly died in office of natural causes (the exact specifications of which are still being debated by historians), to be succeeded by his vice president, Calvin Coolidge.

After Coolidge assumed office, a number of scandals relating to Harding's administration, the most famous of which involved the Teapot Dome, were made public. Another scandal that had already been publicized was brought back to into the news due to congressional investigation.[96] The investigation involved Charles Forbert, Harding's appointee to the Veterans Bureau, who, according to historian Francis Russell, '…was selling government supplies from the medical supply base at Perryville, Maryland, to private contractors at ridiculously low prices and was also engaging in undercover deals relating to hospital building contracts and site selections.'[97] Taken in conjunction with the new scandals, the former President's reputation took a nosedive from which it has never recovered. Despite this, Coolidge was elected to a term in his own right in 1924 with 54% of the vote. This is particularly impressive when considering the fact that his party had split, with Senator Robert LaFollette running as a third party candidate. Despite Coolidge's landslide, it is not hard to understand how a vein of paranoia could run through much 20s media. Although much media of the 20s is associated with frivolity and youth, this may be read as a kind of *carpe diem* hedonism and escapism as opposed to innocence. The country was in an unlikely and paradoxical situation in the mid-20s. Historian Nathan Miller referred to the decade as '...a time when they [Americans] were pushing the outer limits of self-indulgence, yet feared that traditional values were being lost.'[98]

---

[96] Robert H. Ferrell, *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 43.
[97] Francis Russell, *The Shadow of the Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times* (New York, McCraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), 429.
[98] Nathan Miller, *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003), 123.

Laurence Stallings

Although almost entirely forgotten today, Laurence Stallings was an important figure in mid-20s popular and elite culture. He is given story credit on *The Big Parade*, which is ostensibly based upon one of his short stories, and *What Price Glory* is an adaptation of a play he co-wrote with Maxwell Anderson. Advertising posters for both films often prominently feature his name. A writer associated with three mediums, Stallings was briefly renowned for his work on the subject of the Great War. Stallings enlisted in the Marines at the outset of America's entry into the conflict. Shot and severely wounded in his left leg during the Battle of Belleau Wood, the writer endured intense physical therapy, only to further damage the leg two years later in a fall and require an amputation.[99] As indicated by George Garrett in his introduction to the Joseph M. Bruccoli reprint of Stallings' only novel, *Plumes* (1925), the writer was a minor celebrity in this period. He had an enormously successful three years, with a popular novel, a hit play, a screenplay to a huge blockbuster, as well as a screenplay adaptation of the said play, all related to the war.[100] It is not hard to see why he would be appealing to producers and audiences, as his injury provided a visibly obvious reminder of his status as a war veteran.

Plumes provides great insight into Stallings' experiences and views on war, which as Garrett points out, are not unrepresentative of other 20s writers.[101] The obviously autobiographical novel follows the experiences of Richard Plume, a talented scientist from a family of military men. Caught up in the romance of his family ancestry and given the opportunity to patriotically serve his country, Richard enlists in the Marines, leaving his pregnant wife Esme behind. Like the author, Richard is wounded in the leg at the Battle of Belleau Wood, and returns to America a changed and profoundly cynical man. He feels embarrassed and ashamed, not so much for his injury, but for the fact that he chose to enlist. He dislikes the attention that people give him, which Richard/Stallings paraphrases as 'We are all proud of

[99] Steven Trout, afterward to *Plumes*, by Laurence Stallings (Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 2006) 349-350.
[100] George Garrett, introduction to *Plumes*, by Laurence Stallings (Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 2006), xi-xvi.
[101] Ibid, xix- xxi

you for making an ass of yourself.'[102] Since it may be assumed that the protagonist is an author surrogate, it can be reasoned that his views and attitudes are the same as the writers. If true, Stallings' experiences were harrowing. Richard is filled with self-loathing for his own naiveté and, he believes, stupidity. When he is reunited with Esme at the hospital, the first words he says to her are 'God forgive me for my folly.'[103] He feels that he has irrevocably damaged his marriage, both in his difficulty getting work as a disabled man and the fact that he is not the carefree spirit that Esme was attracted to.

Richard feels contempt for leaders but is ambivalent towards Wilson, and thus, Wilsonian interventionism. On the one hand, he feels that Wilson was just as naïve as he was, but could not be expected to do better. He sees that essentially all rhetoric from politicians is not to be trusted and is manipulative. As the omniscient narrator states about Richard when his wife attempts to begin a conversation with him: 'He wanted to talk war and peace, and to lash out in a fury against any one who supported the system in which he had been victimized. He could not talk to Esme of that, because they agree on it perfectly and had threshed it out a thousand times in hospital wards.'[104] Later, he and Esme attend Harding's inaugural, where Richard listens to the speech and hears 'Nothing that mattered. The regular things about internal economy that every politician promised. Were all inaugural addresses this way? Did men of Hughes' and Taft's policy stand thus and beam approvingly every four years upon inanities?'[105]

Richard is a cynic, not a radical. He does not affirmatively belong to any political or practise. This trait will often be repeated in other Great War literature, such as that by Erich Maria Remarque, that I will discuss in subsequent chapters. Richard has great anger towards many figures in power, which later finally climaxes when he realises that patriotism or America itself is at fault for the war, as he attends a meeting other wounded war veterans. As they sing 'My Country Tis of Thee' he assaults Captain Whiting, a former superior officer. Whiting is a minor character, but it is significant that through him we get our first glimpse of Richard at the

[102] Laurence Stallings, *Plumes*, (Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 80.
[103] Ibid, 67.
[104] Ibid, 187.
[105] Ibid, 224.

beginning of the novel: naked and hot-headed, he starts a fight with a black man for wanting to share the soldiers' accommodation. The fact that Richard is naked, wet and referred to as a 'boy'[106] is significant as it indicates how Stallings sees his protagonist before the battle: as a childish, naive fool. Richard is more cynical after his injury and gradually becomes more so throughout the novel, culminating in the epilogue at the Tomb of Unknowns.

Richard is also sceptical about attempts to commemorate and memorialize the war and the dead. The novel ends as Richard, Esme, his son Dickie and friend and fellow veteran Gary attend the commemoration of the Tomb of the Unknowns. A brief mini-narrative is emblematic of the novels themes:

> Dickie was puzzled by the marble hole in the ground.
> "What's that for?" he asked Gary.
> "A grave."
> "What's a grave for?"
> "For a soldier to sleep in."
> "Why doesn't he sleep in his bed?" Dickie was puzzled.
> "General won't let him," Gary said solemnly.
> Dickie scrutinized the dark face above him to make sure there was no insincerity in the answer. He studied the marble receptacle.
> "What's a general?" he said finally.
> "A man," said Gary, "who makes little boys sleep in graves."
> Dickie was frightened. His lip trembled. He looked about to where Richard and Esme sat above him. "I'll ask Esme," he said, "not to let a general get me."[107]

As Garrett indicates, *Plumes* was successful upon its publication in 1924, receiving '…eight printings in the first six months…'[108] The book was almost certainly helped by the fact that it appeared at the same time as *What Price Glory*, a play about the war written by Stallings and Maxwell Anderson, who later would co-adapt the screenplay for *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In fact, Garrett reports that *Plumes* was sold inside the theatre where the play premiered.[109]

---

[106] Ibid, 4.
[107] Ibid, 348.
[108] Garret, xv.
[109] Ibid, xiv.

The Big Parade

Most sources state the genesis of the film that would become one of the highest grossing and most successful movies of silent cinema came from the mind of King Vidor, one of the most successful directors of the Classical Hollywood Era. Born in Galveston, Texas, Vidor entered the film industry by self-producing independent newsreels, eventually becoming a star director of prestige films at the newly incorporated Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor studio.[110] Vidor was once considered one of the foremost directors of his era, but he is not generally place in the league of Capra, Ford and Lubitsch today. His films, mostly big budget, 'prestige' pictures, seem to lack thematic coherence or a distinctive style, both usual traits for classification as an auteur. However, Vidor also does not fit the usual criteria for a studio craftsman or journeyman (*metteur-en-scène)*. He usually generated his own projects, as he did with *The Big Parade*, and had input on and approval over scripts. Lea Jacobs states that MGM production supervisor Irving Thalberg initiated the concept behind a war film. Thalberg purchased the rights to 'The Big Parade,' a Great War short story written by Stallings in the September 1924 issue of *The New Republic*.[111] The short story runs only slightly over three pages, and concerns itself with an unnamed army lieutenant who has a certain functional affection for Gianonni, an Italian-American subordinate. The lieutenant is ordered to bring eight men with him off the front lines for a Fourth of July parade in Paris. Giononni rigs the drawing of straws to make sure that he stays behind, and the lieutenant learns on his way back from the parade that he has deserted.[112] Aside from the war setting, the story bears almost no resemblance to the either *What Price Glory* or the finished *Big Parade*, so it seems likely that Thalberg was simply interested in a Great War film and wanted Stallings to be a part of it (and perhaps, was fond of the title). This idea is lent credence by Marilyn Ann Moss's report that MGM owned the rights to the play, yet did not film it.[113] The most likely reason is that Thalberg was leery about financing an adaptation of *What Price Glory*, perhaps due to its

[110] Michael Isenberg, "The Great War Viewed from the Twenties," in *Hollywood's World War I: Motion Picture Images*, ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997), 41-42.
[111] Jacobs, *Decline of Sentiment,* 142.
[112] Laurence Stallings, "The Big Parade," *New Republic,* September 17, 1924. 66-69.
[113] Marilyn Ann Moss, *Raoul Walsh: The True Adventures of Hollywood's Legendary Director* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 90.

downbeat subject matter, fears of censorship problems, or both. It is possible that the studio purchased the rights to the story and play simply to entice Stallings to another Great War project.

Stallings wrote a five page treatment, which he presented to Thalberg.[114] As in any film, there were many alterations from the outline to the finished screenplay. Most obviously, the protagonist, Jim Apperson is, like Stallings himself, a Southerner, and the role for his brother was much bigger than in the finished film. Jim's mother, possibly added by Vidor as a Fordian archetype for all American mothers, does not appear in the treatment.[115] According to the director, the seed of the film was planted in long conversations the two had about the war in Vidor's home in California.[116] Stallings then returned to New York with Vidor and screenwriter Harry Behn. The two wrote the completed script in a week, presumably with heavy supervision by the director.[117] A later *Los Angeles Times* article indicated that Stallings '...proved of great assistance to Vidor's staff'.[118] According to a *New York Times* story 'He left for New York, however, before the picture went into actual production.'[119]Although Stallings' involvement with the film was helpful to the filmmakers for publicity purposes, and Vidor stated his oral re-telling of the experiences was crucial to establishing his conceptions of the picture, there is strong reason to believe that the writer's involvement beyond the first draft was minimal. Michael Isenberg claims that the plot was 'modified slightly during shooting by Vidor.'[120] Evidence provided by Raymond Durgant and Scott Simmon's book, which reprinted portions of Stallings' treatment, indicate that the story was heavily altered, probably by Behn and the director himself, though it is difficult to piece together by whom and from what.

---

[114] Raymond Durgnat and Scott Simmon, *King Vidor, American* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1988), 62-63.
[115] Ibid., 63.
[116] "World War Pictured Through Veterans Eyes," *New York Times,* Nov. 8, 1925.
[117] Isenberg, "The Great War Viewed from the Twenties," 43.
[118] "Details of 'Big Parade' are Vexing," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1925.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Isenberg, " The Great War Viewed from the Twenties," 44

Though there are obvious parallels, *The Big Parade* is not an adaptation of *Plumes* as Isenberg and others have reported.[121] There is no indication that Vidor or Behn ever read the novel. John Baxter reports that Thalberg purchased the rights to the book[122] and does not mention the short story, but I can find no corroborating evidence of this, and the credits to the film do not state the adaptation source on screen. Stallings' original treatment, the beginning of which is reproduced as a photograph in Raymond Durgnat and Scott Simmon's biography of Vidor, is listed as an 'Original story.'[123] It would probably be more accurate to say that both *Plumes* and the film of *The Big Parade* are based on Stallings' personal life. It is significant that Jim Apperson, the protagonist, takes part in forest warfare, similar to the Battle of Belleau Wood, and he also loses a leg in the conflict. Both Richard Plume and Apperson also fall in love with a nearly saintly woman, although the rural French Melisande is far from the American educated Esme Plume. However, most of the similarities are limited beyond these points. The most obvious difference between novel and film is that *Big Parade* mostly takes place during the war, whereas aside from a few flashback scenes *Plumes* is concerned with the conflict's aftermath. Thematically, however, even more differences appear. *Plumes*, presumably Stallings' most direct statement of his beliefs, is openly critical of politicians, the military and the veterans, all of whom he sees as culpable in the conflict. Vidor, on the other hand, took a much more ambivalent position regarding the morality of war in general and the Great War in particular. In an interview, the director stated 'There isn't even a villain in the [photo]play. We are getting far enough away from the real war to warrant digging out the humor and forgetting the rest.'[124] In other words, the film would not blame the Germans for the conflict, and would instead of focusing on the causes of the war, as in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, would be more concerned with the effect of the conflict an individual soldier. Durgnat and Simmon observe: 'Although *The Big Parade*…was often assumed to be 'anti-war,' Vidor's comments at the time of release suggest a related, but different view: war's horrors are a pre-condition to war's heroism.'[125] Robert Sherwood, paraphrased by Jacobs,

[121] Ibid., 43.
[122] John Baxter, *King Vidor* (New York: Monarch Press, 1976), 23.
[123] Durgnat and Simmon, 63.
[124] A.L. Woolridge, "Soldiers and Trenches Coming Back to Films," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 28, 1925.
[125] Durgnat and Simon, 65.

believed the film was 'anti-heroic, a debunking of the horrors of war.'[126] Jacobs herself accurately states that the portrayal of war in the film '…was, if not more 'realistic' then certainly more pessimistic than the films actually made during the war.'[127]

In a November 1925 interview, the director explicitly stated:

> When a nation or a people go to war, the people fight but do they ask why? In the great war many were wondering why in an enlightened age we should have to battle. I do not wish to appear as taking any stand about war. I certainly do not favour it, but I would not set up a preachment against it. You might as well try to sweet back Niagara as stop war when its rumblings are heard. It bursts upon a nation, and soon becomes a job that requires immediate attention, with no time for argument.
>
> But when we can show that all people concerned, on both sides of the fence, are affected alike, that they are just the same in habit and living, with similar hopes loves and ambitions-then perhaps we can do something to remove the causes of war. In "The Big Parade" I have striven to avoid taking any definite side, but I have not side-stepped taking a stand against war itself.[128]

This is an equivocal and contradictory statement. The director claims not to preach against war, but says that his film takes a stand against it. That the movie itself would be ambiguous in its political commentary, may be one of the primary reasons for its success, as discussed below. Setting the film near the Battle of Belleau Wood has a political significance that may be lost on modern audiences who are not familiar with the specific historical event. Belleau Wood and Chateau Theirry were the first major American engagements of the war. Historian David Bonk referred to the battles as America's 'baptism by fire.' It was here that the American army, mostly untested in conflict for a generation, would finally be judged as to whether they deserved the cowardly reputation they had gained in German propaganda.[129] The portrayal of the event in *Plumes* and Vidor's film is paradoxical. Both Richard Plume and Jim Apperson are torn from their naiveté by the bloody fighting, where they are injured and lose friends. More importantly, they lose their innocence and understand the nature of the carnage for the first time. However, neither novel nor film reports that the battle was a huge victory for the American side. Bonk states that the American success was a major propaganda coup

---

[126] Jacobs, 144.
[127] Ibid., 145.
[128] "World War Pictured Through Veterans' Eyes," *New York Times*, Nov. 8th, 1925.
[129] David Bonk, *Chateau Thierry & Belleau Wood 1918: America's Baptism of Fire on the Marne* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 7.

for the Allies and laid the foundation for the ultimate German defeat.[130] Although Vidor's opinions of the war are contradictory and ambivalent, he avoids the temptation for jingoistic patriotism or to didactically send the message that the suffering, however tragic, was necessary.

The Big Parade is rarely explicitly political. While no film about any war can be apolitical, Vidor's movie is unconcerned with the war's causes, or laying blame for the results. There is virtually no discussion of Germany or German leadership or culture. This, in many ways is probably the fundamental thematic difference between the two works. The focus of the movie is more on the individual experiences and psychological trauma of the typical soldier. The novel is about a specific soldier and his experiences in coming to terms with psychological trauma *after* the war and placing it into a socio-political context. The perspective is different as well. The novel is autobiographical, with Richard sharing many characteristics with Stallings, whereas in the film, Jim is intended to represent the average doughboy in many aspects. In many ways, it may be said that one of Vidor's achievements with the film was to take the trauma of the war experience and contextualize it in such a way that he could include a Hollywood happy ending without seeming to cheapen the war experience, while also not offending large segments of the population by including political positions. Stallings' novel features no such possibility of a positive conclusion, and is explicitly critical of America's leaders.

The Big Parade has a simple plotline, variations of which would be repeated in many subsequent war films, attesting to its influence. Jim Apperson (John Gilbert) is a naïve and somewhat arrogant young man (atypically, for this plotline, from a rich family) who enlists due to social pressure as opposed to patriotism. After the prologue, the film moves to France, where Vidor includes many scenes of daily life in camp. The soldiers devise a crude method of bathing, get used to sleeping in cramped quarters, and begin to make friends with each other. (An interview with Gilbert indicates that some of the business and scenes were improvised by the actors on set, only to find the same material had been planned by the director.[131]) The soldier has an affair with Melisande (Renée Adorée) a young woman from

[130] Ibid., 92.
[131] "Silent Director of "Big Parade" Got Results with Mental Telepathy," *New York Times,* Dec. 6, 1925.

rural France who does not speak English. Their romance is suddenly cut off, and the film takes an abrupt change in tone, when the company marches off to battle, where Apperson finds himself in a psychological torment. His friends are killed and he loses a leg, but survives. Upon arriving home, he finds that his girlfriend (Claire Adams) has left him for another man. He returns to a battered France, where he is reunited with Melisande.

The Big Parade is a director's film, as was observed by Edwin Schallert at the time.[132] Vidor's visuals suggest concepts and war experiences that the simplistic plotline would not indicate. There are three elements of the film that Vidor chooses to emphasise: A) day to day accounts of soldiers' experiences in France, B) the shock of war and C) the love story. After Jim enlists in the army, Vidor includes many scenes intended to be representative of the experiences of the typical American soldiers in France. Jim sleeps in a barn, eats army rations, struggles with a foreign language, makes friends with other soldiers, is sent on menial chores and, as will be discussed later, has a romantic encounter with a native. Save the last, none of these experiences are the typical material of Hollywood war epics but in combination can be seen as making up the experiences of a standard Doughboy. Vidor uses long takes, some that last minutes. These, combined with the somewhat mundane events, help to provide to the viewer the idea that they are witnessing reality unfolding.

However, in a book written in later years on his directorial experiences, Vidor denied that in his aesthetic he was trying to recreate history exactly as it happened: 'Film is an art form and must not be inhibited by anyone else's interpretation of how you might behave or how an event happened. There is no correct interpretation of a historical happening. If there were it might not be useful under the circumstances. Everyone has his own point of view. There are as many truths are there are faces.' He goes on to state that, though the US Signal Corps had marched in a certain formation in the actual conflict, he restaged the event to make it look better on film.[133] Despite this attitude, not surprising from a film director, an *LA Times* piece emphasizes his use of war photographs for accuracy and states 'Minor details, often considered too unimportant to warrant special attention, were reproduced as nearly like the

[132] Edwin Schallert, "When Does the Actor Win?," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 3, 1926.
[133] King Vidor, *King Vidor on Filmmaking* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc.), 221-222.

original as possible.'[134] This type of reportage was similar to coverage given to *Four Horsemen* as discussed in the previous chapter.

Adding credence to this statement are the numerous approaches used by the director to contextualize the past to contemporary American audiences. The mid-20s were a period of strong isolationism in American history. As Charles Evans Hughes, onetime Republican opponent of Woodrow Wilson and later Secretary of State to Harding and Coolidge, stated: 'There can be no question about the state of public opinion in America. They want us to stay out of Europe. They are justified in wanting us to stay out. It would not have made any difference, and it would not have helped any, if we had joined the League of Nations. It merely would have turned the whole burden on our backs.'[135]

Set during the early days of American entry into the war in 1917, the opening scenes of *The Big Parade* contain few visual indications of a setting of that year. In fact, costumes, hairstyles and the tone, which is at times reminiscent of a Harold Lloyd comedy, indicate the mid-20s. However, when Apperson leaves for Europe, the film, which began at a fast pace and was somewhat melodramatic, abruptly slows paced, and realistic given the film aesthetics of the 1920s. When one realizes that the film is an attempt to contextualize the experience for mid-20s audiences, this juxtaposition of the aesthetics of the 20s against the stated setting of the teens is more understandable. As evidenced by Harding's statement about the return of to normalcy, Americans saw the war as a disruption of normal life and progress. Unlike many other combatants (ANZACs also exempted), Americans returned home to a country that was physically untouched by bombs and battles.

When taken in context, it becomes easier to understand why Vidor chose to set the expository scenes in the 20s in all but name, as it makes it easier for the audience to identify with the characters and the culture. When Jim returns in the epilogue, the continuity of the untouched homeland helps to exacerbate the contrast against the inwardly altered and aged soldier. Of course, a simpler explanation is possible: it may have been merely been cheaper to use contemporary settings than to recreate the war period. The slow pace (this an objective

[134] "Details of 'Big Parade' Are Vexing," *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 12, 1925.
[135] Ferrell, 156.

statement, many of the shots run on for minutes) help to induce a sense of realism in the audience, as does Vidor's use of comedy. Until Apperson's unit marches off to battle, many moments are spent as Jim discovers that physical discomfort of military life along with the difficulty of communicating with the French natives. Most of these episodes are exaggerations, but not farce. They are reminiscent in tone of the many comic strips and other material familiar to soldiers. None of the annoyances and inconveniences falls into the realm of tragedy, which is saved for the battle scenes.

When the battle begins, Vidor changes his technique for the third time, and the pace of the film speeds up. Some of the shots are Expressionistic, and there are many in which Jim does not appear. (This may be due to the fact that Thalberg ordered re-shoots for more spectacle when a distributor promised to advertise it conditional to the changes.[136] It is possible that Gilbert was not available at the time.) The casting of the other players lacks typical Hollywood glamour. With the exception of Gilbert and Adorée, the other major characters that we encounter in France are plausibly average in their appearance. This provides a heavy contrast with the early scenes set in a rich mansion in America.

The pre-release publicity was certainly favourable. In the October 1925 issue of *Photoplay* magazine, an unattributed article stated 'One of the most remarkable pictures to be released in the next few months is "The Big Parade," with John Gilbert, directed by King Vidor…It's a story of an American doughboy and contains some of the most accurate and dramatic picturizations of the American army in the World War. One scene especially is one of the greatest scenes ever shown in a picture.'[137] In keeping with the anticipation that the picture could be a major hit, MGM planned prestige openings in major cities around the country. In LA, Grauman's Egyptian Theatre planned a live 'patriotic prologue' with 'colorfull effects' and 'spectacular beauty', ironic considering the ambivalent stance of the film.[138] It was also the first movie premier to be broadcast over radio.[139] In Atlanta, 'An array of notables, high officials of the city and state and others...' attended the premier, along with Stallings' mother,

[136] Isenberg, "The Great War Viewed From the Twenties," 47.
[137] "The Big Parade," *Photoplay*, October 1925, 54.
[138] ""Big Parade" Premiere Coming," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 25, 1925.
[139] "Premiere Air Report Promised," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 4, 1925.

a resident of the city.[140] The city's newspaper also puffed the presence of a native son in credits, inaccurately stating '...Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor gave Mr. Stallings the opportunity of embodying pictorially his knowledge and tremendous feeling about the war...Following the author's idea it was made primarily as a simple and human story and not as a spectacular "movie."'[141]

A pre-release colour magazine ad spoke volumes about what the studio thought the public would want to hear. Featuring a whimsical drawing of Jim wearing a helmet with a well dressed socialite in miniature riding on top (most definitely not Melisande), the copy emphasized Stallings' role in the production. Arguing in large print that the film was 'By the author of "What Price Glory" / Broadway's Biggest Theatrical Success', the ad went on the state that 'Stallings himself has gone to Culver City (in reality the director visited him in New York) and is working in the closest collaboration with King Vidor so that no detail will be overlooked in producing the pictures the feeling of the author's brilliant story of those hectic times and these post-bellum days.'

The ad went on to state:

> The Big Parade is the story of one or two of the vast army of carefree doughboys who sailed into Paris just a few years ago and saw lots of things they'd never seen before. And these things weren't entirely trenches. For one, we might mention the mamselles of Paree, Tom Apperson (John Gilbert) the hero of this yarn, and his hard-boiled buddy from Texas find the going oversees to be merry. Every incident in this great screen tale is faithful to fact, and this doesn't mean it's a theater-full of grim heroics, but rather a wealth of hilarious incidents spun out of the personal phases of life of the boy in the army, from his first day in the ill-fitting uniform to his passionate affair with a little French baggage. Watch this one![142]

The studio was clearly worried that the audience would think that the war content would be too heavy, and thus, try to sell the film as a comedy in the vein of *What Price Glory*. The writer(s) of the ad feel the need to warn audiences that the material would not be too grim and would not have a primary focus on the trenches, completely ignoring the film's battle scenes that are intended to shock. Although some of the scenes in French do fall under the vein of

[140] Albert S. Hardy Jr., "Notables To See Premiere of "Big Parade" Tonight," *Atlanta Constitution,* Mar. 1, 1926.
[141] "Lawrence Stallings' "Big Parade" Film, Atlanta Theater Soon," *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 21, 1926.
[142] Advertisement in *All Americans Ads of the 20s*, ed. Jim Heimann (Madrid: Taschen, 2004), 349.

light comedy, it can hardly be argued that Jim and his friends find the going overseas to be 'merry.' Yet, the ad comments that the film was to be an authentic Great War film.

Figure 6. Many advertising materials emphasized the romantic elements at the expense of war trauma. Note the possesary credit give to Stallings.

As the movie neared release, the advertising of the film focused on the film's romantic aspects and its spectacle. Many posters for the film featured an image of Jim romancing Melisandre

while in uniform-and said uniform was the only explicit reference to the war. When the war was visually present, its importance was either split between the romance as it was in a triptych featuring a large still of Gilbert smiling in uniform, next to two smaller images of the men fighting and two lovers (oddly, not Jim and Melisandre) wooing. This writer was unable to find any contemporary American promotional image of the film that featured solely or even principally the war content. Quotes in newspaper advertisement also emphasised the romantic and comedic aspects of the picture, as well as the spectacle. One ad quoted Polly Wood, who compared the movie to *Birth of a Nation*.[143]

Whatever apprehension the studio may have had about the release of the film was apparently not shared by exhibitors. *Film Daily* encouraged theatre owners to 'Get it or regret it.' The writer handling the film for publication argued that '"Every family that sent to France a brother, a son, or a relative- and that means practically every family in America- will want to see "The Big Parade" because it shows what our boys went through in that hellish period. It is so true to life that every one connected with the Great War will enjoy it. It is otherwise essentially a man's picture.' When writing about the films' box office possibilities, the paper was explicit: 'This is one of the biggest box office attractions ever coming your way.' In accordance with the general critical reception of the film, the writer argued that 'Every family that sent to France a brother, a son, a relative-and that means practically every family in America-will want to see "The Big Parade" because it shows what our boys went through in that hellish period. It is so true to life that everyone connected to the Great War will enjoy it.' After stating that the movie had near-universal appeal, the critic contradicted him or herself by stating 'It is otherwise essentially a man's picture.'[144] The trade publication *Variety* also found that "This picture can only be judged from an entertainment standpoint, and as such should bring plenty of profit, possibly with cost productions taken into consideration more than "Ben-Hur." However, if one wanted to perform a post-mortem from a military technical standpoint plenty of fault can be found with it; but so far as the lay mind is concerned these details either exaggerated or wrongly executed will not be noticed, nor will they detract.' Later in the long review which consisted mostly of plot synopsis, the writer stated 'Everything one can expect

[143] *Chicago Daily Tribune* ad, Jan. 16, 1926.
[144] "The Big Parade," *Film Daily* (New York), Nov. 22, 1925, 6.

from real war is in this picture. One sees the various branches of artillery in action, plenty of hand-grenade and machine-gun warfare, gas attacks, tractors, ect| [sic] Also men marching over the dead in the fields and men dropping left and right. There are air attacks and maneuvers, and not a detail lacking that occurred in the big affray.' Although the writer indicates that the movie inaccurate when it comes to specific warfare, he implicitly does not feel that this detracts from its realism. He or she implicitly defines realism in terms of its portrayal of the war's violence, technology and minutiae, even if such particulars are factually inaccurate. The writer also interrupted the film as '...one of the greatest pieces of propaganda ever preached against war.'[145]

In the examined papers of record, the response to *Big Parade* was not much different from the response to *Four Horsemen* in terms of plaudits. It received near universal critical acclaim. Writing for the *LA Times*, Helen Klumph raved:

> Masterpiece is a word which has been so overworked in advertising good, bad and indifferent pictures that it does not carry the weight it should when sincerely applied to fine achievement. If there were a better word "The Big Parade" would merit it.
>
> Frequently it has been observed that motion pictures appealing as they do to a far bigger public, cannot tear cherished veils of illusion from such subjects as the World War as freely as novels and plays can. The tremendous success that is bound to come from "The Big Parade" will do much toward breaking down that viewpoint…[146]

After the film's premier, it was obvious that Vidor had given the studio a financial success on the highest level. In a 13 December *Los Angeles Times* interview, Marcus Loew stated: 'It is still too early to prophesy the returns on a picture of a type of "The Big Parade"…but its popularity following the premiers in both New York and Los Angeles is already enormous. The picture is playing to capacity at both afternoon and evening performances in New York, and an unprecedented thing in the case of motion pictures has happened in that the theatre brokers have taken tickets to sell without the customary privilege of returning them…The run of the picture in Hollywood is just beginning to gain its full momentum. It will be a little slower to reach the peak here than usual, but the cumulative effect will, I believe be

[145] "The Big Parade," *Variety*, Nov. 11, 1925.
[146] Helen Klumph, "'Big Parade' Lauded," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 29th, 1925.

tremendous.'[147] A later article from the paper indicated that one third of the population of the city had seen the picture by 21 February.[148] By November, the movie had grossed more than a million dollars in New York alone and ran over a year in the city.[149] The picture was not quite successful everywhere, however. Vidor's film ran for only four weeks in Washington, D.C., and two in Atlanta[150], impressive for the time but nowhere near the mammoth New York City run.[151]

Despite the ambiguity Vidor instilled in the film, picture was popular with both critical elites and the military. An *Los Angeles Times* report indicated 'Military, naval and marine corps veterans of the late war overseas are visiting Grauman's Egyptian Theatre in such numbers to view "The Big Parade" that the giant visitors' register in the forecourt reads like the passenger list of a transchannel transport in wartime.'[152] The theatre later hosted a 'Veterans Night's party' attended by Adorée and Charles Ray.[153] Apparently based on reports from New York, the paper also reported that the film 'is extolled by overseas veterans as a vivid reproduction of the war as they lived it.'[154] In the December 1925 issue of *Photoplay* magazine, editor James R. Quirk wrote: 'A high average [referring to MGM's profits] will soon be topped off with 'The Big Parade' parts of which I saw in the California studios and which I consider the finest war episode ever filmed.'[155] The picture would also be named by the readers of that publication as the best film of the year. That opinion was also held by Mordaunt Hall, who placed the movie at the top of his ten best list, writing '…we have a real man for a character, a man who ducks when he hears the hiss of a shell, a man who gets covered with mud, who sneers, who is vengeful and a man who comes back and marries his sweetheart.' He later reported the response of a member of the audience: 'On the night this picture was presented

[147] Schallert, Edwin, "Loew Foresees More Progress," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 13 1925.
[148] "Total of Almost One-half Million See 'Big Parade," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 21 1926.
[149] "Projection Jottings," *New York Times,* Nov. 21, 1926.
[150] "Theater Talk: The Big Parade" Final Week Atlanta Theater," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 7, 1926.
[151] "Poli's". *The Washington Post.* February 8th, 1926.
[152] "Noted War Veterans See Film," *Los Angeles Times,* Jan. 24, 1926.
[153] "Film Stars Will Greet Veterans at Screen Party," Los *Angeles Times*, Mar. 21st, 1926.
[154] "Peace Argument Seen as Motive of 'Big Parade'," Los *Angeles Times*, Jan. 3, 1926.
[155] James R. Quirk, "Speaking of Pictures", *Photoplay*, December 1925, 27.

Slim, the tall one of the three buddies, played by Karl Dane, caused a strong looking man to get up in his seating mutter "I hope they don't get him."'[156]

Clearly, the war content was going over well with audiences. The pre-release publicity and advertisement, which downplayed the film's contextualization of trauma, may have ironically heightened the shock value of the war scenes, as audiences may not have been expecting them. To date, no Great War film had gone as far as Vidor's in its portrayal of the horrors of war. Edwin Schallert's began his review by stating: 'The curtain has at last been drawn back to permit a view of the realities of war. Without flamboyancy, without cheap melodrama, the story of the European conflict is set forth in "The Big Parade." It is a master picture – one of the greatest produced in any season." He later stated: "Nothing in the soldiering of the A.E.F. has been over looked.' And later: '"The Big Parade" is great realism done in a great way. It indulges in virtually no hokum. It blends tragedy with comedy, but its viewpoint never sickens nor becomes sentimental. It all rings true.'[157] The association between truth and realism is key to understanding the response of Schallert and others, but it is not immediately apparent. Very few critics, contemporary or modern, would place *The Big Parade* as a realist film in the way that term was defined contemporary to the period. In her book *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940*, Brenda Murphy describes '…I found that histories of dramatic literature typically describe realism in terms of the creation of a bourgeois milieu on the stage, the use of "common speech" in the dialogue, and the avoidance of sensational melodramatic effects in the action.'[158] Later, she describes aspects of realistic drama during this period:

> The rhythm of life, these plays suggest, is not a movement toward transcendence or harmony but a continual return to the mundane; not resolution or closure but irresolution and open-ended action; not spectacular, world-rendering moments of truth but gradual processes in character or environment. The distinguishing characteristic of realistic dramatic structure is its lack of closure.[159]

[156] Mordaunt Hall, "Ten Best Films of 1925 Helped by Late Influx," *New York Times,* Jan. 10, 1926.
[157] Edwin Schallert, ""The Big Parade" Sensational War Spectacle," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 11, 1925.
[158] Murphy, Brenda. *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), x.
[159] Ibid., xii.

The Big Parade is clearly Classicist in its opening, realistic in its second act, and somewhat expressionistic and Modernist in its third act, returning to Classical Hollywood filmmaking when Jim returns home. What appears to be the director's major achievement for contemporary audiences was to find a relatively safe way to experience the trauma of the conflict while not being overwhelmed by the sense of tragedy and loss. The movie's Hollywood ending, in which Jim returns to his great love, provided a life-affirming conclusion to an experience that many found to be exceptionally traumatic. The implicit message of the film, that true love will save both Jim and Melisandre from their problems (he from his physical and psychological wounds and she from her poverty) would have provided both veterans and their relatives and friends in the audiences with a positive. Thus, the 'realism' of the film is not in its depiction of life but in the intensity of the emotional expression of the WWI experience. For this reason, *The Big Parade* can be classified as a realistic diversion, one in which audiences could experience what they felt to be the horrors of war in the safe environment of the popular cinema.

To many audiences, the movie was a very emotional experience. An anonymous writer for *The Atlanta Constitution* wrote 'Just words, ever very futile things, would be inadequate to describe the bigness of it, the grittiness and awful reality of its story of war stripped of its glory and its glamour, or to describe the thrill of as one sits before a moving panorama of the greatest conflict of men and guns, and life and death.'[160] In this case, the writer simultaneously praises the film's perceived reality while admiring the spectacle elements.

In a subsequent issue, after comparing the film to works of Rudyard Kipling, Beverly Burgess of same publication commented that 'in the visualization of this war epic, where real human estimates were being portrayed with unusual realism.' Burgess closed the review by giving Stallings possibly the greatest compliment he could have asked for: 'Laurence Stallings has very likely done more for world peace than is realized and to this Atlanta-world hero we bow in gratitude, with the prayer that his message will 'get over'.'[161] This statement is interesting for several reasons. It implicitly argues that Stallings, the hometown hero, was the author of

[160] "'The Big Parade' Final Week Atlanta Theater," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 7, 1926.
[161] Beverly Burgess, "Life's Big Parade Made Easier by 'Big Parade" Screen Version Portraying Hope of the World" *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 9. 1926.

the film, not Vidor. It also seems to indicate that Burgess read the film as containing the political arguments of Stallings' writings, which itself is a testament to the director's ambiguity. Somewhat illogically, Paul Stevenson commented 'Laurence Stallings has given the world its masterpiece as far as motion picture stories of the world war are concerned. It is evidentially accurate to the smallest detail or it would not meet with the unanimous approval of those who were in the thick of it.'[162] If Stevenson's account and some of the others discussed below are true, then many audiences shared the same opinion as the critics. One of the rare dissenting views was from a Chicago theatregoer known only as Minnie M. Her published letter, in which she apparently complained about the film's violence, merited an entire column of responses, with statements like 'She seems to have forgotten that that great picture was made, not to please her, but to give the public something which it needs-a true picture of our boys "over there" minus the impossibility and the gushy sentiment. And how it succeeded! / That the public as a whole liked it is a tribute, that the ex-service men, those who lived in that hell, felt that it wasn't a picture but the real thing is what counts; therein lies the greatness of 'The Big Parade.'' Another reported that she had seen the film an officer of the conflict and 'Noticing his extreme quietude I glanced at him and saw huge tears running down his face.'[163]

The movie was also seen as relevant to contemporary thoughts on war and peace. As another *LA Times* article indicated, 'The attention of students of arbitration and advocates of world peace is being attracted to "The Big Parade," King Vidor's drama of the World War, as a potential argument in favour of international conciliation.' The article went on to state that 'those who believe in international conciliation' used the scene in which Jim is trapped in the hole with a German as an example.[164] The film was successful enough that it inspired a song, 'My Dream of the Big Parade,' written by Al Dubin and Jimmy McHugh, and recorded by The Peerless Quartet with Henry Burr and Billy Murray. The lyrics follow a narrator veteran who looks back to his time in the war and sees the events 'just like a photoplay on up my wall.' Later the narrator comments 'I saw one legged pals coming home to their gals' and

[162] Paul Stevenson, ""Big Parade" Appeal Grows as it Enters Second Week," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 9, 1926.
[163] Mae Tinee, "The Voice of the Movie Fan." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 25th, 1926.
[164] "Peace Argument Seen as Motive of 'Big Parade'," Los Angeles Times, Jan. 3, 1926.

remembers 'Fighting and fighting a horrible war/And God only knows what you're fighting it for.'[165]

What Price Glory

Stallings' third major success in the mid 20s was his play *What Price Glory*, co-written with Maxwell Anderson, followed by subsequent film of the same name (despite the fact the title is a rhetorical question, neither play nor film includes a question mark in the title). A major critical and commercial success at the time, the work is now rarely staged. A *New York Times* story recounted the genesis of the play. Stallings and Anderson knew each other as they were both writers for the *New York World*, where the former would entertain the later with anecdotes from his war experiences. Inspired, Anderson took Stallings' war stories and in six nights wrote the first draft of the play at the New York Public Library. According to the account, 'It was, in structure, much like the first and third acts of the present "What Price Glory," and it contained the theme of the play as it is now-the struggle between the Captain and the top sergeant of a marine company for the affections of an unbigoted girl of the country. The second draft, in Anderson's version, was, however, vague and colorless, as might well be expected of a realistic dugout scene written by a man whose wife and children barred him even from the draft.' Stallings then re-wrote the script, adding more authentic dialogue and 'local color.' The article is not clear about the next stages of the writing process but the two presumably continued to work in collaboration with each other. The play was then bought by Arthur Hopkins, manager of Lionel Barrymore, whom Stallings hoped would act in the play, presumably as Flagg.[166]

The text of the play is atypical for the 20s in its use of profanity. The dialogue caused great controversy for the play on the New York stage. When it opened Los Angeles, the *Los Angles Times* in a feature cartoon referred to the 'Ghastly Realism of War Depicted in "What Price Glory"', stating 'That it [the play] will be vividly realistic, both audibly and visually, seems certain…'[167] As Lea Jacobs reports, the use of heavy profanity in the play caused some to call

[165] Al Dubin and Jimmy McHugh, *My Dream of the Big Parade,* The Peerless Quartet with Henry Burr and Billy Murray. ©1926, 78 RPM.
[166] ""What Price Glory" and Its Authors," *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1924.
[167] "Ghastly Realism of War Depicted in "What Price Glory," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 25, 1925.

for more censorship of the modern theatres, though a greater number spoke out against it.[168] The idea that the profanity, at the time perceived by some audiences the play more accurate to the war experience, and thus, more realistic, was echoed in a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* from a reader named Walter W. Metcalf. Metcalf commented:

> Rarely having seen a better play than "What Price Glory," I wonder what may be the trouble with those who adversely criticize it. During its first week many friends who had served with me for a year in the A.E.F. told me that I must see it. / I did, and I enjoyed it. It was such a true picture of what we experienced. I'll admit that the swearing, heard in a mixed company, was at first a shock, but the language was so mild compared to what I had heard in the army, and knowing that I had somewhat increased my own vocabulary while in the service, I felt that its truth justified its presence.[169]

In his letter, Metcalf admits that the language used in the play was not actually a complete recreation of what he had heard during his services, calling it 'mild.' His statement that '…I felt that its truth justified its presence.' indicates that that whatever shock the language may have to 20s theatrical audiences is worth it to indicate to them the 'true' experiences of soldiers. The use of profanity in the play is one of many examples of audiences associating the breaking of an artistic convention- be it in depictions of death, language, or the psychological suffering of soldiers- that is read as being boldly authentic to the war experience due to its transgressive qualities. In a response to the controversy, actor Rollo Peters wrote another letter to the editor of the, where he argued 'Those who would delete the play of its beautiful oaths and rich frankness would bleed it of its force and essential fascination. They must have never overheard the American language in camp, garage, and lunch counter.'[170]

Critics raved about the production. In a review for the *New York Times*, Stark Young observed 'The fundamental quality of "What Price Glory?" is irony. Irony about life and about the war, but irony so incontrovertible in its aspect of truth and so blazing with vitality as to cram itself down the most spreadeagle of throats.'[171] Later, Young would write that a scene in the final act '...is so much the best scene in any play of the season that to mention the fact

---

[168]Lea Jacobs, *The Decline of Sentiment: American Film in the 1920s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2008), 134-135.
[169] Walter W. Metcalf, "More of "What Price Glory.", *New York Times,* Oct. 26, 1924.
[170] Peters, Rollo. "What Price Glory," *New York Times*, Sep. 28, 1924.
[171] Stark Young. "What Price Glory," *New York Times*. Sep. 6, 1924.

seems almost absurd.'[172] According to Edwin Schallert, by the time play opened LA, it was 'Regarded as an achievement in ultra-realism, its fame has echoed farther by far than the detonation of any Big Bertha that was ever fired on Paris during the conflict of 1914-1918.'[173]

The success of *The Big Parade* would change how Hollywood studios perceived the Great War as a property for the foreseeable future. The film's commercial success and audience reaction proved that audiences were not necessarily adverse to a film that dealt with negative and traumatic aspects to the conflict. For the next few years, every subsequent American war film would in some way be a response to *The Big Parade*. Unlike *Four Horsemen*, the success of the picture was not seen as a fluke and other studios looked for Great War material to film.

It should come as no surprise that a film version of *What Price Glory* was released a year after Vidor's film. According to Marilyn Ann Moss, the biographer of director Raoul Walsh, MGM originally hired Stallings to write the adaption of the play, but apparently decided to produce *The Big Parade* instead. After the success of that film, Fox bought the property.[174] There are some logical problems with this account. Why would MGM either sell the rights or not renew the option on the play after their massive success with a similar property?

Walsh, who until this time was most famous for helming the Douglas Fairbanks swashbuckler *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924) had just finished an unsuccessful five film deal at Paramount and had reluctantly returned to Fox, which he felt had stifled his artistic control.[175] Like Vidor, classifying Walsh as either an auteur or *metteur en scéne* is difficult. Canham describes how Walsh was classified as an auteur by French critics of the late 60s, and was used as an example for debate between Andrew Sarris (who argued that he was) and Pauline Kael (who argued that Sarris' position was logically inconsistent).[176] Walsh's films, like his personality, do generally share common themes and tropes. They are often about men and masculinity, with rugged, adventure settings. Walsh is associated with adventure, war and crime pictures.

---

[172] Stark Young.. "New Iconographies,'" *New York Times*. Sep. 21 1924.
[173] Edwin Schallert, "What Price Glory" Here!," *New York Times,* Oct. 28, 1925.
[174] Moss, 90.
[175] Canham, Kingsley. *Michael Curtiz Raoul Walsh Henry Hathaway* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1973), 88.
[176] Ibid. 81-82.

On the other hand, it is difficult to articulate intellectual themes that run through his films. Despite the classic status of some of his pictures, like *High Sierra* (1941), it is difficult to think of a 'Raoul Walsh' visual look. According to Moss, the studio gave the director control over casting, and he chose Edmund Lowe as Quirt and, over his initial objection due to his English origins, Victor McLaglan as Flagg. Like *The Big Parade*, the film was shot in Southern California, which proved a more than suitable double for France. The film was given the prestige treatment by the studio, with 'road show' distribution,[177] along with a synchronous score with sound effects. Clearly, Fox was anticipating this is as a major film of the season, probably both due to the success of the play and Vidor's film. They were also right in that assumption. As Moss states, 'With a production budget of $800,000, the picture grossed $4 million.'[178]

What Price Glory follows Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt, two Marines who share a love-hate relationship that comes to a head over Charmaine (Dolores Del Rio) a somewhat promiscuous daughter of the owner of a French watering hole. The film, which is split into episodes as opposed to one overarching plotline, opens with two segments during previous military exploits in which it is revealed that the two characters share a similar attitude towards women: they are treated as sex objects for amusement and pleasure, but little more. While in France, the two men begin to develop genuine feelings towards Charmaine, which serve to slightly soften the hard hearted veterans.

In terms of the personal journey of their characters, *What Price Glory* is an inversion of *The Big Parade* and other subsequent war films such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Instead of a narrative of an innocent being put through hell and emerging cynical and shattered on the other end, the play and Walsh's film features Flagg, a hard edged, seen-it-all veteran who slowly begins to become slightly more idealistic due to his love of Charmaine, which in the end is more fatherly than romantic. As Lea Jacobs observes, Charmaine is 'progressively sentimentalized' throughout the film, as opposed to the play. This has the effect of reducing the cynicism of Stallings' and Anderson's work. As Jacobs indicates, Stallings' and Anderson's play '…was considered realist not because of its use of the vernacular but also

[177] Jacobs 133.
[178] Moss, 90-93.

because of its departure from conventional representations of the War.'[179] The colloquial and profanity laced dialogue could not be converted to the silent screen, but in the second aspect, the film was a departure from previous portrayals of the war.

What Price Glory is also a far more cynical movie than *The Big Parade*. If Vidor's achievement was to place war drama within the context of Hollywood classicism, Walsh continued the evolution of this cinematic discourse by translating the play's perceived realism into Hollywood cinema. The film does not reveal or imply the fate of the three major characters, including Charmaine, and although the love triangle plotline is given a bit of a resolution, it is not complete. More essential to the film's realism is its lack of a transcendent spiritual or moral lesson for the characters. Nearly the only character that learns anything at all is Flagg, who has his belief that he should not become emotionally involved reinforced. Despite the changes from play to film, Walsh's movie can hardly called be saccharine. In many ways it is colder than *The Big Parade*, and the fact it was such a commercial success may be unexpected, considering its perspective and cynicism. Concerning itself with professional soldiers, the movie lacks an audience surrogate character like Vidor's Jim Apperson, and the film (like the play) makes the protagonist character actor McLaglen's Flagg. Some alteration was made to Quirt by the casting of Lowe (when Quirt is introduced in the play, the stage direction describes him as 'the very picture of old-timer,'[180] but Lowe is young, strong and conventionally handsome). Building a romantic film around McLaglen may seem like an unusual choice. It may be partially explained by the success of a rival MGM actor Lon Chaney, who tended to play cynical characters who falls for women who often see Chaney as a father figure instead of an object of sexual attraction. It is not hard to see Chaney as Flagg and in fact, he played a similar role in another MGM military film, *Tell It to the Marines* (1926). Even so, McLaglen was hardly the matinee idol figure of *The Big Parade*'s John Gilbert.

[179] Jacobs, 135.
[180] Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings, *Three American Plays* (New York: Hardcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), 9.

Figure 7. The three leads of *What Price Glory*.

Jacobs indicates 'Anderson's and Stallings' satire on military dress codes of conduct, as well as their biting criticism of the upper echelons of authority, deepen the pessimism of the play's stress on the inevitable suffering and death of the troops. No Hollywood film in the 1920s was fully able to mount this kind of representation of the War.'[181] While true, that statement is not complete. *What Price Glory* does feature direct anti-war political commentary. A key adaptation of a scene in the second act of the play provides an example. It features a monologue from Lieutenant Moore (Leslie Fenton), who decries the war in such a way that it could be found in *Plumes*. While his statements in the film are not as strong, they still are fairly biting. This section of the film begins with an intertitle that reads 'Through the Scarlet Night- a dressing station beneath the Earth, that earth to which so many will return before the mocking guns of glory cease.' Through intertitles, Moore says 'My men look at me like whipped dogs- white faced boys with the stink of the dead in their nostrils-and all night long that wounded sniper in a tree screaming for mercy! You talk about honor and courage and a man bleeds to death on a cross above your head. Flagg! I'm going to take my boys out of the

[181] Jacobs, 141.

muck and blood. And I'll kill you if you stand in my way. WHAT PRICE GLORY NOW?' Moore then becomes hysterical and is restrained by Flagg.

It would be difficult not to analyse this sequence as a condemnation of the idea of war as a noble activity for men or countries to achieve glory. What is missing from the film adaptation is not the anti-war sentiment, but the placing of blame. As Jacobs indicates, the movie is not critical of the military hierarchy (who are never seen, altered from the play) or the politicians in Washington sending the men to their deaths. Despite the fact that the film is critical of the war, it is not directly critical of any individual nation (including Germany), person or legal policy. The film's Germans are given virtually no development in their character or motivation, and often are only recognizable as German due to their helmets. The movie does not criticize Wilsonian interventionism (although such a position may have been popular to 20s audiences). Aside from its conviction that war was incredibly wasteful of human life and by implication unnecessary, it is silent on these matters.

Jacobs believes that the film is a positive statement about the Marines. She writes: 'This institution, while it unfortunately sometimes kills off "Mother's boys," also makes men out of babies in a baptism of blood and fire and provides the opportunities for the drinking, fighting, and gambling that make for male friendship.'[182] It is true that Walsh does celebrate these aspects of masculine militarism. But the film is also in some ways a psychological examination of the inner lives of people in such circumstances. Walsh shows the fact that these men are prone to having wild, hedonistic behaviour, but he also demonstrates that this behaviour is ultimately hurtful, particularly towards women. Charmaine, hardly a sexual conservative, is portrayed by Walsh a person with human wants and needs. The conflict between Flagg and Quirt over Charmaine begins as masculine bravado over their right to sleep with her, but later become serious as both men experience emotions for the Frenchwoman. *What Price Glory* is perhaps the first popular and successful American film to take a psychological person about the war many subsequent films, particularly films about the Marines, have taken: that the best way to adapt the emotionally strenuous life is to try not to feel emotions at all.

[182] Jacobs, 154.

This is one of the key differences between *What Price Glory* and *The Big Parade*: in the later film, the main character is emotionally shattered by his experience. In the former, the men have already developed psychological defence mechanisms that prevent them being totally traumatized, but these adaptations come at a great cost. They are prepared to kill each other for a woman that they will forget about as soon as they march out. It is in this light that the film's pro-military stance becomes paradoxical. Jacobs calls the film pro-Marine, but it is more ambiguous than that. The audience is called to share this psychological barrier, as Walsh eschews a sentimental or overly morose tone. According to Lowe, 'We felt that we were about to re-enact the great sorrows of the World War; its deaths and its horrors and its separating of lovers from loved ones. / Instead, Director Raoul Walsh soon indicated to us that he wanted to hide the grim tragedy of war behind a wall of comedy…Where he might have injected a heart throb, Walsh substituted humor.'[183]

Another way of examining the commentary of the war and trauma in the film is through the music. The synchronized score by an uncredited composer released to theatres contained light, comedic music during the scenes near Charmaine, behind the lines, but the music quickly becomes extremely serious somewhat disturbing in the scenes near the front. There is no hint of heroic war action during the fighting scenes. It sounds more like material that might have been used later for horror films. Although the movie is heavily associated with the song 'Charmaine', a tune which would later become a standard, the relationship between song and film has been exaggerated. The melody never appears in the official synchronized sound track, and indeed, the song was not published until 1927, a year after the film was released.

Within the American film industry, there was not much doubt that the movie would be a strong financial investment, as demonstrated by success of Vidor's film. The reviewer for *Variety*, credited only as Fred began his review by making the succession explicit:

> To settle the question right off the bat let it be said that the event of "The Big Parade" a year ago has not taken the edge off of "What Price Glory." As a matter of fact "The Big Parade" has made an audience for "What Price Glory." / More than that, the later film has nothing to fear at the box office of the effect of the first one. From the looks of things it is safe to predict the Fox picture is going to be just as great a hit in the legitimate houses as the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer one is. You can mark "What Price

[183] "Tragedy Near to Comedy," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 27, 1927.

> Glory" down in your little red book as one of those pictures that is "in" and look back at that book a couple of years from now with the satisfaction that you picked a winner.

Fred goes onto argue that the lip-read profanity will create a positive word of mouth, predicting the movie '…is going to get about the country like wildfire and [the profanity will] go a long way to make the picture.[184]

The Film Daily agreed, giving the film a lead of 'A BOX OFFICE KNOCKOUT. ONE OF THE BIGGEST OF THIS YEAR AND OF ANY OTHER YEAR. CERTAIN TO MAKE A DEFINITE AND LASTING IMPRESSION ON ALL THOSE WHO SEE IT.' After describing the film as 'A bitter, scathing story of the Great War.', and describing the plotline, the reviewer finds 'Comedy and tragedy stalk hand in hand, but so skilfully are the touches applied that the complete picture stirs a great big emotion such as only a truly great film can. The battle sequences are the finest ever filmed.' Under the 'Box Office Angle' feature, the reviewer describes the movie as 'A clean-up. The sort of picture that will make its mark-never fear, the theatres of this and all other countries.'[185] The industry was now confident that films about the experience of war combined with spectacle would bring in audiences.

Walsh's film received positive reviews, which placed it in the company of *Four Horseman* and *The Big Parade*. Roberta Nangie raved, 'I might as well spill it all at once: "What Price Glory." seems to be the best war picture ever filmed, better than even 'The Big Parade.' And what's more, the movie version has done full justice to the stage play...Now with the shouting over, we can seriously try to figure out what the war was all about. ..probably the easiest way to explain the story is to say that it hands the whole world war condensed into eight reels.'[186] Although the film avoids laying blame for the conflict, Nangie feels that the movie does indeed examine the war in a sophisticated and cogent manner. Clearly, this did not involve a discussion of geo-political issues, at least to her.

Mordaunt Hall found it 'a powerful screen effort' and observed that in the audience '…not only was there many an explosion of laughter last night, but two or three times the audience

[184] Fred, "What Price Glory," *Variety*, Dec. 1, 1926.
[185] "What Price Glory," *The Film Daily*, Nov. 28, 1926.
[186] Roberta Nangie, "All Movies of War Fade When This One's Seen," Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1926.

reached such a high pitch of enthusiasm that they applauded loudly.'[187] Edwin Schallert found the movie to be 'War is ----[meaning hell] and the rest can be pleasantly or unpleasantly left to the imagination, even though war as it is portrayed in the picture… is almost overwhelmingly real.'[188] Schallert praises the spectacle of the production and the acting of the three leads, saying that the film '…reflects a sincerity and power that will reach the majority.'

In his review in *The Atlanta Constitution*, Paul Stevenson raved '"What Price Glory" is a picture of ineffable emotion stirring qualities. It has the quality of pounding the blood through the veins in irresistible torrents, it tugs the heartstrings to the breaking point, sometimes it is as tender as a mothers smile and many times it is as rough as a pig iron. It grips one moment with a tense drama and the next it releases floods of laughter. It is as once an epic, a romance, a somber tragedy and a bubbling comedy. All things that make a of a picture an all-time classic it possesses with a few extras thrown in for good measure.'[189]

Compared to the previous films discussed in this thesis, there was something important that the reviewers were *not* writing about. Reviews of the movie featured a surprising lack of commentary about the war or political issues relating to it. Oddly, the reviews most discussed Walsh's film in positive superlatives while avoiding commentary its relation to the current geo-political situation or individual experiences of Marines or other soldiers. There are many explanations for this, but the one that it most likely is that the film itself did not cue the reviews to address it in this manner. Because of the emotional repression of the characters and its general unwilling to address the political causes of the conflict, few reviewers discussed the movie in terms of either its treatment of the war experience, and instead focused on the films combination of serious war material and dark comedy. Even Schallert's review, which mentions the films 'reality' does not assert what this entails, aside from the possibility of profanity in the lips of the actors.

[187] Mordaunt Hall, "What Price Glory," *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1926.
[188] Edwin Schallert, "What Price Glory" Big," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 23, 1926.
[189] Paul Stevenson, "'What Price Glory' Proves Greatest of War Pictures", *The Atlanta Constitution,* September 6th, 1927.

The picture was certainly a financial success. Norbert Lusk reported that in New York, the movie had broken a record for the highest one week gross in the history of its theatre, taking in $144,000.[190] The cultural impact of *The Big Parade* was felt in the response to *What Price Glory*. As stated in a *Los Angeles Times* photo spread 'It was "The Big Parade" that started it-the war picture fever-and by many it is believed that with the screening of "What Price Glory?" this fever will reach its culmination, and that world of cinema will at last be willing to turn to something else. Certainly "What Price Glory" should be the ultimate word in production dealing with the great European conflict.'[191] A theme running through many reviews of the film are (usually favourable) comparisons to *The Big Parade*. I found no contemporary reference to the movie that argued it was re-making or re-hashing Vidor's movie. Rather, it is seen as giving something new to the discourse. What then, would a mid-20s audience have seen as new in *What Price Glory*? The fact that the film is about hardened veterans means that the picture is *more* cynical than *Big Parade*. There is hope that Jim Apperson may be redeemed by love- no such hope exists at the end of *Glory* and as Charmaine indicates, it is very likely that either Flagg or Quirt, or both, will die in the upcoming battle. Regardless, it is difficult to see them successfully adapting into civilian life.

It is in this analysis that the massive influence *Big Parade* would have on subsequent war films would be felt. It proved that audiences were willing to see a film that at least partially concerned itself with war trauma. It managed to portray this trauma in a way that was emotionally moving to audiences, and do to so without embracing or attacking a particular mainstream political viewpoint or position. Despite the success of the play on Broadway, film interest in *What Price Glory* increased only after the release of *Parade*. It is difficult to see Fox or any other studio producing such a cynical film without the prior success of another. Finally, *The Big Parade* and Walsh's follow-up proved that war films could be extremely financially lucrative. The next few years would feature a large number of war spectacles, two of which will be the focus of the next Chapter, where I will argue that films intended to be sold primarily on adventure and spectacle contained a serious commentary of the Great War experience.

---

[190] Norbert Lusk, "Fox War Film is Held Over," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 28, 1927.
[191] "The Ultimate War Drama," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 1, 1926.

Chapter 3: The Dark Adventure

In this Chapter, I will discuss the cultural reception of war films in the late 20s and 1930, focusing on the reception of two movies about the air war: *Wings* (1927) and *Hell's Angels* (1930). I give attention to the aerial conflict in this chapter for several reasons. The first and most primary is the fact that during this period, some of most popular films concerning the conflict were about the air war. *Wings* in particular was one of the most successful films during this era. These two movies are examples of what I call the 'Dark Adventure;' pictures with plots that seem to be standard subjects for adventure films but thematically darker and with a more serious tone than films with these plots usually contain.

I begin the chapter by examining the cultural portrayal of the air conflict generally, with a discussion of Eddie Rickenbacker's memoir *Fighting the Flying Circus* (1919). I will then describe how the content of *Wings*, itself directed by a veteran pilot, is emblematic of the duality of the air war Rickenbacker describes, an acknowledgement of the exhilarating aspects of the war experience which nevertheless contain a real presence of the possibility of near-random death in keeping with the Dark Adventure. I will then move on to a discussion of *Hell's Angels*, a film that celebrates that also celebrates adventure aspects of the air war, but has a far darker tone and questions the necessity and morality of the conflict.

Although in this Chapter I mostly discuss air war films during the late 20s, at the outset, I do wish to point out that there were significant American war or war-related films during this period that were not air related, such as Frank Borzage's *7th Heaven* (1927), and John Ford's *Four Sons* (1928). I feel that it is necessary to focus on the air war because, for reasons I will expand upon below, Great War aviation movies allowed filmmakers to depict the culture and impact of the war in ways that films regarding infantry could not.

The Experience of the Air War

Understanding the actual experiences of the war among air combat veterans is important to fully understand the culture of the era for two reasons. The first is that many of the early air war films had air combat veterans, such as William A. Wellman and John Monk Saunders, in

significant creative positions and a greater appreciation for their influence on the films can be had if one is familiar with their experiences. Second and more importantly, the general public was fascinated by aerial combat, both during and after the war. Surviving air veterans were often considered heroes in popular culture. It was common to see these airmen described as chivalrous knights, for example. Later air combat films did not come out of a cultural vacuum, but capitalized on the mass audience's already strong interest in aviation in 1927. In order to understand the cultural environment that *Wings*, *The Dawn Patrol* and *Hell's Angels* (all 1930), among others, were released in, it is necessary to first understand what the public already knew about aerial combat. For this reason, I discuss Eddie Rickenbacker's *Fighting the Flying Circus*, a best-selling memoir in 1919.

The experience of soldiers fighting in the air force during the Great War was significantly different from that of those serving on the ground. Perhaps the most obvious difference to a casual observer would be one of comfort: flyers were able to avoid the near continual physical misery that infantry were exposed to. Pilots and their associated crews slept indoors, in warm beds, and ate hot food. There were, however, many experiences that were similar to both aerial and land troops. Death was ever present and often seemingly random. As will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, soldiers quickly learned to guard their emotions regarding grief, so as to be able to continue to function. Paradoxically, the difficulty of the circumstances also resulted in soldiers in this homosocial environment becoming extremely close and loyal to each other.

For various reasons, flyers for both the Central and Allied sides of the war were considered to have immense propaganda value. Newspapers would report rosters of how many opposition machines each ace (a title bestowed after a flyer's fifth victory) had shot down, and pilots themselves would often go to great lengths to increase their confirmed victories, such as landing next to a downed enemy plane and taking its serial number as evidence. Many of the aces themselves were exceptionally charismatic, larger than life figures such as the German Manfred von Richtofen (the famous 'Red Baron,' so called because he painted his plane bright red to strike fear into his enemies), Frenchman Rene Fonck, and American Eddie Rickenbacker. Rickenbacker was the most successful and decorated American airman of the war, with 26 credited kills. This is especially impressive when one considers the fact that he

joined his aerodrome as a pilot on March 4th, 1918,[192] meaning that he amassed his total in only nine months. A former race car driver, Rickenbacker's background, charismatic personality and genuinely impressive war record meant that he was ensured attention from the contemporary media. Intelligent and articulate while simultaneously dynamic, the pilot was a reporter's dream.

His 1919 memoir of the war, *Fighting the Flying Circus*, is a surprisingly frank document. Containing virtually no autobiographical material aside from his flight experience, the book not only describes Rickenbacker's flying exploits, but his state of mind and occasional views on the ethics of killing. However, aside from a strong sense of general patriotism, there are almost no accounts of his views on the geo-political issues regarding the conflict. Rickenbacker was a strong conservative who opposed entry into the League of Nations,[193] but *Fighting the Flying Circus* contains virtually none of his political views outside of a general pro-American disposition.

However, he does not shy away from discussing his views on the nature of killing during war, which is paradoxical. In the first chapter, Rickenbacker writes, regarding his first flight: 'The pleasure of shooting down another man was no more attractive to me than the chance of being shot down myself. The whole business of war was ugly to me. But the thought of pitting my experience and confidence against that of German aviators and beating them at their own boasted prowess in air combats had fascinated me.'[194] Throughout the memoir, the author does not spend a great amount of time or effort in hatred of the Germans, even after his friends are killed, while at the same time he spends a tremendous amount of effort into killing them, often going out of his way and risking his life to increase his score. At one point, he writes: 'I dreamed about No. 16 at night and was up bright and early on the lookout for him every morning…I never in my life wanted anything so much as those orange-colored insignia as decorations for my quarters. I planned to build a house some day suitably designed to set off those works of art to the best advantage.'[195] Later, describing another aerial encounter, he writes 'My Fokker pilot may have escaped death; and now that the war is over, I most

[192] Eddie Rickenbacker, *Fighting the Flying Circus* (Dodo Press), 11.
[193] E. V. Rickenbacker, "U.S. in League Means Menace of Militarism," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* Oct. 9, 1920.
[194] Eddie Rickenbacker, *Fighting the Flying Circus,* 6.
[195] Ibid., 118.

sincerely hope that he did, for he was a brave pilot and a daring fellow.'[196] As further proof, Rickenbacker quotes his own diary, six days after his arrival at his aerodrome: 'Resolved to-day that hereafter I will never shoot at a Hun who is at a disadvantage, regardless of what he would do if he were in my position.' He later makes a comparison to sport: '…with American flyers the war has always been more or less a sporting proposition and the desire for fair play-the anger it always arouses in a true American to see any violation of fair play-prevents a sportsman from looking at the matter in any other light, even though it be a case of life or death. However that may be, I do not recall a single violation of this principle by any American aviator that I should care to call my friend.'[197]

Whether or not the above statements are true or some form of exaggerated hyperbole to make a more exciting book, it is important to note that they were at least presented as true. Considering this viewpoint, a discussion of his views on the ethics of the war is necessary. Rickenbacker is not unconcerned with the ethics of war or of his actions, but seems to view war as a place where the usual peacetime boundaries of morality do not apply. He does not see (at least in 1919) the war as an amoral vacuum, rather, one where laws of fair play and gentlemanly conduct have a high priority. In other words, it is acceptable to kill, as long such killing follows the pre-described rules of fair play. The only occasion of anti-German sentiment in the entire book seems to support this idea. It occurs when an enemy aircraft pursues a shot American machine upon its descent: 'Anybody but a Hun would have turned away his eyes from so frightful a spectacle. But this Fokker Hun was built of sterner stuff. Instead of turning away to attack the rest of the 95 formation, Fritz stuck steadfastly on Sumner's tail, firing steadily at him as he descended!'[198] Thus, the reader is left with a seeming paradox: Rickenbacker enthusiastically hunts and kills people that he respects, while simultaneously wishing them no ill will. Though the pilot was clearly an atypical person, this experience was not atypical. In her book *An Intimate History of Killing*, Joanna Bourke describes how 'There were numerous ways in which exceptionally aggressive acts could be experienced as enjoyable.'[199] Bourke's book is problematic. Her arguments are at times overstated, and she often lacks empirical data as to how many people in a given situation

[196] Ibid., 176.
[197] Ibid., 275.
[198] Ibid., 197.
[199] Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing* (London: Granta, 1999), 370.

reacted the ways she describes. She also mostly sidesteps the question of situational ethics- could some people justify killing others in a given circumstance, believing that they were saving more lives in the future? Under such situations, could enjoyment or pride in killing others be considered ethically permissible? Bourke seems to tacitly assume that it is not, but mostly does not address the question. However, there is one observation that Bourke makes convincingly clear due to her numerous case studies - that a sizeable number of people in warfare could enjoy the killing of others and did so repeatedly.[200] Arthur Gould Lee, a Royal Flying Corps veteran who wrote of his experiences in *Open Cockpit*, a memoir published in 1969, described some of the dual and contradictory responses he had to the conflict. In the foreword, he states '…I was to feel those first shattering impacts of seeing men killed, and of killing them myself, and of escaping the same fate, again and again, by the most unholy luck.'[201] Later he states '…the daily risk of a violent end was accepted unconcernedly. It was something we never spoke of and seldom consciously thought about.'[202]

Films concerning the air war offer unique opportunities to discuss the moral issues involving killing. The experience of the ground war was for most men defensive: days of waiting in the trenches while being shelled. During the real moments of attack, going 'over the top', often involved killing enemy targets under extreme fear and duress. Flyers, on the other hand, were involved in a more offensive combat. They were often separated from their commanders and personally engaged enemy fighters. The flying men would know that the enemy lived in a similar situation to his own, and could decide for themselves when to attack, when to retreat, or when to spare the life of a combatant. For these reasons, veterans of the air war confronted killing in a different and more direct manner than most of their ground counterparts. Lee describes his observations of some of his fellow flyers: 'Some pilots and observers, not a very large proportion, really did not know the meaning of fear. They were men of steel. Their minds never dwelt on their risks, never considered what might happen to them. Maybe they had no imagination. To them air fighting was a sport. This was how Richtofen regarded it - until he was wounded, when his attitude changed. And such aces as Bishop, McCudden, Collishaw, MacLaren, Nungesser, McKeever and the American Luke [he does not mention

[200] Ibid., 13-43.
[201] Arthur Gould Lee, *Open Cockpit: A Pilot of the Royal Flying Corps* (London: Grub Street, 2012), 6.
[202] Ibid., 6-7.

Rickenbacker], ruthless killers all, apparently never knew a twinge of fear in even their most desperate exploits.'[203] There is no way that Lee could have known what was going on in the minds of the flyers on their missions, many of whom he probably never met. However, the observation that he saw them as ruthless killers is significant. Some clearly enjoyed the conflict and of amassing as many trophies as possible.

Other experiences of the air and ground war participants were similar. Many if not most soldiers formed an exceptionally strong emotional attachment to their fellow comrades. The experience of this will be discussed among the infantry in the next chapter, but this was a clear experience to flyers. In *Fighting the Flying Circus*, Rickenbacker writes:

> There is a peculiar gratification in receiving congratulations from one's squadron for a victory in the air. It is worth more to a pilot than the applause of the whole outside world. It means that one has won the confidence of men who shares the misgivings, the aspirations, the trials and the dangers of aeroplane fighting. And with each victory comes a renewal and re-cementing of ties that bind together with these brothers-in-arms. No closer fraternity exists in the world than that of the air-fighters in this great war. And I have yet to find one single individual who has attained conspicuous success in bringing down enemy aeroplanes who can be said to be spoiled either by his success or by the generous congratulations of his comrades.[204]

Other pilots had similar but more nuanced feelings. Arthur Gould Lee writes that the daily risk of death '…bred a hitherto unknown bond with other men-comradeship forged in the heat of dangers repeatedly shared. How remarkable was the understanding we found in each other, the camaraderie on the ground, and the unity and trust during our deadly combats in the skies. Yet most of us had never met until a few weeks, or even days, before.'[205] Later, however, he writes: 'Yet this fraternity, in spite of its common perils and pleasures, was no infallible sphere for strong, enduring friendships. It was not only that we were never a band of entirely amicable brethren, for there were always some who heartily disliked others, and for no discernible reasons, though in the air, all such differences vanished. It was that too often there was insufficient time to get to know a man before he disappeared over the other side.'[206]

[203] Ibid., 67.
[204] Rickenbacker, 34-35.
[205] Lee, 7.
[206] Ibid., 97-98.

Any experience of any war is a unique experience to unique individuals. However, it is clear that for many, the air war was an odd combination of camaraderie, killing and the daily threat of being killed. It could honestly be said that for many soldiers, the experience of the air war was not an entirely or even mainly negative experience, something that relatively few members of the infantry would state. The experiences and perspectives described by Rickenbacker and Lee and discussed above were not uncommon among airman. Taken as a whole, this set of experiences when filmed form what I call the Dark Adventure: a series of movies that treat the war in the form of standard adventure narratives, but with the added element of the threat of real death. In air narratives, both fictional and true accounts, this threat of real death amidst the exciting and sometimes spiritual background of air fighting accounted for a combination of traditional Hollywood adventure and the serious realism of the geo-political tragedy of the war.

The Air War in Hollywood

There is clear evidence that the public was interested in the air war, as evidenced by the frequent newspaper accounts of the kill tallies of aces, public lectures given by Rickenbacker upon his return (the *Detroit Free Press* reported that 'Young and Old Listen Raptly to Recital of Ace's War Experiences'[207]), that *Fighting the Flying the Circus* was a best seller,[208] and the fact that publishers gave him $10,000 for syndicating the book in newspapers.[209] In his book *Flying on Film,* Mark Carlson describes that a large number of movies in the late teens and early twenties featured stunt flying.[210] Although films (such as *The Big Parade*) might briefly mention aerial combat or a famous ace (as in *The Service Star*, a lost movie from 1918), movie studios mostly avoided the air war until the mid-20s. A key exception to this is a movie that has already been discussed in Chapter One, Allen Holubar's *The Heart of Humanity*. The film does contain aerial combat scenes, which mostly combine footage of planes taking off and landing, viewed from land at a distance, and a few shots actually taken in flight. There are some shots of pilots in cockpits, but these are filmed from a stationary plane

[207] "'Rick' Tells Story of Fighting in Air," *Detroit Free Press*, May 5, 1919.
[208] "Tabloid Book Review," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun. 1, 1919.
[209] "Biggest Money-Makers Among Past Memoirs," *New York Times*, Sep. 24, 1922.
[210] Mark Carlson, *Flying on Film: A Century of Aviation in the Movies, 1912-2012* (Duncan, OK: BearManor Media, 2012), Kindle edition, chap. 1.

using a wind machine and lighting techniques to give the illusion of motion. Aside from this film and the lost picture mentioned above, instances of aerial combat on film are rare. The most likely reason for this avoidance was simple: there was not much history of aerial cinematography. During the war, reconnaissance aircraft would have still cameras mounted on them, and these would be very occasionally filmed. As aircraft began to be associated with public consciousness beyond the war, films could include shots of airplanes taking off or landing, but beyond this, there is little history of taking dynamic pictures of aircraft in flight, and even fewer still of them in combat.

Origins of *Wings*

Although there is no extant documentary evidence as to the precise reasons why the *Wings* project (the title never changed from conception to release) was financed; a look at contemporaneous successful films provides the likely answer. As discussed in the last chapter, MGM had a huge hit with *The Big Parade* and Fox had followed this up with the very successful *What Price Glory*. The twin success of these films proved that audiences were willing to pay to see films about the war. In the mid-20s, Paramount Pictures was in a strong position. It was the biggest and most commercially successful studio in Hollywood, only having begun to be threatened by the three way merger of MGM in 1925. Given that the rival studio had a major financial success with *The Big Parade*, a film co-written by a veteran, it would seem natural that Paramount would want to find their own war material.

Paramount executive Jessie Lasky was introduced to John Monk Saunders by George Palmer Putnam.[211] It would be a fortuitous meeting for both men. Biographical information on Saunders is scant and comes mostly from his obituary. Born in Hinkley, Minnesota, Saunders had an ideal resume for such a project- he was familiar with the material being an alumnus of the United States School of Military Aeronautics, and fought in the Air Service during the war. After leaving the military he became a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and later the *New York Tribune*. During this period, he began writing fiction and later screenwriting, a

[211] William Wellman, Jr., *The Man and His* Wings*: William A. Wellman and the Making of the First Best Picture*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 103.

process which was interrupted by his departure for the United Kingdom, where he became a Rhodes Scholar.[212]

Like Laurence Stallings, Saunders could be used for publicity purposes by a studio who wished to make an 'authentic' war film. He also had a proven pedigree as a writer and intellectual. According to a widely published article written by Saunders, the writer pitched the film to Lasky in the studio executive's New York apartment. This is significant, indicating that there must have been some level of personal relationship between the two for it to take place in a private residence, with no others present (or at least reported). Saunders recounted that Lasky had no issues with the basic storyline and listened to the writer's arguments that an air war film would be a unique and dramatic subject, but indicated reservations about the budget. Saunders stated that the project would only be possible if treated as an epic.[213]

At this point, sources diverge in their account of events. William Wellman Jr. reports that Lasky proposed the project to Darryl Zanuck and 'New York bankers' and the project was promptly refused, thinking it 'pure insanity.'[214] According to Wellman Jr., a 'desperate' Saunders suggested to Lasky that with the assistance of the US government, the film's cost could be greatly reduced. Agreeing, Lasky sent the writer and producer Lucien Hubbard to Washington to try to persuade the military. According to Saunders, at the same New York pitch session, the writer suggested that Lasky enlist the aid of War Department for assistance in filming and the producer promised that he would greenlight the film if the appropriate government resources could be gathered. Continuing the account, Saunders managed to convince the War Department of the project's merits with the assistance of Will B. Hays and the production was a go, with producer Lucien Hubbard being only assigned to the project afterwards.[215] The writer does not describe how he convinced the military to assist the film, but it is likely that his experience as a veteran helped. Helping filmmakers was not new to the Armed Forces but no previous film had used aeronautics to this level or in the same way.

Saunders' rough outline was turned into a screenplay with the assistance of Hope Loring and Lewis D. Lighton. The writer would assume a greater role than that of screenwriter,

---

[212] "John M. Saunders Suicide in Florida," *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1940.
[213] John Monk Saunders, "The-War-in-the-Air," *New York Times*, Jul. 31, 1927.
[214] Wellman Jr., 103.
[215] John Monk Saunders, "The-War-in-the-Air," New York Times, Jul. 31, 1927.

eventually being credited as a technical advisor and working with the director on set.[216] Despite his war experiences, the finished screenplay would not be particularly original, mostly incorporating war tropes from other films into an aerial combat situation. A far greater contribution to the movie would be made by the director, fellow airman William A. Wellman.

Born in Brookline, Massachusetts, Wellman was raised in a middle class family. After being rejected by his own country's air program, he enlisted in the Lafayette Escadrille, an all-American unit in the French Air Service.[217] Wellman's war experiences seemed like something out of a film and almost certainly influenced his later war and aviation dramas. In between his air combat experiences, he fell in love with Renee, an aspiring French painter who made a living as a baker. They were eventually married in a small ceremony. Wellman would crash several times, but he would ultimately survive the war. His wife, however, would not. After only a few months of marriage, Renee was killed in a German bomb attack in Paris. Wellman himself discovered the burned body and was only able to identify it due to her wedding ring.[218]

Like Rickenbacker and Lee, Wellman approached flying with an adventurer's spirit. In a letter home to his mother, he wrote: 'The front is very different from anything I ever dreamed of. A life of thrills and luck and I feel sure I have both in my favor.'[219] He also experienced a strong sense of friendship and camaraderie. In another letter, the young pilot wrote I have yet to see a group of Americans I admire more than these that are here…If it hadn't been for one or two fellows I don't know what I would have done, for about six weeks ago I got a pretty bad strain and with their aid I was able to see a real doctor and get fixed up all O.K.…these fellows have at least one life long friend. No matter what they do or what happens to them I will always be ready to return their kindness. After all, friendship is the most wonderful thing in the world and most of it comes from generosity, not be necessary (sic) a 'good fellow' in the sporty sense.'[220]

[216] Wellman Jr., 103.
[217] Ibid., 6.
[218] Ibid., 32-44.
[219] Ibid., 27.
[220] Ibid., 16.

After the war, Wellman was able to find employment as an actor due to a personal connection with Douglas Fairbanks. Finding that he disliked performing, he worked his way up through the ranks behind the camera and eventually became a director at Fox.[221] After directing one film for Columbia, *When Husbands Flirt* (1926), his career stalled. Wellman was forced to return to assistant directing and overseeing films of others after the original director had been removed until *When Husbands Flirt* proved an unexpected hit upon release. Although the movie is now believed lost, the financial success of the project, shot cheaply in only three days, resulted in the offer of a contract from Paramount Head of Production Bud Schulberg.[222]

The most in-depth work on the making of *Wings* comes from *The Man and His Wings: William A. Wellman and the Making of the First Best Picture,* written by his son, William Jr. Much of the book incorporates elements from the director's unpublished autobiography, but as the writer often does not cite sources, the reader is often left to assume that the information presented is from the manuscript, which unfortunately, is rarely quoted directly. A son's obvious interest in preserving the legacy of his father also means that his book should be considered carefully (For convenience's sake, I will refer to the son with the 'Jr.' suffix and to the father as simply 'Wellman.'). According to Wellman Jr., it was Schulberg who suggested Wellman as the director for *Wings*. Although the writer is clearly biased in his father's favour in describing his success in being assigned to the project, he is correct in stating that this is unusual and that he would not have the obvious choice. Paramount had several directors who were used to working on a large canvas, most notably Cecil B. DeMille. Wellman had been until this time associated with Westerns, comedies, and romantic films, certainly nothing approaching a 'prestige picture' like *Wings*.[223] Schulberg argued that Wellman was appropriate for the project due to his war experience and in a meeting with Wellman the director emphasized the same point, telling Lasky 'I know what these battles are all about. You're worried about the damn budget. This is a great story. I'll make the best goddamn picture this studio's ever had.'[224] Wellman and Schulberg managed to convince Lasky to assign the director to the movie.[225] It was a huge coup for the filmmaker. Given that the

[221] Ibid., 86.
[222] Ibid., 94-97.
[223] Ibid., 104-106.
[224] Ibid., 106.
[225] Ibid., 106.

director had never been associated with so massive a project, the reason can almost certainly be ascribed to his war experiences and Paramount's desire for some form of 'authenticity.' *Wings* would therefore be written and directed by two air war veterans. Although previous war films had proved the public was interested in the subject, Paramount was taking a risk in spending so much money on a film that would require a large amount of technical innovation. The final budget for the film was $2 million. According to Wellman Jr., it would be the most expensive film ever made up until this point.[226]

Wellman was brought on the project after many of the key personnel had been assigned, such as cinematographer Harry Perry, who would have to work with the director to devise a way to film the key flying sequences. Only one part had been cast, but this necessitated a rewrite of the screenplay. The film's marquee star would be Clara Bow.[227] From nearly any financial standpoint, presenting Bow in the film was a wise move. She was Paramount's biggest female star and one of the most popular actresses in the world. Appealing to both sexes, her presence could be expected to help sell the movie to women who might otherwise stay away from a masculine subject. Finally, if the combat sequences were to fail and the film to receive bad word of mouth, the presence of a reliable star could prevent the film from failing financially. Incorporating Bow into the story from narrative standpoint was a more difficult proposition.

Put simply, the main body of the film concerned all-male groups training to fly combat airplanes and then doing so. *The Big Parade* and *What Price Glory* could plausibly work romance into the plot as infantry soldiers would have interacted with the French population. Airmen, on the other hand, mostly stayed at the aerodrome when not flying (except of course, while on leave), severely limiting their ability to interact with women. Aside from a few cutaway asides, Bow's presence is restricted to three major sections of the film, the prologue, epilogue and a sequence immediately after the intermission in which her character is falsely accused of sexual misconduct and shipped back home. Wellman Jr. records that the studio had 'announced' Charles Farrell and Neil Hamilton as the male leads,[228]. The two leads were instead to be played by Charles 'Buddy' Rogers and Richard Arlen, two relatively unknown

[226] Ibid., 114.
[227] Ibid., 107.
[228] Ibid., 108.

actors cast by Wellman. The director felt that Rogers was reminiscent of his war comrades.[229] Casting Rogers and Arlen may have worked in the film's favour in an unexpected way. Bow and comedian El Brendel are the only name actors in the film and each play characters in line with their screen persona. However, putting two unknowns in the leads may have heightened the sense of realism to the audiences, since the actors had no star iconography behind them, allowing the audience to see only the characters. In any event, it must have quickly become clear to the studio that *Wings* was not going to be a screenwriter's movie, nor an actor's film. The picture was instead going to live or die on the plausibility of its aerial combat sequences.

As the director explained in a *New York Times* piece, the main problem with shooting aerial photography was that the audience had no visual frame of reference.[230] Early in the process, Wellman and Perry realized that the obvious source of this was clouds, but photographing these subjects necessitated simply waiting, with the entire cast and crew, for appropriate formations to appear, incurring a great cost.[231] It also became apparent that audiences would have a difficult time determining which flyer they were looking at, so it was decided that for certain shots, a camera would be mounted on the front of the planes, which would be operated by the actors themselves, many of whom had no previous flying experience. At one point, stunt flyer Dick Grace broke his neck while making the film.[232] The shoot would be tedious, frustrating and expensive. In a *New York Times* interview, Arlen described his experience: 'Billy Wellman told us that we were going to hate him like poison, every one of us, before the picture was made. We did. He told us that we would find it hard and relentless, and that after it was all over we would be glad of it. And we were.' The actor went on to describe how he found shooting the flying scenes, in which he was underdressed for the cold conditions, to be miserable.[233]

A Successor to *The Big Parade*

Though the film was about the air war, the memory of *The Big Parade* and its massive success hung over the production. Much of the appeal and reception of both films would be centered

[229] Ibid., 109.
[230] "Some Difficulties of a Producer," *New York Times*, Jul. 10, 1927.
[231] Wellman Jr., 118-121.
[232] Rosalind Shaffer, "Glimpses of Hollywood," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 31, 1929.
[233] "Difficulties in Making "Wings"," *New York Times*, Jul. 8th, 1928.

around the authenticity of its portrayal of the war's physical and psychological trauma. Wellman later stated: 'I saw it [Vidor's film] twenty-two times until I knew every cut and, I thought, every reason for it. I lay in bed and tried to figure out how I could have topped King Vidor and his direction. I had no success.'[234] There are many similarities between the two pictures. Both involve men who are relatively innocent and were traumatized and matured by the war. Both involve a scene where a character returns home a changed man, while the home they left looks visually the same as when they left. Both films place an extremely high emphasis on friendship and camaraderie. It would not be accurate, however, to call *Wings* '*The Big Parade* in the sky.' Three crucial differences between the films are in the ways trauma, friendship, women and adventure were portrayed. Perhaps the most dominant idea in the reception of *The Big Parade* was its portrayal of trauma, both in the general horrors of war and on the effect of the protagonist. As mentioned in the last chapter, review after review discussed the audience emotionally engaging with effects of the conflict's violence. Vidor's film portrays a naïve protagonist, completely unprepared for the changes that will overcome him in France, both physical and emotional. Although *Wings* does portray traumatized characters, the effects are nowhere near as extreme as in Vidor's film. To begin, they are not as innocent in the respective films' opening. Whereas Jim Apperson is somewhat adolescent, living a life of privilege; Jack and David are portrayed in a more adult manner despite their youth. They both fight over the same woman, but in *Wings* that woman is sexualized, suburban, American and a long way from the earthy, rural yet near angelic Melisande. It is worth noting that, as evidenced by his letters to his family upon his departure, Wellman was aware that he might not return, and appeared fully willing to make the sacrifice.

The risk of sudden death runs through *Wings*, as exemplified by the scene in which Cadet White (Gary Cooper), a young trainee, dies after taking a lucky charm with him. A clear theme of the film is that the soldiers have no way of knowing when their next mission will be their last. This is historically accurate, and something that was an emerging theme in WWI popular culture at the time. As portrayed in films of the period, different soldiers dealt with this fact differently. Eddie Rickenbacker describes how one soldier admitted he was scared up front and asked the flight commander to assign someone else to his missions.[235] Arthur Gould

[234] Wellman Jr., 114.
[235] Eddie Rickenbacker, *Fighting the Flying Circus*, 41-42.

Lee states that he was not afraid of death, mostly due to his youth, but more afraid of the pain that might happen if his plane caught fire.[236] Rickenbacker also mentions that after a comrade would be killed, the other soldiers would not grieve for him to avoid becoming too emotional, which would compromise flying. The constant presence of death was also a part of the experience of the infantry, but with a key difference- the trenches were places where physical violence was expected, with war sounds and daily shelling.

Another key difference is in the portrayal of friendship. As indicated by the letter quoted above, Wellman place a high value on friendship and many of his films feature a close camaraderie between the characters. In *Wings*, the relationship between David and Jack is exceptionally close, almost brotherly. A key scene in the film is when the two men kiss on the lips as David is dying. Some may interpret the scene as being homoerotic, but Wellman and possibly Saunders are portraying something that many soldiers have reported: that the relationship among them is often the closest that would occur in their entire lives, more so than between spouses, but usually non-sexual. At the same time, however, it is worth noting that many war films of the era contained relationships that could be read as homoerotic, and that it is possible, as Michael Williams indicates, that archetypal imagery of two young male friends may act as an 'alibi' for a homosexual reading.[237]

Wings and *The Big Parade* also differ in their treatment of women. Consistent with the more cynical tone of Wellman's film, Mary Preston lacks the non-sexualized and almost angelic qualities of Melisande. Rather, she is (typical of Bow's persona) a man's fantasy: the girl next door who is interested in traditional male concerns, such as cars, while retaining her feminine sexuality. She also has a maternal role, as evidenced by the film's party scene. In this sequence, Mary, who has joined the Army as a nurse, finds a drunken Jack while on leave in Paris. As he is too inebriated to comprehend the order to return to the front, Mary tries to help Jack by giving him a place to sleep in her room. While changing her clothes, the military police barges in and believing the two are fraternizing, forcing Mary to resign and return to America in disgrace. Jack is never aware of what transpires until he reads about it in the newspaper, which causes his final argument with David. At the film's ending, Jack and Mary,

[236] Lee, 68.
[237] Michael Williams, *Film Stardom, Myth, and Classicism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillion, 2013), 158.

now a couple, sit on Jack's customized car and look at the stars. This scene is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, in addition to being romantic partners, the theme of friendship seems to continue as the two share a 'buddy-like' relationship. That the two look at the evening sky and remember their dead friend gives the ending a somewhat spiritual note.

Finally, the way the two films deal with danger is significantly different. In *The Big Parade*, death is seen as entirely negative and the sudden brush with mortality is a complete surprise that comes when the soldiers suddenly entire combat. When his friend Slim dies, Jim Apperson is in shock and moral outrage. Almost unable to contain his disbelief, he shouts 'They got Slim!' as if to alert others about an unexpected occurrence. In *Wings*, the men are aware of the dangers from a much earlier time, and lose Cadet White in basic training. They are aware that each patrol may be their last, and death may come at any time. However, Wellman portrays the aerial combat sequences as being exciting and somewhat beautiful. In *Wings* and other films that I refer to as Dark Adventures, the real threat of mortality is consistently present with the excitement and exoticism of combat. Wellman takes the threat of death seriously, but does not present the audience with a completely negative portrayal of the war. Thus, death and adventure are intertwined, the thrill of a dogfight and the possibility of the end are textually interlinked.

Marketing

Due to the success of previous war films and Bow's star presence, *Wings* was likely to be a box office success under most circumstances, but Paramount received an unexpected stroke of luck early in 1927, when Charles Lindbergh completed his transatlantic flight from New York to Paris on May 21st. Lindbergh became an instant folk hero in both Europe and North America and this in turn helped to spur public interested in aviation. As *Wings* was a technically innovative film on the subject, the studio was given a huge amount of free publicity.

Figure 8. This poster emphasized both Bow's stardom and the film's spectacle.

The studio adopted a 'big' marketing campaign for the film. Many (though not all) posters for the movie depicted the title in huge letters, dwarfing everything else in the image. During the summer leading up to the film's August 12th premier at New York's Criterion Theater, newspapers ran a serialized version of the movie written by Saunders. A novelization, credited solely to Saunders and not the other screenwriters, was also published. As planned, the movie received a 'roadshow' treatment, with a more expensive ticket and, for equipped theaters, synchronized music and sound effects, and the 'Magnoscope,' a process that doubled the size of the projected image. Used mostly for the flying sequences, the Magnoscope process would usually be referred to by critics favourably, but was rarely the primary focus of the review. Information on the special process is scant, but it is likely that few audiences outside of large cities were able to see *Wings* with the adaptation.

The Magnoscope was not essential to the movie's success, however. The picture was a hit even before it received national distribution, an immediate sucess with both critics and audiences. At this film's New York premier, Mordaunt Hall reported that Commander Robert Byrd stated to Lasky at the intermission 'And I wouldn't say so if I didn't think it.' - the end of a compliment. Later during the premier, a young Air Corps soldier yelled 'That crash in No Man's Land was a real bust-up.' Hall stated that 'scores of others found the realism of the

episodes highly exciting' and that the tension increased in the audience throughout the film. Hall's review indicated that in addition to being exciting, the picture served a social purpose: '…there is an underlying idea throughout some of the episodes that the motto of the gallant warriors of the clouds was: "Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we (may) die"/ This feature gives on an unforgettable idea of the existence of these daring fighters- how they were called upon at all hours of the day and night to soar into the skies and give battle to enemy plans; their light hearted eagerness to enter the fray and also their reckless conduct once they set foot on earth for a time in the dazzling life of the French capital.' Hall understood Wellman's argument- that the airmen's escapades in Paris acted ask both a mask and release to their pent-up fear, trauma and grief. The critic's only negative comments were for Saunders' 'conventional narrative' and for the epilogue, which the critic found too maudlin.[238]

Hall's review and his report on the audience response must have been a great source of relief to Zanuck and Lasky. Not only did they have an audience-pleasing hit on their hands, they also had a movie that could be marketed as serving a legitimate social purpose: remembering the brave veterans of the air, something that print media were happy to play along with. A *Los Angeles Times* reprint of the above interview with Arlen stated that 'When a company sets out to make a photoplay which shall reproduce, as accurately as is possible to do so, the battles of the World War, it has a task on its hands.'[239] An earlier story from the same newspaper noted that '...Wellman wanted to show accurately and truthfully how the flyers sought recreation in Paris and other places he had the Follies Bergere as one of the settings in "Wings." It was faithfully reconstructed down to the pictures on the walls…'[240] Whether or not this fact is true, it does state that media saw the movie as something more than an action epic- a way to remember the brave war veterans. More than one article emphasized Wellman's war experiences.[241][242] *The Washington Post* compared him favorably with Lawrence Stallings.[243]

For the Chicago premiere, the Erlanger Theater was converted into a cinema for the first time. In a rave review entitled '"Wings" is Brilliant, Poignant, and in Spots' Most Too Real', Mae

[238] Mourdant Hall, "The Flying Fighters," *New York Times*, Aug. 13, 1927.
[239] ""Wings" Adventurous Feat," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 29, 1928.
[240] "Tolerant Attitude Towards Flyers Stressed in Film," *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 17, 1927.
[241] "War Hero the Mentor of 'Wings'," *New York Times*, Dec. 4., 1927.
[242] Marquis Busby, ""Wings" Triumph of Youth," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 15, 1928.
[243] "The Spectacular Career of a Director of Spectacles," *Washington Post*, Aug. 12, 1928.

Tinee of *The Chicago Tribune* wrote: 'The air stuff is heart stopping. It is almost too real. Impossible to forget those falling planes hurtling downward with fire devouring their vitals--like strange, wild birds in agony.' Like Hall, Tinee found fault with the writing, which she called 'just another story.' In addition, she found Bow's presence unnecessary, arguing that 'her role and the way she acts it add in the least to the interest of the whole.'[244] The observations about the unoriginal script and Bow's character would be repeated in many reviews. A reader of the *Tribune*, perhaps emblematic of a less elitist audience, wrote that 'I don't know of any picture whose human appeal was so pronounced as that of "Wings." The optience (sic) literally lives through the parts...Tears come to the eyes of men and women alike when Rogers, the conquering hero, returns to the bereaved parents of his best friend. There is humanness as only a mother can understand and appreciate. There is sympathy for the man, a mere boy aged by the experience.'[245] Despite the fact that many critics found the storyline to be trite, this letter is evidence that many members of the audience were moved by the portrayal of the trauma inflicted on the characters. This response and the many accounts of repeat viewings of the movie may indicate that the movie was a far greater emotional experience to the average filmgoer than the reviews would attest. Shortly after the New York premier, *Film Daily* ran a description of the movie for distributors. Claiming it was 'A sure-fire money-maker.', the paper went on to print: 'Any audience will get a tremendous kick out of them [The air combat sequences]. It is unfortunate that the dramatic story was not stronger. Somehow or other, this fact does not vitally detract from the whole. "Wings" is truly the epic of aviation in the Great War and, as such, is certain to make its deep impress on the box office of the country.'[246] The fact that so many viewers found the film to be a moving experience, despite its hackneyed storyline, indicates that death, always present in the film, helped to take the movie into the realm of the Dark Adventure. Instead of the glorious chivalry of Knights in the Air, as one might expect to find in a propaganda film, we see people fighting for a cause they believe in with an actual chance of dying. The action/adventure elements that were read as both exhilarating and giving the film some substantive thematic weight. The trade publication *Variety* agreed that film was going to be a commercial success, stating:

---

[244] Mae Tinee, "'Wings" Is Brilliant, Poignant, and in Spots' Most Tool Real," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 1, 1927.
[245] C.A.G., "The Greatest Picture," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 5, 1928.
[246] "Wings," *Film Daily* (New York), Aug. 21, 1927.

> The air stuff in this one is going to keep it going at the Criterion [theatre] a long time and they're going to turn out for it when it takes to the road. "Wings" is there. / This super [production] is not just a $2 entry for Manhattan. It's a road show – under the strength of that air stuff, a combination of beautiful flying and great camera work. There are thrills and a couple of gasps in it. When the actions settles on terra firma there is nothing present that other war supers haven't had, some to a greater degree. But nothing has possessed the graphic descriptive powers of aerial flying and combat that have been poured into this effort. All of which will carry the 12,600 feet of film currently being unloaded for the populace twice daily. Try and get in-for awhile, anyway.

After praising the movie's technical virtues, including the Magnoscope, the writer calls the story "average", but continues as describing "…human enough Friday to make 90 per cent of the women in the house cry."[247]

From a financial standpoint, the film was a huge success. In New York, the film was 'the greatest hit in the history of Broadway' according to a *Moving Picture World* interview with Paramount executive A. Griffith Grey. In the 10 September interview, Grey stated that every showing of the film had sold out since its release and the film had made $30,115 in advance tickets alone.[248] The movie would run for almost a year in New York,[249] and the *LA Times* reported that the movie was attracting bigger and bigger audiences the longer it was released.[250] Harry Holt, the treasurer of the Biltmore Theater in Los Angeles found that he had 'never observed an attraction at this theater which has drawn so many "repeat" patrons. He [Holt] declares that some people have seen it four times and it has become a custom for the ticket to sellers to even know some of the patrons by their names as they come up for seats for a third or fourth viewing.'[251] The theatre ended up cancelling its bookings for other films to keep showing *Wings*, meaning that Wellman's film exceeded even the expectations of its distributor.[252]

Edwin Schallert of the *LA Times* made an interesting comment in an essay on the flaws of the contemporary film, making him one of the few to question the off-stated realistic content of the movie:

---

[247] Sid, "Wings", Aug. 17, 1927.
[248] "Big Advance Ticket Sale for 'Wings," *Moving Picture World*, Sep. 10, 1927.
[249] "The Spectacular Career of a Director of Spectacles," *Washington Post*. Aug. 12, 1928.
[250] "Aerial Film Attraction to Crowds," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 12, 1928.
[251] "Air Picture Enters its Sixth Week." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 19, 1928.
[252] "Film Now in Eighth Week Here." *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 4, 1928.

> Giving an artificial tone to plots is perhaps the most persistent offense that the films fall into..."Wings" is a particularly fussed up picture, and it could have been told with a finer-grained simplicity than any other story. The screen had something big to say in "Wings" and it should have said this without trying to say it. There has been no great picture of air warfare preceding. It would have been enough to have let the human action take its own power. This isn't the fault of the story in itself, for that could pass; but the treatment, the acting and frequently the direction tend to emphasize rather than subdue the note of artificiality. "Wings" nevertheless has great force as a picture. Its air scenes remain unrivaled, and tremendous. They compensate abundantly. But the picture could have been something far greater than the huge spectacular achievement that it is and could have made its massage of the tragedy of aerial conflict ring much truer even than it does."[253]

The discourse of the realism of *Wings* in contemporary print media is relevant to a cultural study of the film's impact, but frustrating. As stated in previous chapters, the concept of realism is always relative, as movies, even documentaries, do not convey an objective reality. It is likely the air combat scenes, which had never been shown on screen before to that scale, appeared to the audience as realistic, perhaps due to the fact that they had never been exposed to anything like it before and had no frame of reference. What caused the audience to perceive the movie as evoking reality was not the storyline, but the style: nothing had been presented in this way before, and an audience with no expectations was enthralled. Other films, such as the previously discussed *The Heart of Humanity*, had featured aerial combat sequences, but none had anywhere near the extent contained in Wellman's film. The use of real airplanes performing actual stunts must have been thrilling to most audiences.

The film would receive another honour that would seem more impressive in later years than it appeared at the time. The movie was chosen as the 'Best Production' by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences of the 1927-28 season, beating Lewis Milestone's *The Racket* and another war film, Borzage's *Seventh Heaven*. At the time, the Academy was a new institution and most of the pre-announced winners did not attend the ceremony to pick up their statues. *Wings*' status as the answer to the trivia question 'What film won the first Academy Award for Best Picture' is further threatened by two additional facts. The first is that for the 1927-28 ceremony, the Academy actually gave out two 'Best Picture' awards, one for 'Outstanding Production' and one for 'Unique and Artistic Production', thereby roughly dividing Hollywood product in entertainment and art. The later award was won by F.W.

[253] Edwin Schallert, "Can There Be a Cinema Classic?" *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 22, 1928.

Murnau's *Sunrise: A Song for Two Humans* (1927). *Wings*' victory also becomes less impressive when one takes into account that the Academy disqualified Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus* (1928) from contention. Fearing that Chaplin would dominate all of the categories, the board presented him with an Honorary Oscar. Wellman was not nominated and the movie received only one other award, for 'Engineering Effects', a catch-all category for technical achievements not covered by the Cinematography or Interior Decoration awards,[254] that was almost certainly a reward for the dogfight sequences.

Hell's Angels

One of the individuals who witnessed *Wings* was independent producer and oil industry tycoon Howard Hughes.[255] Hughes remains one of the colourful figures of the 20th century. The Texas millionaire inherited a massive fortune at the time of his father's death at age 18. Coming into such a large amount of wealth at such a young age meant that Hughes was able to pursue whatever career he wanted, and he choose, partially due to his father's industry connections, to go into films. Although Hughes considered his first film so bad that he did not release it, his second was a surprise critical and financial success. His third, *Two Arabian Knights* (1927), a WWI comedy directed by Lewis Milestone, performed likewise.[256]

According to biographers Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele, the magnate had taken a limited role when it came to production up to this point.[257] For his next films he would be a much more active participant.[258] Hughes had developed an interest in aviation, and it might seem that his interest in flying film would be to directly follow Wellman's achievement. However, a 1930 interview in *Photoplay* indicates that the idea for *Hell's Angels* was actually conceived by Hughes' friend, Marshall Neilan, and that the project was conceived before Wellman's film was released.[259] From the start, the film was planned as an epic, budgeted at

[254] Mason Wiley and Damien Bona, *Inside Oscar: The Unofficial History of the Academy Awards* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), 3.
[255] Peter Harry Brown and Pat H. Broeske, *Howard Hughes: The Untold Story* (London: Little, Brown and Company. 1996), 47.
[256] Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, *Howard Hughes: His Life and Madness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1979), 61.
[257] Ibid., 62.
[258] Brown and Broeske, 47.
[259] Bogart Rogers, "4 Million Dollars and 4 Men's Lives," *Photoplay*, April 1930, 32.

$2 million, all of which would be put up by Hughes personally.[260] In a 1929, interview, Hughes reported 'We [Hughes and Neilan] worked on the story together. Neilan wanted a story of the German flying corps. I was afraid to confine the story just to the Germans, so I thought it was better to go with the story alone.'[261]

Hughes selected Neilan as director. Hughes then argued with him to the point that Neilan was released for his duties, though sources do not indicate if he quit or was fired. Luther Reed was chosen as his replacement, but walked off the project after two months. Hughes then took over as director. As he was a flier himself, he had knowledge about aviation that would be of great assistance to the production. Unlike Paramount, he did not enlist the help of the US Air Corps and instead spent around $500,000 purchasing forty warplanes for use on his film.[262]

This purchase and Hughes' total control gave rise to a problem. As his own producer and financier, Hughes could spend as much money as he wanted to, without having to justify his choices to anyone. The tycoon's reputation for obsessive devotion to his projects began with *Hell's Angels*. At one point, he flew one of the film's planes for a particularly dangerous stunt, which resulted in a crack in his skull and damage to his brain and spinal cord.[263] Although the director would survive, publicity would report that the film cost the lives of three of the crew. The first involved a mechanic who failed to jump out of an intentionally crashed plane in time. In the second, a pilot who crashed while filming a battle scene in Oakland, California and a third while transporting a plane for production.[264] Bogart Rogers reports that another, a camera operator who had a stroke during the film, possibly due to stress, is debatable.[265] An *LA Times* story also reported that there was a near miss when a plane crashed into multiple cameras, almost killing one of the operators.[266] While this kind of coverage could not be considered to be entirely positive, it does emphasize the lengths that Hughes was going through to make his film, which promised interworking elements of

[260] Brown and Broeske, 47.
[261] Marquis Busby, ""Hell's Angels" to Take Flight," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 3, 1929.
[262] Rogers, 48.
[263] Rogers, 48-50.
[264] Rosalind Shaffer, "Tragedy Stalks Realism in Films," *Chicago Daily Tribune.* May 31, 1929.
[265] Rogers, 102.
[266] Marquis Busby, "'Hell's Angels' to Take Flight," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 3, 1929.

spectacle and authenticity. The mogul was using his money to realistically recreate the 'bigness' of the aerial conflict.

Hughes found that he had some of the same issues with aerial photography that Wellman had faced. He described some of his technical problems in a 1930 interview: 'The trouble with 'Wings' and the other aviation films had been that half the time audiences didn't know whether they were cheering the Allies or for the enemy. And that wouldn't do for "Hell's Angels." / So we painted the German Fokkers black and the British planes- the Sopwith Snipes and Camels and the S.E.5's - a cream color that would show up as grey. At one time it had been my intention to do the air sequences in color, but I wasn't satisfied with the way the different processes photographed distances so I abandoned them. Too blurred.'[267] Also like Wellman, Hughes felt the need to have his actors pilot some of the planes themselves. The production went on for so long that eventually star James Hall reported that he was bored with all the flying, save for an incident in which he and co-star Ben Lyon were almost killed when a plane suddenly failed.[268]

The movie began production on Halloween, 1927,[269] and finally appeared to finish in February, 1929.[270] Like *Wings*, the film took a very long time to make for its era. Press reports reveal that in mid-1929, the movie was considered almost finished and that Hughes had even booked the George M. Cohen Theater in New York for the premier.[271] Apparently near the last moment, Hughes felt that he needed to convert the film to sound. Whether this was actually a financially necessity is an open question. MGM was still releasing silent films well into the year, and it is possible that the film would have a financial success even given its silent status. Hughes stormed ahead, however, adding another $1.7 million to the budget.[272] The new sound script was written by Joseph Moncure March, from the silent story written by Hughes and Neilan.[273] An *LA* Times story stated that Howard Estabrook had been hired, but his participation appears to have been minimal.[274] Just how much of the silent film's story was

---

[267] Phillip K Scheuer, "Hughes Expects to Laugh Last," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1930.
[268] "Flying Called "No Fun"," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 15, 1930.
[269] Rogers, 33.
[270] Brown and Broeske, 52.
[271] "'Hell's Angels' Almost Ready," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 2, 1929.
[272] Brown and Broeske, 53.
[273] Barlett and Steele, 66.
[274] "Estabrook Will Start Work on 'Hell's Angels'," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 31, 1929.

altered is unclear. Most sources do indicate widespread dissatisfaction with the original plot. According to Jean Harlow's biographer Irving Shulman, most of the screenplay needed to be re-written, which implies more than just writing dialogue for the sound scenes. As was his proclivity, Hughes told March that money would be no object with the new script. [275]

The long series of artists involved with the project increased when James Whale was brought onto the production. An English former POW, Whale had achieved success as a theatre director with R.C. Sheriff's war play *Journey's End* (1928) and was eagerly awaiting the opportunity to turn it into a film. (Whale's war experiences and *Journey's End* will be discussed more in the next chapter.) Although Whale would be credited as 'dialogue director', Hughes' *Photoplay* interview seems to indicate that the dialogue scenes were directed solely by Whale, and his biographer Mark Gatiss describes him as influencing Monash with the writing and 'supervising the post-production.' [276] A *New York Times* interview reported that Whale convinced Hughes to re-shoot the film in sound, but no other source supports this. The article later contradicts itself, stating that Whale '...had been drafted by Mr. Hughes to supervise the dialogue alone, not only suggested that most of the story be scrapped but that the cast be changed.' [277] It is more likely that the second statement is true, and that Whale heavily influenced the story, but only after Hughes had decided to re-shoot the picture for sound.

Given Whale's close involvement with the story, dialogue and post-production elements of the film, along with its thematic similarity to his other work, it is not an unreasonable argument to consider Whale a co-auteur of the project with Hughes. In fact, it appears that after production of the sound sequences began, the tycoon finally relaxed control, possibly due to lack of interest with any scenes not involving airplanes. Few accounts of the production mention Hughes prominently in relation to the actors after the casting of the sound elements were completed, and he seems to have been far more interested in innovating new ways of recording airplane sounds, which necessitated an invention of a new microphone. In fact, the obsessive producer seemed more proud of providing authentic sounds that pilots would recognize than a plausible human story. [278]

---

[275] Irving Shulman, Harlow: An Intimate Biography (New York: Random House, 1964), 74.
[276] Mark Gatiss, *James Whale: A Biography* (London: Cassell, 1995), 45, 47.
[277] "British Director's Views," *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1930.
[278] Phillip K Scheuer, "Hughes Expects to Laugh Last," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1930.

Hall and Lyon were held over from the silent version, but Hughes decided that Greta Nissen's Norwegian accent would render her implausible as a British aristocrat.[279] She was replaced by Jean Harlow, a then unknown actress who had been given her big break. The casting of Harlow did not negate that the film had some decidedly inconsistant vocalizations. Hall, Lyon and Harlow were all playing English characters but spoke in an American vernacular, as did John Darrow, who played German Karl Arnstedt. By contrast, American actor Lucien Prival adopted a stereotypical Teutonic intonation as the German antagonist. Much of the supporting cast would be played by both Americans and English actors.

By the time of its release, the movie's extremely long gestation had become an industry joke in Hollywood. Barlett and Steele quote a statement that 'the only living person who could remember when *Hell's Angels* started' was 105.[280] and actor Lyon had joked that he wished he would live long enough to see the film open.[281] The above mentioned *Photoplay* interview seems to imply the Hughes was mentally ill for his investment in the movie, and also implies that he may have been overly zealous in demands for dangerous aerial stunts.[282]

The final film would feature Whale's dialogue scenes combined with Hughes silent combat sequences, with overdubbed sound effects. A few of the silent exteriors with Hall and Lyon feature their voices, added in post-production. Adding to the prestige quality of the film, one episode, a society ball, was shot in two-strip Technicolor. Pre-release publicity for the film played up its enormous budget along with, somewhat morbidly, the fact that three of crew perished making it. According to both the *New York Times* and *Photoplay*, the final cost of the film was over $4 million.[283]

Hell's Angels concerns itself with the story of Monte (Lyon) and Roy Rutledge (Hall) two brothers who are students at Oxford when war breaks out. The two could not be more different in terms of personality. Roy is a straight arrow idealist while Monte is hedonistic and sexually open. Both men are somewhat immature and both are in love with the same woman, Helen (Jean Harlow). After defending London from a Zeppelin attack that fails

[279] Shulman, 73.
[280] Barlett and Steele, 67.
[281] Muriel Babcock, "Lyon Out of Air Pocket," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 1, 1930.
[282] Rogers 30-33, 118-119.
[283] Rogers 30-31, "An Angel to Angels," *New York Times,* May 11, 1930.

partially due to the treason of their German friend Karl, the brothers are posted overseas. Monte, who is considered by the other men in his unit to be a coward, volunteers for a near suicide mission in which a captured German plane is used in a bombing mission to prove his bravery. Roy joins him and the two men are captured as spies, but not before Roy suffers a final indignity when Helen reveals that she never loved him. After their capture, Monte panics and offers to give the Germans vital Allied war plans in exchange for his life, but Roy kills him before he has the chance. Roy is executed by firing squad just before the battle commences, implying that the mission was a success.

In its framing device of two men (in this case literal brothers) fighting over the love of a woman who follows them to the continent, as well as two large aerial combat action sequences, the movie follows the basic premise and structure of *Wings* but *Hell's Angels* is a far darker, cynical and at times subversive film. The picture's most subversive element may not be intentional but it comes from an intriguing source: the performance of James Hall as Roy Rutledge. Hall's character is written as an absolute straight shooter idealist, the kind that would often be played in contemporary films by Richard Barthelmess (although not in his Great War film *The Dawn Patrol*). However, his performance seems to suggest that Roy is somewhat dense and almost childlike in his beliefs, as well as myopic in his inability to understand that the cynical outlook on life shared by both Helen and his brother, and presumably by society at large. It is hard to understand why he would find himself attracted to a woman as unwholesome and promiscuous Helen in the first place. Whether this is intentional or a result of mannered acting by Hall is impossible to ascertain with certainty.

Another ambiguous element of the film is its depiction of Monte's cowardice, or perhaps, lack thereof. In the film's second half, it is revealed that Monte feigns illness to avoid flying and he later concedes that he is faking due to his fear of death. Later, he is willing to betray his country and collaborate in exchange for his own life. However, the arguments he puts forth (that the war is a joke, that the men are being abused by the governments who actually believe their own propaganda and that he is simply expressing his human desire to live) are not explicitly condemned by Whale and/or Hughes. This may be due to Whale's somewhat proscenium camera work, which results in some visual ambiguity regarding which character the audience is intended to sympathize with, but it may also be intentional. The movie is also more sexual than *Wings*, as in the scenes where Monte encourages Roy to cavort with

prostitutes before their likely suicide mission. Again, Whale does not explicitly condemn this activity, nor does he use any techniques to indicate that this behavior is not ethical.

It is in this portrayal of death that the Dark Adventure themes are expanded from *Wings*. As mentioned by nearly every reviewer, the primary draw to audience were the aerial combat scenes. Unexpectedly, the framing storyline is imbued with fatalism. Neither Roy nor Monte seemed particularly content before the war started, and the home front lacks the innocence or beauty found in either *The Big Parade* or *Wings*. The stakes for the characters are more basic, primarily survival. Roy and Karl, the two primary characters in the film who perform noble actions, end up dead, while Monte, who is willing to betray his country, also dies. The adventure comes from spectacle and the potential for the characters to survive, not to find love or necessarily live up to high ideals.

Like *Wings*, the industrial reception of *Hell's Angels* was positive. I could find no review of the film in *Variety,* but the headline in the short notice and extremely positive notice in *Film Daily* described that 'MIGHTY SPECTACLE OF THE AERIAL SIDE OF THE WAR, AFFORDS TREMENDOUS BOX OFFICE ENTERTAINMENT.' The notice praised the spectacle and, departing from other reviews, the cast, though it did describe that '…the events transpiring are so awe-inspiring that they minimize a conventional treatment of the subject.'[284] The commercial success of the film was not much in doubt.

Reviews were generally conditionally positive, giving exceptional praise to aerial scenes but condemning the story as hackneyed and unoriginal. The world premiere at Grauman's Chinese Theater was a typically Hughesian event, featuring $11 seats and an airplane show over the city.[285] Myra Nye reported 'Never was the sky of Hollywood more brilliantly illuminated, never were the white smoke screens made by airman more lavish and never were the air stunts more brilliantly hazardous.'[286] The movie was preceded by a half hour live prologue[287], and the film finally began at 10:45, ending at 1:30 AM.[288] The spectacle would be repeated in New York. Rosalind Shaffer of *The New York Times* attended the premier and described

[284] "Hell's Angels," *Film Daily*, Aug. 24, 1930.
[285] "And Now All That Trouble Seems Not Half So Futile," *Washington Post*, Jun. 22, 1930.
[286] Myra Nye, "Society of Cinemaland," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 1, 1930.
[287] Muriel Babcock, "Lyon Out of Air Pocket," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 1, 1930.
[288] Edwin Schallert, "Great Thrills in Air Feature," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1930.

'parachute jumpers flying through the rays of light which were shot into the sky from the first and were augmented by rainbow lights directed on planes by the arcs from the boulevard.' When she finally described the actual film in sixth paragraph, she states 'The showing of "Hell's Angels" proved a sensation, due mainly to the remarkable air scenes…Probably no one will ever equal these air scenes. But the story they illustrate unfortunately must have partly fallen on the cutting room floor, for by the time the heroine, Jean Harlow…goes wrong, nobody cares.'[289] The New York premiere would also have the gimmick of opening at two theatres at the same time.[290] All of this spectacle, both on screen and in advertising, demonstrates the movie's unspoken goal- to replicate the success of *Wings* by being the apotheosis of it. Although both films were partially sold to the public on their authenticity to the air war, the two approaches had key differences. In *Wings*, authenticity seemed to mean honestly portraying the experience of the air war both in the skies and in the traumatized minds of the men who fought it, whereas in *Hell's Angels*, authenticity was linked to an almost obsessive interest in accurately reproducing the technology of the war.

In his review, Mordaunt Hall shared these complaints, finding 'in every instance when so soon as the producer forgets Helen, the flaxan-haired creature, and takes to the war, his film is absorbing and exciting. But while she is the center of attraction the picture is a most mediocre piece of work.' He would find fault with the Oxford scenes as well.[291] In a rare second review, he called the movie 'a strange combination of brilliance and banality.' Hall presented an unusually long description of the zeppelin attack, indicating what he thought was the film's highlight.[292]

Mae Tinee gave the film a four star review, raving about the aerial sequences: 'There has never been anything to compare even faintly with the air stuff in "Hell's Angels". There are examples of physical daring that make you shudder.' She contrasted them with an 'unremarkable' story, and found Harlow 'no great shakes an actress.' However, owing to the movie's cynical tone, she applauded Hughes 'for omitting marshmallow sauce from the finale!'[293] Ironically, although Harlow was criticized more than the other actors for her

[289] Rosalind Shaffer, "'Hell's Angels in Spectacular First Showing," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 8th, 1930.
[290] "Two Theaters for Talkie," *New York Times*, Jul. 25, 1930.
[291] Mordaunt Hall, "Hell's Angels," *New York Times*, Aug. 16,, 1930.
[292] Mordaunt Hall, "Exciting Air Battles" *New York Times*, Aug. 24', 1930.
[293] Tinee, Mae, "Long Awaited Air Spectacle Wins Four Stars," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 23, 1930.

performance, she would be the only actor from the film to attain stardom. In a 1929 interview, James Hall stated that Roy Rutledge was '...the most wonderful part I'll ever have.'[294] Neither Hall nor Lyon reached anything close to the heights of *Hell's Angels* in their careers. The real star of the film was its aerial sequences.

Unlike their treatment of *Wings*, the popular press contained far fewer descriptions of the movie's sociological importance or its role as a tribute to veterans, most likely because the movie had a far more ambiguous portrayal of patriotism than its predecessor (and significantly, none of its characters were American), and the fact that *All Quiet on the Western Front*, discussed in the next chapter, had already caused a major discussion about the war in popular culture. One of the few accounts relating the movie to the historical event it was based on was an *LA Times* article by air veteran Major C.C. Mosley. Mosley had an extremely strong emotional reaction to the film: 'I saw 'Hell's Angels' last Tuesday night and what a picture that is! It actually shows you the things the gang who flew at the front has been trying to explain for twelve years...My sleep has been ruined every night since Tuesday, fighting the war all over again in my dreams....I almost passed out helping keep the ships from colliding in the big 'dog fights' where about forty or fifty skips are milling around exactly like the big scraps during the war.' In a compliment to Hughes, the Major was impressed that the planes were 'hauled around in the sky by regular pilots who know their stuff.' Apparently impressed by the portrayal of Karl and ignoring Prival's stereotyped role, he found 'The Germans, instead of being portrayed as terrible ogres in the usual silly manner, are, on the contrary, shown as real human beings they are, with high ideals, unselfish, lovers of home, country and friends and strange as it may seem now, are, after all, about the same as ourselves.' Mosley's only criticism was for 'The scene at the officers' mess where Ben Lyon is denounced as yellow, is, of course, one of the little Hollywood touches that someone sneaked in on Mr. Hughes-it isn't at all like an officers' mess or anything that ever happened in one- but don't let that bother you. Forget it and watch the flying; it is probably the nearest approach to the flying done at the front during the great war that will ever be made.'[295]

[294] "Hall Weary of Hero-Ing," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 20, 1929.
[295] C.C. Mosley, "War Ace Gets Thrill From Air Combat Film," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 1, 1930.

Mosley's reaction indicates that despite the complaints from several critics about the storyline and Harlow's performance, Hughes had achieved his artistic goals. He was always more interested in presenting an 'authentic' portrayal of the air war in its most literal aspect: the air fighting. He had delegated the storyline and direction of the actors, at least in the sound version, to others, because that was what interested him the least. For Hughes, realism was technical recreation of the mechanics of flying. The psychology and the effect of trauma on the fighters were nowhere near as important.

Although spectacle was a key element of the air war film, the dark elements were beginning to outweigh the adventure, as evidenced by another war film of the year, Howard Hawks' *The Dawn Patrol*. In this film, Richard Barthelmess plays a pilot who is promoted to commander of the squadron, meaning that he must determine which young men to send to their deaths. Hawks' film has a morbid and somber tone in it that renders it more serious than either *Wings* or *Hell's Angels*. In a certain sense, Hughes' film was an anachronism, as the release of other war films had made it difficult to see the war as any kind of an adventure.

Setting aside the spectacle elements and the idea that the audience would 'enjoy' them, the themes of *Hell's Angels*: the sudden and random presence of death, fatalism bordering on nihilism and a nationalistic view of the conflict, were emblematic of other films in the year of its release. The Dark Adventure war film cycle of the late 20s and 30s capitalized on the war trauma portrayed in *The Big Parade* and *What Price Glory*, but combined it with standard plot elements often found in fictional portrayals of war: brotherhood, spectacle, and action. However, as these films found popularity, other war works were released that would take the portrayal of trauma and negativity even further. These works, among them Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1927) and R.C. Sherriff's play *Journey's End* (1928), would later find success on the screen, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: The Black Void

As discussed in the last chapter, in the late 20s, many films used the war as the subject for adventure, but such movies often had a dark and serious undertone. This chapter discusses a development that ran parallel to this in popular culture and entered the world of cinema in the early 30s- what I call 'the Black Void' This phrase is partially inspired by a term used by Modris Eksteins in his article 'The Cultural Impact of the Great War' in which he refers to people who saw the war as a 'horrific blank, signifying nothing of world-historical importance.' He later also refers to the war as a 'Great Nothing.'[296] However, my use of the term does not refer to the conflicts geo-political significance, or lack thereof, but rather the effect on the individual psyche of those who fought it. I will argue that the Black Void constitutes a group of texts in various forms of media about the war which emphasize a heavy degree of trauma, fatalism and nihilism. Art that concerns itself with this concept tends to see the war as being essentially chaotic and meaningless and the war as the cause of untold psychic suffering. Films that concern themselves with the Black Void tend to emphasize coping mechanisms for war trauma that include emotional dissociation, stoicism, and self-medication with sex and alcohol. As with the Dark Adventure, many of these movies had actual veterans of the conflict serving in various artistic capacities. Using the method of the previous chapters of analysing contemporary newspaper and magazine articles as well production histories of the films, I will discuss how these films took the portrayal of physical and psychological trauma to a previously unseen level. I focus my discussion on two movies; both released in 1930- *Journey's End* and *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Journey's End

The film of *Journey's End* is can be classified as both British and American. It was financed entirely with British money but was filmed entirely in the United States. As this is a thesis about American reception, I will only going to describe the film beyond its theatrical origins and production history in terms of its effects on and interaction with American culture about the war. A discussion of the film of *Journey's End* is also essential as it is an auteur film from James Whale, who directed two other films discussed in this thesis, *Hell's Angels*, as discussed in the last chapter and *The Road Back*, which will be examined in Chapter VI. As a

[296] Modis Eksteins, "The Cultural Impact of the Great War," in *Film and the First World War*, ed. Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 202.

piece theatrical literature, *Journey's End* has enjoyed a place in British culture since its publication in 1929. As described by Robert Gore-Langton in his book *Journey's End: The Classic War Play Explored*, it is a standard text for many children in British schools and has been revived successfully many times. A 2004 revival from David Grindley ran for more than two years.[297] However, aside from the brief period of time discussed below, it is almost entirely unknown in the United States. The play was written by R.C. Sherriff, a Great War veteran from Richmond upon Thames, London. As Gore-Langton describes, Robert Cedric Sherriff was born into a middle class family and intended to follow his father's career in the insurance industry, but enlisted in the Army at age eighteen upon the outbreak of hostilities. Intending to be an officer, he was rejected. He was later accepted into officer's training in 1915, after the initial round of officers were mostly slaughtered in the early days of the conflict.[298] Posted into the East Surrey Regiment, Sherriff was at the front lines of conflict at several occasions, such as Vimy Ridge.[299] Gore-Langton reports that by the spring of 1917, Sherriff was suffering from severe mental stress due to his war experiences. He quotes a letter written by his subject: 'I feel I would be willing to do anything- resign my commission and work at any kind of work as long as I am only away from the awful crash of explosions which sometimes quite numb me.'[300] Later, in a letter to his father, Sherriff described an idea that would play a major role in *Journey's End*: 'The suspense of long hours of duty in the line tells upon you…I think nearly everyone gets to this state sooner or later and it is of course a question of their powers of being able to conceal their fear after that.'[301]

Sherriff suffered a career-ending injury at the Battle of Passchendaele, when he was hit by an exploding German shell. One of his friends who had been nearer the explosion was killed.[302] While convalescing, he seemed to have ambiguous views about returning to the front lines, writing to a regiment friend that he was looking forward to re-joining them, while also stating to his father 'I shall not of course hesitate to report any trouble with my head for I think 10 1/2 months is quite a sufficient spell out there and that I am due at least a couple of months off in England.'[303] These paradoxical statements probably spoke to the ambiguity that many

[297] Caroline Ansdell, "Journey's End," whatsonstage.com, May 24, 2004, http://www.whatsonstage.com/west-end-theatre/reviews/05-2004/journeys-end_25539.html.
[298] Robert Gore-Langton. *Journey's End: The Classic War Play Explored* (London: Oberon Books, 2013), 4-8
[299] Ibid., 30.
[300] Ibid., 44.
[301] Ibid., 45
[302] Ibid., 55-57.
[303] Ibid., 58

soldiers felt. On the one hand, he may have felt a duty to his country and to his fellow men; on the other, he clearly states that he has paid his dues and suffered more than enough. This duality would find its way into the play. Sherriff was not dismissed from the Army due to his wounds; instead, he was given a desk job in Scotland that lasted through the duration of the war. He was discharged in January of 1919.[304] Like most war veterans, the war had a major and telling effect on his life. Throughout the 20s, Sherriff remained a successful enough artist to find someone to consistently produce his work, but with little notoriety. Until *Journey's End*, he was unable to quit his day job at an insurance office. His literary work concerned itself with a variety of subjects, with only one involving war material.

The Play

The genesis for the project that would become *Journey's End* started when Sherriff conceived a novel about hero worship at public schools. The premise involved Stanhope, once a role model to younger students and now an alcoholic, being discovered and helped by Raleigh, a younger boy who once idolized him. At some point, Sherriff set upon the idea to change the setting from the post-war homefront to the trenches the change the novel into a play.[305] The title, *Journey's End*, came from the closing line of a chapter in a book that was lost to his memory.[306] The finished play features Stanhope as protagonist, although he does not appear until about twenty minutes into the production. We are initially introduced to the young Raleigh as he is himself introduced to the dugout and realities of trench life. Stanhope is angry that Raleigh has been assigned to his unit, as he knows that he will not be able to maintain the illusion that he is in total control of his faculties. As indicated by Gore-Langton, 'He drinks not to evade his responsibilities but so that he is better able to perform them.'[307] A German invasion is imminent, and Stanhope and the experienced officers are aware that they are probably doomed, which provides a contrast with the naiveté of the young Raleigh. A great deal of the dialogue involves seemingly trivial conversations about food (Whale commented 'That's about all there was to think about in Flanders during the war'[308]), but it becomes clear to the audience that these conversations are actually an attempt by the men at distraction from the overwhelming sense of fatalism that surrounds them, taken nearly to the

[304] Ibid., 58
[305] Ibid., 65
[306] Ibid., 65
[307] Ibid., 45
[308] James Curtis, James *Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 55.

point of compulsive ritual. A key scene is when Stanhope confronts a soldier claiming to suffer from neuralgia (a condition that causes pain in the nerves that Sherriff actually suffered from) and convincing him to stay and fight, even though both men know it is likely the soldier will be killed. The scene reveals one of the main themes of the play: that honour and loyalty are the only thing that men have left. They are not necessarily fighting for political or patriotic reasons as much as they are to maintain their personal dignity to themselves and to each other.

Sherriff submitted the play to literary agent Curtis Brown, who then contacted the Incorporated Stage Society, a not-for-profit organization. At this point, accounts of the production of the play diverge. Sherriff states that the Society was ambivalent and wanted an endorsement, which caused the playwright to ask George Bernard Shaw for his opinion of his work. Shaw's report on the play was not a ringing encouragement, but he was in favour of *Journey's End* being produced. That appeared to be enough. However, Gore Langton reports that years later, the secretary of the Stage Society wrote in a gossip column that the organization was so desperate for a play to fill their schedule that they were going push ahead with *Journey's End* no matter what.[309] Regardless, Sherriff's play was going to be seen on stage.

The choice of director would prove fateful. Although not the first choice (Miles Malleson turned the play down)[310] James Whale would prove to be one of the prime reasons for the success of both the play and subsequent film. Whale was a war veteran himself. Born in the small West Midlands mining town of Dudley, the director had a relatively uneventful life until he joined the Army during the war. Like Sherriff, he was selected for officer training, eventually becoming a Second Lieutenant in 1916.[311] Also like Sherriff, Whale saw the realities of trench life and the Battle of Passchendaele. Unlike the writer, the war experience did not end with an injury and a safe desk job. Whale was captured in August of 1917 and spent the remainder of the war in German POW camp. According to Curtis, although the director occasionally spoke about his war experiences, it was usually in the form of a humorous or amusing anecdote.[312] In keeping with his reserved and sophisticated nature, he rarely discussed the intense feelings of fear and melancholy he must have felt. As discussed

[309] Gore-Langton, 66-67
[310] Ibid., 67
[311] Curtis, 17
[312] Ibid., 20-21.

in the last chapter, many soldiers found that they had positive experiences in the war, and although his time in the POW camp must have obviously been difficult, he managed to discover a new passion: directing theatre. With endless hours and nothing to do, many camps ended up putting on plays for the soldiers (something Jean Renoir would later portray in *Grand Illusion*).[313]

Throughout the 20s, Whale worked as an actor, director and set designer in various capacities. By 1927, it might be argued that he had risen to a level of basic success without experiencing a great degree of fame. His selection for the Stage Society production of *Journey's End* is probably owed equally to his willingness to work cheaply as much as to his status as a veteran. Whale designed the interior of the trench dugout, the play's only set, himself.[314] The cast for the two performances would include no celebrity actors, but one who would go on to great fame: Laurence Olivier as Stanhope. As Gore-Langton observes, the long term of success of the play was ultimately due to London theatre critics championing the production, particularly James Agate in an extremely positive review on the BBC.[315] Eventually, mainstream producers became interested and the play was given transfered to the West End. Olivier, however, had moved on to another project and was unable to reprise his role as Stanhope and was replaced by Colin Clive. The initial performance was attended by high ranking figures in the British military as well as many of the London literati.[316] The audience on the opening night was so overcome with emotion that at the conclusion of the play there was initially no applause, until an avalanche of sound burst out.[317] Reviews were extremely positive.[318] The first few performances of the play were so successful that producer Maurice Browne was able to negotiate the most expensive deal for a non-musical play in the West End. The play was guaranteed a run of twelve weeks (it long surpassed that) at £1,000 a week.[319]

A common theme in the reception of the play was its supposed accuracy in terms of the war. Despite the lack of explicit romance and all male cast, Gore-Langton quotes Sherriff: 'Women recognized their sons, their brothers or their husbands, many of whom had not

[313] Ibid., 20-24
[314] Gore-Langton. 67.
[315] Ibid., 69-72.
[316] Ibid., 76.
[317] Curtis 70.
[318] Gore-Langton 76-77
[319] Ibid., 77.

returned. The play made it is possible for them to journey into the trenches and share the lives that their men had led.'[320] In keeping with the idea of the play as a way that non-veterans could understand the war experience, Sergeant Ormshy, a Yorkshire V.C. who saw the play as part of a visit to London for Armistice Day, commented on behalf of his colleagues: 'We would like 'Journey's End' to be seen in every town in the country. It was so real. It was the finest thing I've ever seen in my life.' Sergeant Welch, another member of the group, stated that 'There were some moments that brought back to my mind scenes in dug-outs which I thought I'd forgotten. I saw men I'd known, the reckless, the indifferent, the nervous, the man that was almost afraid and pretended that he didn't care a damn.' The reporter then describes Welch's wife commenting that the family was trying to forget the war, to which her husband 'insisted that the play ought to be seen by young folks who knew nothing about the war.' The reporter then quotes Welch a final time: 'It's real, it's true, and they [the young people] ought to know it. Then they would understand the Centograph service and the big silence better.'[321] Despite the fact that a play cannot disseminate through an entire nation in the same way a novel or a film can, *Journey's End* would become a major touchstone in British culture, through tours,[322] the film adaptations and later through other productions. The London correspondent in *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* reported that the brutal winter of 1929 caused a decline in attendance at most West End theatres except for Sherriff's play, which was continually popular. Again, the commentator mentioned the play's realism, stating that 'It tells of war without frills or flourishes, as war was.[323]

Despite its essential Britishness, the play went on to become a successful production in America. Whale followed a company of British actors to New York to prepare the Broadway production, this time starring Colin Keith-Johnson.[324] The play was also an immediate success on Broadway, running for 13 months at Henry Miller's Theatre.[325] Curtis quotes actor Jack Hawkins as saying 'The day after the opening, the theatre was booked solid for the next three months.'[326] At one point, a special performance was given for cadets at the West

[320] James Dunn, "Women Thrilled by Dugout Drama," *Daily Mail* Feb. 19, 1929, quoted in Robert Gore-Langton, *Journey's End: The Classic War Play Explored* (London: Oberon Books, 2013) 82.
[321] "Yorkshire V.C.'s," *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer,* Nov. 12, 1929.
[322] "'Journey's End'" *The Daily Mail* (Hull, England), Nov. 12, 1929.
[323] A.E., ""Journey's End"," *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer,* Feb. 21, 1929.
[324][324] Curtis, 74
[325] "'Journey's End' To Close at Last", *The New York Times*, May 15, 1930.
[326] Curtis, 74.

Point military academy. The *New York Times* reported that 'The players received what was said to be the longest applause ever given by the cadets to any organization.' The cadets apparently thought the play realistic as the reporter stated: 'It seemed to the future officers of the United States army that the actors were thoroughly in sympathy with the odd situation in the World War which they presented.'[327]

Due to the success of the play, Whale was offered a contract with Paramount Pictures,[328] which was in the midst of the transition to sound and needed theatre directors who were familiar with and who knew how to use dialogue. He was given a brief contract by Paramount as a dialogue director, but he ended up having relatively little to do and played a minor artistic role in the films that he was involved in.[329] Whale's main stroke of luck came when he was selected to direct the non-combat scenes (and assist to develop the sound story) by Howard Hughes for *Hell's Angels*, as discussed in the last chapter.

The Film Adaptation

Despite working on almost every production of the play in the US and UK, Whale was not the first choice for the director of the film version of Sherriff's play. Even though he had essentially been the auteur behind the non-combat scenes of *Hell's Angels*, the fact that Hughes was given credit as director and was generally seen as the mastermind behind the production presumably stifled his reputation. The film rights to *Journey's End* were bought by Gainsborough Pictures, who were motivated by an attempt to keep American producer Morris Gest away. Curtis describes their motive as to 'keep the rights to *Journey's End* in British hands.'[330] Their first choice for director was V. Gareth Gundrey, who was also commissioned to write the script. However, a number of factors made Gundrey's candidacy as director problematic. For one, it was decided that to save time and rush the film out before Universal's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the movie would be made in America, owing to the lack of appropriate sound studios in the UK. Gundrey had directed only silents, and it was known that Whale was about to assist on the sound scenes in *Hell's Angels*. Curtis

[327] "West Point Ovation for' Journey's End'," *New York Times*, January 27th, 1930.
[328] Curtis 76
[329] Ibid., 77-84.
[330] Ibid., 91.

reports that the latter artist was selected for the film, mainly due to his experience with the stage play and the fact that he was already in the United States.[331]

The production of *Journey's End* would be a conundrum: a film about a very British subject, with a British director and a mostly British cast (David Manners, the film's Raleigh, was Canadian but spoke with a diction that meant he could appear passable as English and German Werner Klinger played the captured POW), but filmed in the United States. Colin Clive was temporarily released from his role on the West End to play Stanhope in the film.[332]

Figure 9. The nervous but controlled performance of Colin Clive as Stanhope, seen here in a photograph from theatrical version of *Journey's End*, would be one of the film's most celebrated elements.

Instead of Gundrey, the script would be mainly adapted by Joseph Moncure March, whom Whale had worked with on *Hell's Angels*. The movie would hone very closely to the play, only opening up to show the exterior of the trench and some of elements of the mission that ultimately kills Uncle (Ian Maclaren). Despite that Whale had previous experience with *Hell's Angels*, James Curtis reports that he focused heavily on the actors to the exclusion of the formal elements of filmmaking.[333] Judging from the cinematography and editorial strategies of the finished film, it seems possible that Whale used multiple cameras

[331] Curtis 91-92
[332] Ibid., 98
[333] Ibid., 98

simultaneously. Robert Florey had used the same approach when filming the Marx Brothers musical *The Coconuts* (1929).[334]

Despite the heavy emphasis on fidelity to the play and to the character's motivations, Whale did make some innovations for film, notably in the sound design. The sound, credited to Buddy Rose, features the ever-present sounds of shelling and explosions in the background. The effect is surprisingly subtle, particularly for an early sound film, and serves to reinforce the unusual surroundings of apparently desperate circumstances. Conversely, long stretches of quiet also at times provide a contrast and prevent the audience from becoming so accustomed to the shelling that they filter it out and disregard it.

The production was plagued by conflicts between Whale and producer George Pearson, who complained that the movie was too stagey, insisting that the first week of shooting be scrapped and remade. Whale eventually ignored Pearson's ideas and continued with his own plans for the movie, essentially, a faithful adaptation of Sherriff's play, slightly opened up for cinema.[335] The director explained his approach in a *New York Times* interview:

> The whole foundation for the success of 'Journey's End', to my mind, is that it presents an unusual situation in a most appealing way. Some critics have said it violates the ethics of drama. It does not, because the essential element in all drama is truth-truth brought home so forcibly that it plays upon the higher emotions. / We know these things are real- these officers in the dugout, this sergent-major, this cook, this private. We recognize in this the human element confronting warfare in its most hateful form. These men are English. They have homes, a family whom they have left to risk death- for what? The call of country. Seething within them are deep and terrible emotions. Outwardly, they seem calm-all except Hibbert, who hides his real self behind a please of sickness.[336]

However, the attention that Whale paid to the actors is certainly one of the prime reasons behind the success of the film. Although efforts were made to find someone other than Clive for the lead,[337] including Colin Keith-Johnson, the choice of the former was crucial. Even though he does not appear until well into the first act, Clive dominates the film. Perhaps Whale's greatest achievement as director was to guide his star in modulating his stage performance into a screen one, particularly impressive considering the fact that it was the actor's first film. Whale's familiarity with the play (and probably his personal experiences in

---

[334] Joe Adamson, *Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Sometimes Zeppo: A History of the Marx Brothers and a Satire on the Rest of the World* (London: Coronet Books, Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), 78.
[335] Curtis 99-102.
[336] "To Film War Play", *The New York Times*, Sep. 8, 1929.
[337] Curtis, 97-98

the war) served him well and adapting the complex series of character interactions to the film. Due to its relative lack of battle sequences, *Journey's End* is in many ways a chamber piece. With the exception of the cook (Charles K. Gerrard), who is a stock Cockney comic relief, all of the major characters are relatively complex. One of the reasons that the play and film have often been seen as being authentic may be the details they provide: the men are not going to have beef for dinner, they are going to a specific type of beef, prepared in a special way, due to their current war conditions. Likewise, many of the characters are from specific cities, and are identified with what they did in their pre-war lives.

An Anti-War Film?

Unlike in *All Quiet*, there is no explicit dialogue concerning the men's political views, which raises the question of whether the film can be classified as anti-war. The term anti-war is itself complex and often used with various meanings. Does it refer to a film that opposes all wars, a specific war, or one that merely shows the colloquial term that war is hell? There is a great deal of discourse on *Journey's End*, *All Quiet,* and a number of other war films from this era in reference to their supposed anti-war themes. However, the phrase 'anti-war' could have been used to refer to a number of political and ethical positions concerning war, ranging from absolute pacifism to merely acknowledging that war is tragic. As Gore-Lanton describes, Sherriff never intended to write a war play, and his artistic goals were less to make socio-political statements as much as to pay a tribute to his friends on the Front. As he describes it: 'By not inveiging against the war but by evoking its reality, many critics assumed that Sherriff had thought that best way to condemn the war was not to condemn the war.'[338] In a certain sense, the play might be seen as at least nominally apolitical as the characters rarely discuss their political motivations; they are simply doing what is expected of them. However, its reception by the general public was largely seen within the context of an anti-war statement. There are many potential explanations for this. The most obvious and likely explanation of much of the reception of the play and film is that they so effectively presented the nature of war trauma and psychology in a way that could be read as realistic that audiences saw any experience that could have led to such a great amount of suffering as negative. Because Sherriff avoids any scene where characters argue that there is a reason or

[338] Gore-Lanton, 80.

greater good behind their suffering, it is possible that many audiences concluded that the play was a tacit argument against war in general.

However, as Gore-Lanton indicates Sherriff himself was certainly no radical pacifist.[339] As he describes, a significant aspect to the setting that is now lost to modern audiences is the specific day that the action begins- 18 March 1918, shortly before the Battle of St. Quentin. Gore-Lanton reports that audiences of the time would have known that this was the battle that was contemporarily thought of as the beginning of the end for German forces, a huge success for the British that enabled the Allies to win the war.[340] Even though the characters rarely describe their political beliefs, the fact that they die in a crucial battle with positive connotations is hugely significant. In an interview quoted in *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sherriff was paraphrased as saying that 'he had no thought of [writing] propaganda, but tried only to give a true picture of life as it was lived in a dugout from the point of view of an ordinary man, and believed that the play would have been less successful had he attempted to conceive it from any other angle.'[341] Furthermore, Andrew Kelly quotes Sherriff as saying 'not a word was spoken against the war, in which no word of condemnation was uttered by any of its characters.'[342]

One of the most original aspects of *Journey's End* is its focus on the way the characters communicate. Although many war films before and since have focused on the subcultures and convergent communication produced by war experiences, both the film and play share a continual focus on paralanguage often not found in other works. Characters in *Journey's End* to explicitly communicate about the subjects of war and death to each other, often speaking about seemingly trivial matters, such as food, so they do not have to focus on the horror that is about to occur around them. Although Stanhope may sometimes speak directly about his thoughts and fears to Uncle, the older man acts more as a psychologist or counsellor as opposed to anything else, rarely stating his own thoughts or feelings. An example is his insistence on not talking about the impending raid with Raleigh. Uncle is trying to maintain an illusion of normalcy and that danger and death are not just around the corner, yet both men know their grave situation. The title, selected by Sherriff, is telling. After Raleigh arrives, all of the characters have reached their final destination; they are merely waiting for their final

[339] Ibid., 91
[340] Ibid., 59
[341] H.H., "'Journey's End' Radiocast," *The Christian Science Monitor*, (Boston, MA), Dec. 28, 1929.
[342] Andrew Kelly, *All Quiet on the Western Front: The Story of a Film* (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1998), 34.

execution. It is in this aspect, that the movie becomes emblematic of the Black Void – the men are already spiritually dead, only waiting for their hearts to stop.

Whale completed post-production in early March 1930 and the movie was set for a New York premier on 8 April. Like many of other films discussed in this thesis, it was a prestigious 'roadshow' attraction, with a $2 ticket.[343] Curtis mentions a *New York World* article that stated 'a seemingly stunned audience remained seated and inarticulate for a full minute after the picture had been completed and the lights had been turned up.' The same marketing strategy for *The Big Parade* and *Wings* was used for *Journey's End*: inviting real soldiers to a special screening. The day after the premier, a soldiers-only screening was presented, attending by General Pershing, the American Commander-in-Chief himself.[344] The trade publications I surveyed indicated that the film was expected to become a hit, but that there was some reservations about it. The notice in *Variety* began 'No crystal gazing required to forecast a big measure of success for this picture because so many elements enter the situation to ensure its future. Intrinsic power of the story alone would be sufficient. On top of that the production has the enormous advantage of the well advertised success of the play and a thoroughly capable translation to the screen with the same players.' The review went on to state that 'Except for its background of sensational propensity on the stage, the picture has almost none of the characteristics that would indicate a former screen success.' and questions whether the movie would be popular outside of New York, of both the anonymous reviewer and an exhibitor at the premier. The reviewer finds the move to be of high artistic quality, claiming 'If "Journey's End" behaves the way it should anywhere, it's Tiffany's gold mine at last.'[345] *Film Daily*'s short notice found that it 'It pounds tragedy from real to real with sledgehammer force. Occasionally comedy creeps into the incidents but, for the most part, it's a recounting of the war at its cruel worst.' The review concluded by stating, in the only indication of its box office potential or audience response 'People who like unvarnished realism will be apt to cheer over this picture.'[346] These two notices in industry publications indicate that there was a belief that the filmgoing populace was ready for a bleak look at the water that could be claimed as realistic, but that it needed to be tested. When the film was realised, it became clear that this position was correct.

[343] Ibid., 103
[344] Ibid., 104
[345] "Journey's End", *Variety*, Apr. 18, 1930, 21, 46.
[346] "Journey's End", *The Film Daily*, Apr. 13, 1930, 10.

The film was a huge critical and commercial success on both sides of the Atlantic. As might be expected in adaptation of a still-running play in America's theatre capital, Mordaunt Hall of the *New York Times* spent most of his review comparing the movie to the play, ultimately finding that '…James Whale, who directed this film, which was presented last night at the Gaiety, has availed himself of the scope of the camera and the microphone, and under his knowledgeful guidance the interpolated scenes of the climactic raid, which are left to the imagination in the play, are intensely vivid. They are undoubtedly far better than any other glimpses of warfare that have come to the screen./ To those who have not seen the play this talking picture will prove even more impressive than to others who have. There are bound to comparisons, and it is human nature to be more affected by actors in the flesh and blood than by vocalized shadows…The underlying subtleties of the play are sometimes missed.' Despite believing that the play was better than the film, Hall also found that Whale 'has succeeded in making adroit use of close-ups for minor details and also for revealing the facial expressions of the participants.'[347] Writing in the same publication, Edwin Schallert, who had reviewed the play and praised its realism,[348] found that 'The story is retold…with loyalty to the original-and splendidly. / There could be no higher appraisal, perhaps, of the film version of "Journey's End," which opened last night at the Mayan Theater. / One found different men on the screen –different at least in their impersonators, from the stage play, but the spirit of R.C. Sheriff's study of war remained impressively similar.' Most of the rest of Schallert's review focused on aesthetic differences from the translation to the film medium and relatively detailed descriptions of the performances.[349] The New York reception is an example of how cultural characteristics unique to a particular city- in this case, New York being the capitol of America's theatre community, can influence the reception of the film. Although the play would tour the United States with several companies, the New York reception was heavily focused on the differences between the New York production and film. A few days after his review, Hall would write another piece describing many of the changes made in the adaptation, indicating that he was quite familiar with the stage show, and seemed to expect his audience to be.[350] *The Chicago Daily Tribune* would commission a long piece under 'Special Correspondence' from *New York Daily News* theatre critic Burns Mantle, who also focused on differences between the play and film, indicating that the movie was thought

[347] Mordaunt Hall, "Journey's End," *The New York Times*, Apr. 9, 1930.
[348] Edwin Schallert, "Emotional Epic Stirs Audience," *The New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1930.
[349] Edwin, Schallert. ""Journey's End" Well Enacted," *The New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1930.
[350] Mordaunt Hall, "Dialogue in Pictures", *The New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1930.

to be of high interest to Chicagoans, as Mantle never mentions a visit to the Illinois city and after summarizing the reviews of other critics, focuses on differences between the film and New York production.[351] As the movie would open in Chicago in a few weeks, the fact that the newspaper was willing to commission such a long piece about a production of the play that had never been performed in the city indicates the editor must have assumed his audience would be very interested in the picture.

When the film did open in Chicago, the anonymous critic writing as Mae Tinee gave it four out of four stars. Emphasizing its social significance and perception as an anti-war text, stated: 'Good morning! / If all the world were to witness "Journey's End," it just seems to be me there couldn't be another war!" Tinee goes on to comment: "As a study of men under stress, "Journey's End" has rarely, if ever been equalied. Their nerves strung to the breaking point; decency, honor, humor, pity under the steady fire of frightful suspense, Capt. Stanhope and his men carry on in dugout, trench and No Man's Land. And here again the director has scored smashingly. "O, this IS war!" you whimper to yourself…' Tinee repeats the phrase 'This IS war' many times for emphases as she describes the various struggles the characters face. She closes her review by imploring the reader 'Don't, I beg of you, miss this picture, for there never was such another war cinema as "Journey's End"! / See you tomorrow!'[352]

Despite Whale's conflict with Pearson about the fidelity to the stage play, in Atlanta, critic Robert Moran wrote that 'War is painted here frankly, freely and at times almost brutally. It is no glorious adventure to which your actors carry you with joy. It is shown has a monster, taking everything and giving nothing, and throughout the effort is made to prove that it is futile, absolutely useless and entirely unnecessary.' Moran's and Tinee's comments indicate a common audience reaction: reading the film's portrayal of war trauma as anti-war sentiment, something that as stated above was not shared by Sherriff. This reaction of audiences, interpreting any portrayal of war trauma as anti-war sentiment was first discussed with *The Big Parade* in the previous chapter and will continue with subsequent discussed films. Moran also described an odd promotion tactic of the theatre in questionable taste: 'The interior of the lobby has been turned into a trench dugout, carried out with the greatest of faithfulness in detail, and winning congratulations from Manager Hicks.'[353]

[351] Burns Mantle, "'Journey's End' Finds Favor in Its Film Form", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 20, 1930.
[352] Mae Tinee, "Shell's Screech Chills You at 'Journey's End'", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1930.
[353] Robert Moran, "Journey's End," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 27, 1930.

As Curtis indicates, 'Michael Balcon's wise decision to beat *All Quiet on the Western Front* into release paid off handsomely.'[354] As acclaimed as *Journey's End* was, it was nearly forgotten in the wake of *All Quiet*, as will be discussed below. To a degree, the film has languished in a kind of obscurity ever since. Like *Four Horsemen*, the movie has never been issued on any home video format in the United States. Part of the reason for this may be that Whale became known as a director of horror films, even though he made only four such movies in his entire career. His next picture, which also starred Clive as the title character, would become an iconic classic: *Frankenstein* (1931). Although the director would make more war-related films than horror thrillers, his contemporary reputation among most cineastes is almost entirely from the later genre. *Journey's End* was also a bit of an orphan film in the sense that it did not have the backing of a major American studio behind it for periodic re-release. But perhaps the greatest reason that *Journey's End* fell into obscurity was that its status as the current holder of the claim of 'great realistic war film' was simply replaced by *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Throughout the 20s, every few years a new film would be released that would be acclaimed as the 'new' greatest war film. However, the public reception of *All Quiet* was so overwhelmingly positive that it held this unofficial title throughout the 1930s, a position it, to a degree, still holds to today. Despite positive reviews mentioned above, it is worth noting that at the end of the season, *All Quiet on the Western Front* won Oscars for Best Production and Director. *Journey's End* was not nominated for any.

All Quiet on the Western Front

All Quiet on the Western Front (hereafter referred to as *All Quiet*) is the most influential film about the Great War. Unlike many of the movies in this thesis, it is still having a direct impact on contemporary popular culture. Images from the picture, including but not limited to the famous 'butterfly finale', have entered popular culture in such a way that people who have never seen the movie have been exposed to its iconic imagery. In a greater sense, the movie's storyline has influenced the general perception of the First World War, namely that it was a pointless conflict brought about by politicians that had a disastrous impact on the essentially apolitical, innocent lambs who fought it. This is the framework that many subsequent war films featured. Although it is a bold claim, I will argue in this and

[354] Curtis 105.

subsequent chapters that the film of *All Quiet* became the text that nearly all war films of the 30s in some way referenced. As Andrew Kelly indicates in his book on the making of the film, *All Quiet* was one of many works at the time dealing with the subject of war disillusionment.[355] However, it is perhaps the most popular and longest lasting work in any medium in this vein. One of the most remarkable things about its production is that it was conceived, almost from the beginning, as exactly what it turned about to be: a prestige picture, designed to be a critically acclaimed commercial hit about a major socio-cultural issue, as planned by the two studio executives behind its productions, Carl Laemmle and his son, Carl Laemmle Jr. The film was designed to court controversy, but a certain kind of controversy that would be beneficial to its publicity. The fact that Universal was willing to spend so much money on its production was an indication of an astute reading of public tastes and attitudes about the conflict. The Laemmles realized that the public was ready for *All Quiet*, and would indeed be receptive to its message.

The Novel

Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neus* (literally *Nothing New in the West,* 1929) was one of many novels of the late twenties that described liberal and pacifistic themes concerning war. Although Kelly indicates that this period was a high watermark for this kind of war novel,[356] I have shown that this view of the war as fallacious exercise in human waste conducted by clueless cultural elites existed earlier, as indicated by Laurence Stallings' *Plumes*. Despite the fact that his central theme had already existed in war literature, Remarque's book would go on to have a major global impact. At first, this may seem surprising as the book was written by a German in his native language, but the culture in the United States and Great Britain had sufficiently declined in its anti-German sentiment make enough members of the public receptive to a translation and cause it to be a financial success. However, it may be argued that the ideas of Remarque, which were highly critical of German society and war leaders while being sympathetic to the average German fighter, were one that Allied audiences would have been receptive to hearing.

There can be little doubt that Erich Maria Remarque was scarred for life by his war experiences, even though they were not quite as extensive as one might expect. As Andrew Kelly describes, Remarque was a philosophical pacifist who did not join the army until it

[355] Kelly, 14-15
[356] Ibid., 42

appeared that he could not avoid enlistment, and surprisingly for a writer whose most famous novel was about frontline soldiers, never served on any front, though he did see enough action to receive a major war injury.[357] Kelly provides a long quote from Remarque that sums up his attitudes:

> Our generation has grown up in a different way from all others before and afterward. Their one great and most important experience was the war. No matter whether they approved or rejected it, whether they understood it from a nationalistic, pacifistic, adventurous, religious or stoic point of view. They saw blood, horror, annihilation, struggle, and death…I [have] avoided taking sides from every political, social, religious or other point of view… I have spoken only of the terror, of the horror, of the desperate, often brutal impulses of self-preservation, of the tenacious hold on life face to face with death and annihilation.[358]

This quote demonstrates Remarque's essential perspective was in many ways similar to Sherriff's, albeit with one major difference: Remarque lacked Sherriff's patriotism, having little loyalty to the German government or state, and in fact, later became an American citizen.[359] Also like Sherriff, he claimed he was writing an apolitical piece. In a certain sense, it can be argued that no work of art can ever be entirely apolitical, but this claim is particularly specious in Remarque's case as his novels make explicit complaints about the German government and leadership. It is more accurate to say that his characters are not particularly interested in party politics, rather than the fact that they have no opinion about the war.

The novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a plotless series of episodes, out of chronological sequence, told in first person from the point of view of Paul Baumer, a sensitive young student who enlisted with his friends in the German Army while still in high school. The group of boys are killed one by one, and finally Paul himself dies, reduced to a mere statistic on a piece of paper, shortly before the war ends. One of the most unique and effective aspects of the novel is the mental perspective of the characters. Paul, though a naturally sensitive person, is at times almost clinically detached from horrific events that surround him. Although the book describes a near consistent series of physical and emotional tortures and humiliations, the protagonist greets these events with a kind of stoicism, a coping mechanism. It is better that Paul feel nothing than react to the horrors that surround him, lest he lose his sanity.

---

[357] Ibid., 50
[358] Kelly, 51
[359] Christine R. Barker and R.W. Last, *Erich Maria Remarque* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1979), 22.

Like the early stages of Sherriff's career, Remarque also became a writer successful enough to find a publisher but not one of great success, as his first two published novels languished in obscurity. It is worth repeating another long quote from Remarque, found in Kelly's book, regarding the inspiration for the novel:

> I suffered from rather violent attacks of despair. When attempting to overcome these attacks, it happened that gradually, with full consciousness and systematically, I began to look for the cause of my depressions; in consequence of this international analysis my mind reverted to my experiences during the war. I was able to observe quite similar phenomena in my acquaintances and friends. We all were- and are often to the present day victims of restlessness; we lack a final object; at times we are supersensitive, at times indifferent but over and above all we are bereft of any joy. The shadows of the war oppressed us, and particularly so when we did not think of it at all. On the very day on which these ideas swept over me, I began to write.[360]

The book, which was initially serialized in a German newspaper, was an immediate success. Kelly reports the impressive statistic that 'Within fifteen months, over-two-and-a-half million copies were in print worldwide.'[361] The novel was also critically acclaimed for many reasons, but a consistent theme in reviews was its realistic depiction of war life.[362] For those who did not read the book in its bound form, there was another source. Kelly reports that sixty-four American newspapers serialized A.W. Wheen's English translation.[363] Like many popular novels published in the 20th Century, the studios were naturally interested in a film adaptation. However, there would be many difficulties, both financial and aesthetic, in translating the novel to the screen. The most immediately obvious difficulty with a film of the novel is that it had no real plot and was told out of chronological sequence, frequently pausing for flashbacks. Another problem was the explicit content of the book. The gore, sex and scatological details often mentioned could not be filmed, even in the relatively liberal atmosphere of pre-Code Hollywood. There was also much about the movie that would not count it as a traditional commercial product. From a financial standpoint, it would be clear that a film version would require a large budget, due to the battle scenes, many of which had never been shot with sound before, which would in turn require technical innovations in both the camera and sound departments. Despite a sexual transaction that occurs when the men trade food for sex, there is no real romantic love in the book, which would have been thought

[360] Kelly, 53
[361] Ibid., 45
[362] Ibid., 44-49
[363] Ibid., 47

to present a problem in selling the film to female audiences. Finally, the downbeat tone and bleak ending were far away from what was typically associated with Hollywood.

A studio producing the adaptation would have been guaranteed a certain audience from the fact that it was based on a popular novel, and as previous chapters had shown, war movies could be very successful at the box office. The explosion of war related material in 1929-1930 indicated that the public was certainly receptive to war pictures. Although there had possibly never been a mainstream film as explicit and downbeat as a faithful adaptation of *All Quiet*, the themes and ideas discussed were not totally new or unfamiliar to audiences. Thus, it could be argued that a film of Remarque's book would not have been a departure from the ideas in popular WWI discourse; it would rather be the apotheosis of them. The innovation and novelty of the movie would not be in the novelty of the ideas expressed (even seeing the war from a German perspective had been previously accomplished in John Ford's *Four Sons*, 1928), but in the explicitness and intensity of their depiction. *The Big Parade* and *Wings* may have demonstrated the trauma of losing friends in war, and *What Price Glory* had demonstrated the psychological defence mechanisms employed by soldiers. But in *All Quiet*, *all* the soldiers die, and unlike in *What Price Glory*, the characters begin as sensitive innocents and then gradually become hardened. *All Quiet* would not only be a bleak film in regards to the losses of war in life, but also the psychological cost to those who fight it.

The studio that would ultimately purchase the film rights would not be the most obvious: Universal Pictures. Universal was known as a 'major minor' at the time, being a large studio but lacking ownership of a national chain of theatres. Furthermore, its output at the time usually consisted of a large number of 'B' genre films, usually Westerns, along with an annual 'Super Jewel' prestige picture, such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) or *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925). The studio was not known for movies that made major social statements. Andrew Kelly reports that studio founder and President Carl Laemmle (himself a German immigrant) was interested in making the film because he personally believed in its political message. This is probably true to some degree but his source is a publicity biography commissioned by the mogul himself, and it would be naïve to suggest that his sole motivation was sympathy with Remarque's viewpoint.[364] Kelly goes on to report that the real

[364] Kelly, 60

impetus behind the film was Laemmle Jr., who wanted to improve Universal's reputation into the big time with more artistic films.[365]

An adaptation of the book would have presented any financing studio with an obvious marketing strategy. Previous war films had used the war to sell to the audience that they were seeing a 'serious' movie that they could view with pride, as if they were taking part in a positive social experience, and this one would be no exception. It would be a 'prestige picture' that could be marketed through its spectacle of war and the supposed authenticity of its portrayal of war trauma. Finally, the studio had one other big film on the roster that would be an almost guaranteed big hit- *King of Jazz*, a musical featuring superstar musician Paul Whiteman. The believed nearly certain success of that picture would mean that the year would not be a total loss were the war movie to flop (ironically, *King of Jazz* under performed at the box office and *All Quiet* would help the studio make up for its losses[366]). The Laemmles must have sensed early on their marketing strategy of claimed fidelity to the novel and treating the movie with reverence, as Laemmle Senior flew to Germany, supposedly to personally negotiate the rights with Remarque.[367] In actuality, the studio expressed interest in the film surprisingly early, before the book had become the popular phenomenon it turned into. Kelly reports that Laemmle himself was indeed personally interested in securing the film rights for Universal, finally paying somewhere between $25,000 and $50,000.[368] Newspapers reported the unexpected and apparently true fact that the mogul tried to encourage the writer to star in the film himself, perhaps an attempt to preserve fidelity to the book. Not surprisingly, Remarque declined, stating 'I am not an actor.'[369] Laemmle Sr discussed some of the difficulties with a film adaptation in an interview with the *New York Times*: 'We [Remarque and the mogul] conferred at some length during my three-month stay abroad. There were many problems to be solved. After all, a narrative so sullen as his must be changed somewhat for presentation as a screen offering.' Already, there was tension between the novels' tone and explicit content and the commercial standards of popular cinema.[370]

---

[365] Ibid., 62
[366] Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997), 344.
[367] "'All Quiet on the Western Front" Opens Monday Night at Erlanger Theater in Premiere Road Show Production," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun. 8, 1930.
[368] Kelly 66-67
[369] "War Featured by Remarque in Local Bow," *Washington Post,* Sep. 28, 1930.
[370] "Mr. Laemmle Returns," *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1929.

Production

The first choice to direct the movie was Herbert Brenon.[371] Brenon was a logical selection, associated with successful films that were also known to have technical challenges (for example, he had directed a film version of *Peter Pan* in 1924) and were also critically popular. The artist, however, wanted too much money,[372] and the job instead went to Lewis Milestone. Milestone had been born in the Ukraine and came to America in his late teens. He enlisted in the American army but was assigned to the film division, never leaving the United States during the war. His experience in war training films meant that he would have been among the relatively few directors of his generation with formal training as opposed to on the job innovation. After the war, Milestone moved to Hollywood and eventually worked his way up the ranks.[373] He was familiar with war material as well. The director had won an Oscar for his handling of the direction of Howard Hughes' war comedy *Two Arabian Knights* (1927). Thus Milestone had a strong CV- he had served in the Army, had critically and commercial successful films under his belt, had worked with war material, and perhaps most importantly, was willing to work for one third of the salary as Brenon.[374]

In a sign of his respect for talent, Laemmle Jr. gave the director a relatively large amount of artistic control on the project, especially one so important to a fledgling studio. The first choice for screenwriter was obvious: Remarque himself, but the writer declined.[375] The second choice was R. C. Sherriff, who also passed.[376] Milestone selected Del Andrews, a screenwriter he had previously worked with, to write a screenplay after C. Gardner Sullivan provided an initial treatment for the adaption.[377] Andrews lacked the name recognition and association with the war that both Remarque and Sherriff would have provided. Laemmle hired Maxwell Anderson, a noted Broadway playwright, to work on the film simultaneously. Milestone respected Anderson as a writer but detested his work on the film, believing that his adaptation undermined the grittiness of the original novel. Apparently, Anderson himself agreed, discarding his own work and using the treatment that Milestone and Anderson had written from Sullivan's original work. Another Broadway writer, George Abbot, did a final

[371] George J. Mitchell, "All Quiet on the Western Front," In *The Cinema of Adventure, Romance & Terror,* ed. George Turner. Hollywood: The ASC Press, 1989, 62.
[372] Kelly 63.
[373] Mitchell, 62
[374] Mitchell ,62
[375] Kelly, 69
[376] Ibid., 68.
[377] Mitchell 63

re-write on the script.[378] Sullivan's and Milestone's contribution to the screenplay would remain uncredited.[379]

Casting a film like *All Quiet* was a difficult proposition. On one hand, a star would help to advance the downbeat film's cause at the box office if the Laemmles had misread the openness of the public to the material, on the other, a star might become the victim of their own iconography and take the audience out of the movie, not to mention requiring a higher salary. George J. Mitchell reports that Phillips Holmes, a matinee idol, was briefly considered for the lead as Paul, but Milestone decided against it.[380] James Murray and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. were also rumoured to be in the running for the role.[381] At some point, Junior Laemmle must have made a conscious and risky decision that one of his two big films for Universal that year would not have any proven box-office draws in it. The final selection for Paul Baumer was Lew Ayres. Ayres had never played a lead on film and had only one major supporting part to his credit, albeit a significant one, in MGM's romantic drama *The Kiss* (1929), starring Greta Garbo. Ayres volunteered his services for the role by phoning Milestone early in the morning, something the director found rude. The actor did somehow manage to arrange a screen test for himself, and Milestone was immediately impressed by his screen presence, apparently not realising that he was the same actor who had annoyed him with his early morning communication. Junior Laemmle objected, but eventually allowed Milestone his choice. Ayres' depiction of the innocent and sensitive boy turned into a cynical and callous soldier would be one of the primary reasons behind the film's strong emotional impact on audiences.

The closest thing to a name actor in the ensemble was Louis Wolheim. A Wallace Beery-type known for playing tough characters, he would lead the cast and receive top billing despite the fact he had a clear supporting role. Wolheim's performance as Kat, a tough yet empathetic army veteran who becomes a kind of father figure to the boys under his command would be memorable, not the least of which was the fact that he would provide a contrast to the rest of the youthful cast. Milestone, in a unique bit of casting, selected his friend Raymond Griffith for the small but crucial role of a French soldier whom Paul is unwittingly trapped in a pit with during a battle. Griffith had been a silent comedy star and was not

[378] Kelly, 69-70
[379] Citation
[380] Mitchell, 63
[381] "James Murray May Have Leading Role," *Los Angeles Times,* Sep. 12, 1929.

known for dramatic performances[382], but there are no reports of inappropriate laughs coming from the sole scene in which he appears. Griffith therefore managed to escape the fate that was to result in actress ZaSu Pitts being cut from the movie after a preview and replaced in pickups with Beryl Mercer as Paul's mother. The audience reportedly laughed because they were familiar with Pitts performing in a then-popular comedy.[383] For the parts of Paul's ill-fated comrades, Milestone selected a group of up and coming young male actors, plus Slim Summerville as the comic relief Tjaden, who is in the sequel *The Road Back* revealed to be the only member of the ensemble to survive the war (his fate is left unresolved in *All Quiet*).

There was one final critical player behind the success of the film. Arthur Edeson, the cinematographer, was like Milestone not the first choice- that was Tony Gaudio, who had worked on *Hell's Angels* but declined because he didn't want to do another war film.[384] Aware that the movie would require technical innovation to shoot sound material outdoors, Edeson boasted that he owned a specially modified camera that made far less noise than the Hollywood standard. It is probable that the reason that Edeson was selected was because his camera and methods meant the Milestone did not have to resort to using a 'sound house', a small cubicle where the camera was isolated from the rest of the set, severely depleting its versatility.[385] Edeson and Milestone would have to produce several innovations during the course of the film, as it would be the first sound picture to have full scale battle scenes. Among them the shooting war scenes silent and adding foley during post production. The director of photography would sometimes use six cameras simultaneously.[386]

[382]Mitchel, 63
[383] Kelly, 73
[384] Mitchell, 64
[385] Mitchell, 65-66
[386] Ibid., 65

Figure 10. This shot, the likes of which were not found in previous war films, is an example of the visual innovation of Milestone and Edeson.

Due to the technical problems with filming material that had never been shot in sound before, it is not surprising that the movie ended up well over budget, coming in 51 days behind schedule. Universal did not try to make to make their prestige picture cheaply, initially budgeting just under $900,000 for the production, a figure that would ultimately grow to $1.4 million.[387] They allowed Milestone to spend $27,500 to buy actual German war uniforms and battle equipment,[388] and built a recreation of an entire German village.[389] The trench and No Man's Land sets had another, strange kind of authenticity of their own. An anecdote that sounds like publicity puff piece but, according to Arthur Edeson, actually happened, involved a sanitary inspector shutting down production until conditions were improved to Orange County standards. The conditions in the trenches were evidently too accurate for peacetime Hollywood.[390]

Despite their faith in the film as demonstrated by the large budget and giving Milestone a high amount of artistic latitude, the studio was indeed concerned that the ending would be too bleak, and the elder Laemmle actually suggested closing the film on a happy note.[391] Milestone felt that the ending of the adaption of the screenplay, in which a war report of a

[387] Kelly, 98
[388] Ibid., 88
[389] Ibid., 85
[390] Ibid., 88
[391] Ibid., 94

quiet day on the Western Front is superimposed over Paul's death, did not work. Close to the end production, he collaborated with cinematographer Karl Freund (Edeson had moved on to another project) over a new ending. Taking a cue from the novel which mentioned Paul's hobby of collecting butterflies, Freund suggested the now famous 'butterfly finale' in which Paul is killed by a French sniper while reaching for a butterfly, the first object of beauty he has seen in months, perhaps years. Milestone had already shot footage of Ayres looking longingly at a stray butterfly, but the actor was making another film by the time Freund conceived the new conclusion, so the cinematographer's hands doubled as Paul's.

Figure 11. The famous 'Butterfly finale', devised by replacement cinematographer Karl Freund after principal photography had been completed.

In the final print, the use of music and sound during the sequences was particularly innovative: a folksy but forlorn accordion tune plays over the scene (one of the few uses of non-diegetic music in the movie) but abruptly ends when the gunshot rings out. The final shot of the film, discussed below, occurs in total silence.[392]

[392] Ibid., 91-94

What separates *All Quiet* from the previously discussed films in this thesis is its lack of anything approaching a happy, or even ambivalent, ending. No soldier survives and goes off with his love to recover from the wounds of the war, nor is there any of the spiritual comfort found in *Four Horsemen*. There is only the cold fact that millions of young men died for reasons that did not to many seem congruent with the war aims. The closing image, in which Milestone repeats the shot of the soldiers marching off to war while looking back home, is superimposed over a shot of war cemetery, provides a reminder of what was lost, with no statement of any gain.

Figure 11. The final moments of *All Quiet*.

Trauma and Authenticity

The final cut of the film was indeed bleak and depressing, and although the violence and scatological detail was less explicit, the motion picture was in certain ways more harrowing than the novel. The screenwriters' solution to the book's episodic narrative was to put the events in chronological order, beginning with the boys being encouraged to enlist while in high school and ending with Paul's death. This narrative difference meant that the audience

watches Paul lose his innocence, his hope, and then eventually his will to live, whereas Remarque's novel essentially begins with him in his final state, with the flashback scenes only in distant memory. Thus, *All Quiet* is, like *Journey's End*, a movie about how men deal with war trauma psychologically, although the characters in both films do it in very different ways. In *Journey's End*, Stanhope keeps his sanity by drinking, and most of the characters maintain an illusion of normalcy by obsessing about mundane details of everyday life.

In *All Quiet*, the men have no such option, partially because they are not officers. Instead of denial and self-medicating in alcohol, the men cope by feeling nothing. In a certain sense, *Journey's End* is ultimately a movie about tacit acceptance of death made palatable by its explicit denial. *All Quiet* is a film where the men lose their humanity itself. Paul's reaction near the end of the film to the death of Kat (his only surviving friend) is remarkable in that he seems to have so little emotion. He does not cry, nor does he become angry, he merely seems a bit perturbed, as if he had missed a train. If Paul were to cry, he would lose his ability to function, so his only way to stay sane is to feel nothing and experience the Black Void, in which the absence of emotion is preferable to overwhelming trauma. In a certain sense, like the men in Whale's film, he is dead in all ways but physical by the end.

The two movies can be contrasted to each other in the way that their characters interact with each other. A homoerotic undertone pervades *Journey's End* (James Whale was openly gay and Robert Gore-Lanton believes that R.C. Sherriff was probably a closeted homosexual[393]). The men have extremely intense bonds with each other, and often half-jokingly refer to each other with feminine descriptors. Stanhope's treatment of Raleigh at the end of the film is nearly motherly in its nurturing quality. In *All Quiet*, the men begin as an extremely close-knit group, and then slowly become more and more mentally isolated from each other. They still feel the importance of camaraderie, but perhaps only because other soldiers can identify with the war experience. The inability of people to act humanly towards each other is a consistent theme of *All Quiet*- Paul is unable to relate to his mother when he returns home on leave, French women are only interested in 'romancing' the soldiers for their food, and Paul quickly turns on a soldier suffering from shell-shock, unable to show him empathy. The most obvious example of this is the sequence in which Paul mortally wounds the French soldier, played by Raymond Griffith, and ends up trapped in a hole with him throughout the night. Overcome with guilt, he helps the soldier, promising to contact and take care of his family,

[393] Gore-Langton XII.

and indeed is almost unable to bear the idea that he killed a man with whom he has no quarrel. However, when he is rescued and back behind the German lines, he quickly forgets about his promises and indeed the whole encounter. Paul Baumer, the sensitive poet who collects butterflies, is now able to kill without feeling remorse, at least when the body is not present.

This is the ultimate example of the Black Void; an underlying and overwhelming sense of negativity that pervades both films that can only be dealt with through denial. Howard Hawks' *The Dawn Patrol*, also released in the same year, is another example of this. The three movies argue that veterans were essentially morally and psychologically scarred by their experiences, and their very humanness, the positive traits associated with liberal humanism, have been removed, with nothing replacing them. Instead of a psyche, there is merely nothing, a void.

Politics

Unlike *Journey's End* and many of the other films discussed in this thesis, *All Quiet* is explicitly political. Two scene are of particular interest for their political content. In the first, the men, finally on leave, discuss the seeming incoherent reasons for the war and their lack of allegiance to the German justification for fighting it, explicitly renouncing patriotism. The other scene occurs when Paul returns to his village on leave and is shocked to discover his elderly high school teacher encouraging his students to enlist with the same war propaganda he tricked Paul with. The former pupil gives an angry and impassioned speech in which he demonstrates that the man has no idea what he is talking about, knowing little about the experience of the common soldier. Both of these scenes are in keeping with the common ideas at the time, particularly in America, that the war was started by elitist politicians who were guilty of using innocents as chess pieces. Although there were a sizable number of people who held this view, to release a film with such an argument in the early 20s, when popular culture contained a heavy emphasis on war memorial and the anti-German sentiment expressed in *Four Horseman*, would have been nearly unthinkable. Nonetheless, the fact that audiences were receptive to it and indeed, were willing to pay money to see a movie as bleak as *All Quiet* indicates just how much these ideas had permeated the general consciousness in popular culture. The paranoia and mistrust of authority that had always been lurking below the surface in the 20s was now explicitly out in the open.

All Quiet on the Western Front was all that the Laemmles had hoped it would be. It was a huge critical and commercial success. Like other war films before it, there was the sense that there was something greater than the release of a typical movie. Unlike the reception of other films, such as *Wings*, there was no way the movie could be read as a patriotic tribute to any military. All of the other films discussed in this thesis to this point have had some elements of either a happy or at least hopeful ending (even *Four Horsemen*, which at least entertained the possibility that man might socially evolve into loving and accepting his fellow humans). *All Quiet* argued that there were close to zero positives about the war, that there was only pain, tragedy, loss and death.

Although *The Film Daily* did not write a formal notice for the movie, the notice in *Variety*, credited to publisher Sime Silverman, understood the pictures appeal as a prestige film that was perceived as telling the truth about the war, writing 'A harrowing, gruesome, morbid tale of war, so compelling in its realism, bigness and repulsiveness that Universal's "Western Front" becomes at once a money picture. For this is war and what Sherman said [that war is hell] goes double here. / Nothing passed up for the niceties; nothing glossed over for the women. Here exhibited is war as it is, butchery.' Later, Silverman praises the studio: 'It's so real despite the inner intent of the elder Laemmle to present a picture of the Germans in war, Universal has turned ou [sic] an object lesson against war.' Later, the theme continued: 'And what a war picture, without an English or American soldier in it? And the best war picture ever filmed. Which is "Western Front." Because it's a real war, whether made in Hollywood or in what was the Western Front of the supreme holocaust.' Going along with Universal's position that the movie had a function in preventing future conflict, the review ended: 'The League of Nations could make no better investment than to buy the master print, reproduce [ing] it every year until the war War shall have been taken out of the dictionaries.'[394] This review was almost everything Universal could have hoped for: an indication that the lack of American characters and bleak subject matter could be overcome at the box office by the film's perceived artistic merits and strength as a socio-cultural statement.

Most of the reviews of the film in the popular press indicated that the movie was a major work of art though quite bleak and difficult to watch emotionally. What is unexpected about the initial reception in the United States considering its subsequent reputation is that the movie, though highly critically praised, did not receive the superlatives as previous war epics.

[394] Sime Silverman, "All Quiet on the Western Front", *Variety*, May 7., 1930, 21.

An exception was *L.A. Times* critic Edwin Schallert, who attended the world premiere in Los Angeles on 21 April 1930 at the Carthay Cirle Theatre and opened his review by stating: 'It [the film] may well be called a preachment for peace. No motion picture has presented a bleaker, blacker etching of the horror of war than 'All Quiet on the Western Front…until you have seen it you have never viewed the war portrayed on the motion-picture film….I cannot recommend that you see the picture for enjoyment. I can, however, say it is a courageous accomplishment.'[395] The paper would later report that that Remarque would be moved to tears upon a screening of the adaptation of his work.[396] However, many of the initial reviews, such as Mordaunt Hall's in *The New York Times* was still very positive but less hyperbolic, noting that the audience 'most of the time was held to silence by its realistic scenes. It is a notable achievement, sincere and earnest, with glimpses that are vivid and graphic. Like the original, it does not mince matters concerning the horrors of battle. It is a vocalized screen offering that is pulsating and harrowing, one in which the fighting flashes are photographed in an amazingly effective fashion.' His praise was tempered by the fact that he found the film too long and that some of the actors did not look plausibly German.[397]

In Atlanta, Lewis Hawkins raved: 'You will see "All Quiet on the Western Front." This week, next week or next year or the year after, some time you will see it for it is a picture that will be with us for a long time. As long, perhaps, as there are any whose hearts and minds bear any imprints of the international carnage that gave it birth.' Later he describes the film's message: 'For this thing, torn from that stark document that was Remarque's life recital, shoulders a burden of propaganda that would have crushed a lesser work, steadfastly keeps your mind from dwelling on minor faults and stands you face to face with a living cross-section of that ghastly kaleidoscope called war.'[398] Once again, a review references the real or 'living' concepts of a film adaptation. In his account of the Atlanta premier, Ralph T. Jones reported '…Having come, Atlanta remained to sit, awed, through the magnificent screening of the greatest of all the great stories that have grown out of the World War…The picture cannot be called amusing. It is too realistic, too vividly true to its subject, for that. And its subject, you must remember is war and the things war does to the bodies and souls of

[395] Edwin Schallert, "War Shown in Stern Reality," *Los Angeles Times,* Apr. 22, 1930.
[396] "War Film Author Pleased," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 7, 1930.
[397] Mordaunt Hall, "Young Germany in the War," *New York Times,* Apr. 30, 1930.
[398] Lewis Hawkings, "All Quiet on the Western Front,", *The Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 12, 1930.

men. Such as subject cannot be made entertaining.' Jones closes his account by again emphasizing the movie's said realism, writing

> If any of you who have experienced the front-line trench, under fire, would like to see and hear it again, but in perfect satey [sic] and comfortably ensconced in a cushioned chair, you may see it now at the Erlanger. And if any of you who have not experienced modern war would like to do so, you are likewise advised to hasten to the box office. / Many of men who went "over there" 13 years ago have vowed that no man, again, can take them to that frightful agony, alive. And it is a mighty service to the cause of peace, to let the new generation, that has grown up since November 11, 1918, see, through this picture, just what war is. War, shorn of all its false glory, its shoddy brilliance and its lying lure. War of blood and suffering and agony and death. War that takes decent boys and makes of them nerve-wracked killing machines. / War as it was fought and war as it is shown, in supreme realism, in Universal's "All Quiet on the Western Front," which you may see , at 2:30 and 8:30 daily, in a de luxe road show screening at the Erlanger Theatre all this week.

Jones' account most explicitly states what most of the other reviews discussed-the explicitness of the movie's violence and unpleasantness is what makes the movie realistic, and will also allow audiences to understand what the war experience was like, presumably to be opposed to it afterward. This position was also held by Mae Tinee, who began her four star review in *The Chicago Daily Tribune* with a statement that could have been an advertisement from Universal: 'Good morning! / If that Utopian day ever arrives when There Is No More War [Tinee's intentional capitalization] surely the world will have to lift up its face and give thanks to the Movies that brought home, as no other medium could have done, the truth about the trenches.' She continued by stating 'I have just seen "All Quiet on the Western Front" and I feel as I imagine I would had spent a couple of hours in an orphanage watching the babies being murdered.' Tinee then compares the movie to *Journey's End*, implying *All Quiet* is more intense, because, unlike the soldiers in Whale's film, which '…had known something of the sweetness and adventure of living before being called to make the ultimate sacrifice', wheras in Milestone's picture '…you witness the slaughter of the innocents.' She ends by reaffirming the movies realism: 'Too much cannot be said for the acting and direction of "All Quiet on the Western Front." It is almost impossible to believe that some of the battle scenes were staged, and that you are not, in truth, listening to the sounds that made the world hideous a couple years ago.'[399] The movie, as evidenced by its critical and audience response, had been what Universal had intended- a hit, prestige film that was perceived as a major artistic statement of social importance.

[399] Mae Tinee, "All Quiet on the Western Front", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1930.

Clearly, Milestone's film had a heavy impact on audiences. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Louis Wolheim described the appeal of the picture: 'Here is the first film that plants the audience firmly in the first-line trenches and allows it to see and feel war as it really is, to understand vividly the stupidity of it, its murderous worthlessness and the criminal, predatory and ruthless instinct that inspires it. Audiences like it because it lifts them from their theatre seats and takes them over the top into the hell of a fierce attack…safely.'[400] Wolheim's comment, made just a few months before his death from cancer, indicated the important role that films could play from a socio-psychological standpoint, allowing audiences a safe environment in which they could encounter the very darkest aspects of the human experience.

All Quiet would reverberate throughout the thirties as the First World War movie that all subsequent films would in some way respond to. The parade of war films would continue into the decade, and will be discussed in the next chapter, but few of these movies would be considered grand philosophical statements about the trauma of the war in the United States. In a very real sense, *All Quiet* had become the benchmark for films about the Great War, particular in the 30s. Subsequent American films in some ways appropriated or referenced its ideas, but did not try to remake it . In the next Chapter, I will discuss two films that build on the thematic groundwork of *All Quiet*, both of which take for granted that war is a disastrous experience and fear its repeat, this time with an emphasis on women on the homefront.

[400] "Trench Life Depicted in War Film," *Los Angeles Times,* Sep. 7th, 1930.

Chapter 5: Gender and Fears of a Second World War

Ten years after the release of *Four Horseman* in 1921, the belief held by many in the film industry that the public was not interested in the war had subsided, and in its wake there were a large number of war-related films. In addition to *Four Horseman*, the 1920s had witnessed several Great War blockbusters in the both the US and UK: *The Big Parade, What Price Glory* and *Wings*. The new decade had begun with the massive financial success of two war pictures, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Hell's Angels*. The war clearly could no longer be considered an inherently uncommercial subject for audiences.

This chapter will discuss how films about the Great War as a cinematic subject responded to public fears about a Second World War, as well as the varying causes of the first. I will discuss two films, Edgar Selwyn's *Men Must Fight* (1933), as well a brief analysis of John Ford's *Pilgrimage* (1933). These films are different from the other movies that I have included in previous chapters in that none are part of what is usually described as the war genre. As demonstrated in the Introduction, this thesis is not a discussion of war or the Great War as a cinematic genre, but a discussion of films about the Great War as a cinematic *subject*. *Men Must Fight* has elements of science fiction and the 'women's picture.' Both of the films have a great deal to tell about 1930s culture vis-à-vis the Great War, the basis for their inclusion here. Although both are ostensibly about a future Second World War, I argue that they are actually more about contemporary attitudes toward the Great War and its causes. *Men Must Fight* is about the role that gender socialization plays in the conduct of war, as well as the individual responsibilities that particular soldiers have in choosing to fight, one the of the few movies from its era on either topic. *Men Must Fight* is an understudied film and, to my knowledge, this thesis represents the first time it has ever been discussed in any academic context. Both of the films demonstrate how the war was incorporated into the contemporary concerns of the period. A common and overriding theme that I will discuss in reference to this era is the idea that somehow, a Second World War was inevitable, and one that would end up being even worse than the first. Although there still were a number of people who saw the Great War as necessary and honourable, many others by this point saw the conflict as being an example of human folly. These films are both examples of the effects of *All Quiet* on the cinematic discourse, both take the political position espoused by Milestone's film for

granted. They also build on its central thesis, acknowledging from the beginning that war is a terrible and destructive thing and continuing on the fears that it might break out again.

Historical Background

Before going further, it is necessary to discuss many of the contemporary events of the early 30s. The stock market crash of 1929 had slowly but gradually turned into to a major worldwide economic recession that peaked in 1932. The depression affected both the United States and Europe in serious and profound ways. America was overwhelmingly Republican in the 20s, electing three successive Presidents from that party by large margins. By 1932, however, Herbert Hoover, the incumbent President, was extremely unpopular and was seen as being out of touch by a large number of Americans. Hoover was out of office in a landslide in an election that focused almost entirely on domestic, economic issues, winning only six states. Hoover's biographer Glen Jeansonne records that the President's 1932 re-election campaign seemed so hopeless that some members of his own party tried to recruit former President Calvin Coolidge to run against the incumbent.[401] Franklin Delano Roosevelt would be re-elected three times, all by wide margins. Although Roosevelt would be hated by many conservatives and free market supporters, he enjoyed popularity throughout his long Presidency.

The era of the early 30s was an unprecedented era of peacetime crisis for most industrialized countries in the world. The recession began in America spread throughout Europe. Just a little over ten years after cessation of hostilities in the most violent and deadly conflict in the history, which coincided with the worst disease outbreak in the history of the world, a great many veterans and families of the conflict now found themselves unemployed and in desperate financial straits. It was a period when, for many, whatever faith was left in traditional institutions was shattered and replaced with a dark uncertainty about the future. Seemingly more than ever before, there was a sense that the traditional way of operating was not working and a radical or reactionary solution was needed. Films such as Gregory La Cava's *Gabriel Over the White House* (1933), which featured a borderline dictatorial President solving the nation's problems, indicate that once-radical sentiment could go to the mainstream. As Robert S. McElvaine states in his history of the Depression: 'Revolution was not yet likely in 1932.' However, '…faith in the economic system was beginning to

[401] Glen Jeansonne, *Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker 1928-1933*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 407.

erode.'[402] He later states 'The Depression led many intellectuals into believing that some sort of social and ideological apocalypse was at hand.'[403]

As discussed in the last Chapter, the success of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Journey's End* both reflect ideas about the conflict that already existed in the public's mind, such as the fact that war mostly hurts the innocents who fight it and that there is little glory in the traditional sense in the endeavour, as well as propagating this idea to many more people. After the massive critical and commercial success of *All Quiet*, a marked change in the portrayal of the war as a cinematic subject occurred. It is significant to observe that although a large number of films about subjects relating to the war were produced between 1931 and 1936, there were far fewer films set in the trenches and airfields. Instead, a number of films discussed either the aftermath of the war, its effects on civilians, or its central causes. Many of these films were less about the actual experiences of soldiers, as they had been in the 1920s, as much as they were about the central, causative and metaphysical questions about the war. I suggest that this is because the cycle of films concerning war trauma of soldiers had become perceived to be overplayed after the first few years of the 30s. This is partially due to the relative simplicity of the arguments these films made and also due to the fact that *All Quiet* was largely seen as being the definitive movie on this subject.

Women in War Films

At a first glance, a casual observer might perceive that the portrayal of female characters in war films of the 20s was limited to a worried, weeping mother or concerned girlfriend or wife. However, a survey of the films already discussed in this thesis does not support this contention. In fact, given the homosocial nature of the war film as a genre, it is counterintuitive how many portrayals of females are more than one-note worried criers and are used by their male directors as a critique of male attitudes at the time. As indicated in Chapter II, the plot of *What Price Glory* concerns itself with a love-hate relationship between two male American soldiers whose conflict comes to a head over Charmaine, the daughter of a French bartender. Director Raoul Walsh clearly indicates that these men are not above using women in the 'exotic' lands that they visit for sex, and initially Charmaine is seen as little more than an object for the men to fight over. As the movie continues, her portrayal is more complex and the film indicates that she is suffering from the fight between the two men.

[402] Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1993), 94.
[403] Ibid., 205.

Walsh suggests that she is a person in her own right and not a thing to be fought over. Although somewhat idealized, Melisande in *The Big Parade* is also more than a type for Jim Apperson to fall in love with. King Vidor uses her character to demonstrate the suffering of the French civilian population at the time. She is another wounded person, who, like the protagonist, needs love to overcome the almost existential suffering of the war. Although less developed as characters, the portrayal of women in *All Quiet on the Western Front* is also more complex than the men in the film perceive them to be. The French women who give their bodies to the German soldiers during the war in exchange for food are shown as being clearly desperate. Paul's mother is well meaning but cannot fully understand the horrific experiences that her son has gone through. Despite the fact that it has an all-male cast, the lack of women in *Journey's End* is telling. In this film, the men form a completely homosocial environment. Among some of the men, there is an undercurrent of homosexuality, although among others, sex and women are completely removed from their lives, almost as if they do not exist, a form of denial of the memory of what they have lost.

As demonstrated by this review of films, I argue that pictures that use the Great War as a subject during this period were sensitive to the roles that women did (and did not) play in the lives of the soldiers, and often these sociological commentaries are undercurrents and sub-themes of the films in question. The two films discussed in this chapter explicitly concern themselves thematically with the role of women in the conflict (and its aftermath).

Pilgrimage

The subject of the effects of war on women was on the public mind in the United States due to the Gold Star Pilgrimage program. As writer Erika Kuhlman describes in her book *Of Little Comfort: War Widows, Fallen Soldiers and the Remaking of the Nation after the Great War*: 'These government-funded, all-expenses-paid voyages to France allowed widows of servicemen killed overseas to visit their husbands' graves and act out publically the war widows' role that Thurston had prescribed for them before U.S. intervention began.'[404] The Thurston she refers to is Ethel Thurston, a newspaper woman who advocated the role of the war widows and women on the homefront as a kind of feminist experience, arguing that

[404] Kuhlman, Erika, *Of Little Comfort: War Widows, Fallen Soldiers, and the Remaking of the Nation After the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 69-70.

women could prove their toughness and reliance by actively stepping out of traditionally feminine roles and aiding the war effort.[405]

These sojourns were the subject of John Ford's film *Pilgrimage*, which will be briefly discussed in this chapter as it is an example of the degree to which the effects of the war on female relations of soldiers were in the public consciousness. The film recounts the journey of Hannah Jessop (Henrietta Crosman), who undertakes the trip to France with several other war mothers. Ford is mostly concerned with the concept of motherhood, a theme that runs through much of his work, but there are some Great War elements in the film worth studying, mainly as examples of how tropes established by previous films and war media were now incorporated into the film's thematic background. The only segment of the film that features actual battles in the trenches is very brief, likely because the audiences were already familiar enough with the tropes of the war film from *The Big Parade* and *All Quiet*. Great War battle scenes were not the novelty that they once were. In fact, much of the film can be seen as an interesting parallel to *The Big Parade*, as like that film, it follows an American as she experiences French culture shock and come to terms with the overwhelming emotional loss of the war. A key difference is that the protagonist of *Pilgrimage* is elderly, female and visiting France long after war is over, as she is beginning to understand the experiences of her Everyman son.

Men Must Fight

I now turn my attention to *Men Must Fight*, a picture that is by a wide margin the most understudied extant film discussed in this thesis. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the movie has never been released on VHS, DVD, Blu-Ray or any other home format, including digital download. Based on an unpopular play, the movie was not a critical success at the time of its release and there is not much evidence of commercial success, either. The director, Edgar Selwyn, has been almost completely ignored by film historians. Due to that this thesis is a discussion of historical reception and unlike the other films I have discussed *Men Must Fight* was not a popular hit, some may argue that it should not have a place in this thesis. I argue that its inclusion is crucial.

Men Must Fight is, to my knowledge, the only American film of its era to concern itself with the roles that masculinity and femininity play in war and conflict, and the movie's plot ties

[405] Ibid., 54-55.

these themes to the Great War and a potential Second World War. It is also close to the only film to argue that the causes of conflict are not just geo-political but societal in origin. Its discussion of socialization and masculine violence is unique, and as one of the few films of any era to address this idea in great depth. The picture is relevant as a reflection of many contemporary views on these issues at the time the movie was released, as well an early demonstration of the growing fear that a repeat of the Great War was a possibility in the minds of the public.

The movie is based on an unsuccessful play by S.K. Lauren and Reginald Lawrence, which ran for only 35 performances on Broadway.[406] What encouraged MGM to produce a film adaptation cannot be ascertained, as there are no surviving studio memoranda regarding the movie in its file at the Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills. It may be possible that the studio saw the movie as a vehicle for their new star, English actress Diana Wynyard. At the time, Wynyard was in the ascent of her film career. She would receive an Academy Award nomination for her performance in *Cavalcade,* a film released earlier in 1933 that would go on to win the Oscar for Best Picture. In that movie, the actress had played the matriarch of the Marryot family, observing thirty years of British history and suffering with worry and anxiety as her husband fights in the Boer War and her son in the Great War. One reviewer of *Men Must Fight* commented that her character was 'a fairly legible carbon copy of Jane Marryot.'[407] Wynyard had also played a supporting role in a previous film with Great War overtones, *Rasputin and the Mad Monk* (1932). In that picture, she had reprised her Broadway performance as Princess Natasha. *Men Must Fight* would be only her third film, but she would receive top billing, indicating that MGM felt she was star material, probably in 'prestige' pictures. Ultimately, Wynyard would not stay long at MGM, making only one other film at that studio, leaving for others such as Universal and eventually returning to the stage, despite her success in *Cavalcade*.[408] The only other star was Lewis Stone, who would go on to be known for his performances as Judge Stone in the *Andy Hardy* film series but at the time was a reliable MGM character actor, usually playing patriarchal authority figures.

The director was Edgar Selwyn, who has been almost completely ignored by film researchers. Selwyn has more credits as a writer, directing only eight features, the best

[406] "Men Must Fight," *Internet Broadway Database*, http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=11646.
[407] W.A Whitney, "Loew's Fox," *Washington Post*, Apr. 1, 1933.
[408] Edwin Schallert, "Diana Wynyard's Hollywood Return Delayed by Successful Engagement in London," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 6, 1934.

known of which is *The Sin of Madelon Claudet* (1931), which featured an Academy Award winning performance from Helen Hayes. It is unknown whether he was assigned to or lobbied for work on *Men Must Fight*, but a look at his previous five features reveal an interesting commonality- four of them have female protagonists, concern themselves with traditionally feminine subjects and feature some of the biggest female stars of the time, such as Hayes, Bessie Love and Lelia Hyams. Therefore, it is possible that Selwyn was considered, either by himself, MGM, or both, as a George Cukor-like 'women's director', with a talent for getting impressive performances out of female stars.

As *Men Must Fight* is not generally available, I will discuss the film's plot in greater depth than usual in this thesis. The movie begins with a prologue during the Great War, as Laura (Wynyard), an unmarried nurse, is having passionate relationship with Geoff (Robert Young), an aviator. They discuss their love before he leaves in the morning on a mission in which he is killed, apparently never knowing that she was pregnant with his child. Later, she confesses her plight to her friend Ned Seward (Stone). Although she does not love Ned, Laura agrees to marry him to provide the child with a stable future.

The narrative then jumps forward to the year 1940. During the preceding two decades, Ned and Laura have been extraordinarily successful, with Ned becoming the American Secretary of State and, with Laura, the leader of an international pacifist movement. Sometime during the 1930s, at least certain parts of Europe and Asia have come together to form the superstate of Eurasia. This is an alteration from the play, where the United States goes to war with Uruguay. I do not have access to the play script, but I speculate that this change was made to increase the similarity to beginning of The Great War.[409] The movie does not greatly discuss the details of this alliance but does mention this state includes at least Italy and the United Kingdom. Ned has used influence as a peacemaker, and we are told that the United States and Eurasia are about to sign a treaty that will 'end war forever.'

Also at this time, Laura and Geoff's son Bob (Phillips Holmes) is beginning a promising career as a chemist. He is engaged to be married to Peggy (Ruth Selwyn, the director's wife). Things take a sudden turn towards the disastrous when, off screen, the American ambassador to Eurasia is assassinated, in a clear reference to the murder of Franz Ferdinand. Believing

[409] Brooks Atkinson, "War and Peace in a Drama That Is on the Side of Pacifism," *New York Times,* Oct. 15, 1932.

that war is now inevitable and that it is his duty to support the President in the war effort, Ned eschews his pacifism, while Laura stands firm, driving a wedge between the two.

Bob is caught between two conflicts: loyalty to his father and fiancée on one side and his personal beliefs and mother on the other. Initially supporting Laura, he refuses to enlist, which outrages Peggy and her conservative and patriotic mother (Hedda Hopper). Bob acknowledges that the war (and apparently, all war) is ethically wrong. But he feels great social pressure to act 'manly' from both his wife and father. Even so, he still refuses to enlist, willing to give up Peggy for his ethics. Things intensify when Laura makes a television address to the anti-war movement over the world. During her address, Laura, on behalf of the female sex, makes the only threat she sees available to females- if politicians insist on continuing war, they will stop having children, because 'if you have no men, you have no war!' The speech ends in a riot by male pro-war forces, who are only calmed by Ned who tells them that until war starts, Americans still have their free speech rights.

When the war officially begins soon after, Ned argues 'Any talk of peace now is not only cowardice, its treachery.' Bob still refuses to go, though stung by the loss of Peggy and the knowledge that if he does not enlist, someone else will in his place. Using the only tactic left to him, Ned informs Bob of his real biological father, the airman who died fighting. Although he still believes that war is wrong, Bob is genuinely moved by the fact that his biological father was a brave fighter, and is aware that his country is in a state of crisis. He enlists, refusing a safe desk job that Ned had arranged for him, instead joining the Air Corps. Given the devastating losses that America has suffered at the beginning of the conflict, both Ned and Laura know this almost certainly means he is going to his death. The film ends as Laura, Peggy and Bob's grandmother (May Robson) observe Bob's squadron flying over New York City to defend against the Eurasian attack. The grandmother states that if only women ruled the world, there would be no war, but this will never happen. Peggy swears that she will never allow her son to fight, just as Laura had twenty-two years earlier.

Understudied as the film is, the movie offers a wealth of sociological commentary about the nature of war, gender and politics in the early 30s. *Men Must Fight* is about the *personal* causes of war-why individual soldiers choose to fight - as well as the potential of a Second World War. Unlike many films of its era, such as *All Quiet*, it does not solely blame governments for the problem of war, but also discusses the culpability of those who fight them as well as the sociological conditions that encourage those soldiers. The film's final

scene and very title seems to argue to that the fundamental problem is men themselves, a very unique and unusual argument for the patriarchal 1930s. The movie is also atypically structured in that the central moral choice of the film, Bob's struggle about whether or not to enlist, occurs to a secondary character. Laura, the protagonist, never has a moment of doubt at any time after the prologue. She is convinced that promoting her pacifistic beliefs is her moral duty, and the film clearly takes her side. As the picture is concerned with psychological motivations of the characters, it is worth noting that Ned's sudden change from peace-loving pacifist to patriotic zealot occurs so suddenly and quickly that it does not seem motivated. However, Ned may have been intended as a stand-in for the US government in the early days of the war. Woodrow Wilson ran for re-election in 1916 on a platform of keeping the nation out of war, something a majority of Americans agreed with, only to suddenly and with great rhetoric come out in favour of entering the conflict shortly after the election. In this sense, Ned's actions, although not realistically motivated psychologically, are emblematic of the government he represents.

The central (and not explicitly answered) question of *Men Must Fight* is the motivation behind Bob's choice to enlist. He tells us that he has a general sense of patriotism and that he is moved by the fact that his deceased father was himself a soldier. It is defensible that the primary reason is simply the tremendous amount of sociological pressure that is put on him by almost everyone except his mother. Like Laura, he intellectually buys into the equation that if soldiers do not fight, war will end. With his masculinity being threatened by both his (adoptive) father and fiancée, he simply cannot continue down that path he had originally chosen, even if he believes himself to be logically right.

The film does not withhold from criticizing women for upholding the same beliefs. *Men Must Fight* also demonstrates how women can create a sociological environment where men are encouraged to fight. Peggy and her mother are traditionalists and as such are portrayed as automatically and unthinkingly supporting the USA in whatever position it may hold, rightly or wrongly. In addition, Peggy feels that it is Bob's duty to enlist, but, like Ned, does not give any intellectual or logical reasons as to her support for the war or the military. She simply expects that Bob enlist because it is what he is supposed to do. However, in the film's final scene, as she realizes that her fiancée is in great danger and has many worried days and nights ahead of her. She sees the futility of the cause, albeit too late to change anything.

The closing scene is remarkably pessimistic, but is in keeping with much media of the early 30s, which, as discussed, often had a strong belief that traditional government and social institutions were not working and needed to be changed. This dénouement, which gathers three generations of women together in one place, in a triangular composition, indicates that this change is unlikely to happen, and indeed, the cycle of war and violence is to repeat itself, unless of course the human race is destroyed first. The grandmother, mother and fiancée speculate that war would never happen if women ruled the world, but as this will never happen, they are resigned to forever watching the sons, husbands and brothers they love fight each other in senseless conflict. Like many films of its era, *Men Must Fight* criticizes war in general, sharing the pacifist value that all countries are equally at fault while rejecting the standard argument of a 'just war.' As Laura repeatedly states in the film, government cannot be relied on to stop war itself. War must be stopped by the soldiers (the common folk) refusing to fight it.

The film is much more expansive than nearly all the other early sound depictions of WWI, even *All Quiet,* in its concern for the sociological reasons why individual soldiers might fight. Milestone's film argued that men joined essentially due to naiveté. The very young soldiers of that picture were strongly encouraged to join by elite intellectuals who did not, and indeed, could not, understand what they going to experience. In contrast, Selwyn's film explicitly associates war, and by extension all violence, with masculinity. The director, along with playwright and screenwriter C. Gardner Sullivan, were acutely aware of the fact that men are often socialized to solve conflicts violently. Bob relates a story about how his mother chastised him for hitting a schoolmate who called him a sissy. Laura calls upon the mothers of the world to teach their sons the same thing, while presumably being well aware of the fact that this lesson is stronger when coming from a male figure.

In this regard, Laura gets no help from Ned. His conversion from peace lover to warmonger occurs off screen, so much so that one must wonder if he was really committed to peace activism to begin with. After the war seems imminent, Ned's entire *modus operandi* alters and he seems persistent, almost fanatical, in his association of war with masculinity. Bob shares the cultural association but it is much more ambivalent about it. He knows that the war is 'a dirty rotten business' and in no way agrees with the conflict's political aims. The film is ambiguous in its portrayal of why Bob finally enlists. He may be joining simply because of the calculation that if he does not go, someone will in his place (though this does not make logical sense in the absence of a draft). Bob may also be motivated by the legacy of

his biological father, perhaps because he sees the hypocrisy of his adopted one. Edgar Selwyn clearly criticizes Ned out on disowning his son for not joining while pulling strings for him to serve in a safe desk job away from the front lines. Bob may also make his choice due to his fiancé's refusal to accept his pacifism. Peggy does not offer a rational, intellectual opposition to Laura and Bob's philosophy. Rather, she is simply identified as a 'traditionalist' by her mother and angrily refuses to accept Bob's position. Although it could be argued that the traditionalist argument is based mostly on emotion, Peggy's character is so underwritten (and so amateurishly played by Ruth Selwyn, whose casting can apparently only be explained by nepotism), that her relationship with Bob appears implausible. Peggy does, however, provide a way for the movie to indicate that women, too, directly contribute the psychological tendencies for men to prove their masculinity by committing acts of violence. This makes Peggy's conversion in the final scene is ironic. She was willing to leave her fiancé because of his refusal to fight, but when he does go, she swears, just as Laura did years ago, that she will do everything within her power to make sure that any future son she will have shall never face death in the same way.

The most likely reason for Bob's enlistment, however, is simply that the societal expectations placed on men are too strong for him to overcome. When trying to explain his decision to his mother, he tells her that, though he disagrees with the war, he must join. One of his statements sums up his attitude: 'There are certain things a man must do.' Bob's final choice underlines the film's central thesis: that war may be unstoppable not for political reasons, but for social ones. Men will continuously feel the need to assert their masculinity through acts of aggression, and since men will always be in power, there will be no end to war. At the end of the film, the women wishfully muse that if only females had power in the world, war would be banned, but this is decried by Bob's grandmother (the picture's ultimate voice of wisdom) never to happen. There are, however, a number of thematic contradictions in the film's argument. The first is the continual association between femininity (particularly motherhood) and nonviolence. The director does not seem to admit the possibility that women themselves may be violent or vengeful, even though Peggy is sometimes portrayed as petty. Though Laura is strong willed and sticks to her convictions, she does so only to save her son, and by extension, the sons of all mothers. Apparently, the only thing that women can do to stop war is to stop having children. During her climatic speech, she states 'If you have no children, you have no men, and if you have no men, you have no war!' The second is the movie's inability to predict a world in which women will either serve in the military or

hold major political positions. Grandmother Seward's prediction that women will never rule the world is treated by the movie as something of complete and absolute certainty. The final issue that may undermine the movie's argument is Phillips Holmes' performance. Possibly unintentionally, he comes off as somewhat effeminate in his opening scenes, and he is often portrayed as being closer to his mother than his father. Holmes also has a slim, unmuscular body and 'pretty boy' features, none are associated with the macho image of a soldier.

Figure 122. Phillips Holmes and Diana Wynyard as mother and son.

As the film progresses, he becomes more and more assertive and traditionally masculine. He connotes strength and manliness the most at the end of the film when he makes the decision to enlist. Apparently, men really cannot be men if they do not fight.

Unlike many of the films discussed, was not intended to be a prestige blockbuster, and the internal industrial response to the film bears this out. The headline of its brief listing *The Film Daily* proclaimed 'WAR-THEME DRAMA HOLDS FAIR INTEREST THROUGH EXCELLENT CAST AND DIRECTION.' Though the listing mostly consisted of a plot synopsis, the writer did state that '[The] Chief merits of this picture lie in the good work of its cast, Edgar Selwyn's direction, and the attractive mounting of the production.'[410] Although by this point the publication often did not explicitly instruct exhibitors as to whether a film would be commercially successful, the comparative lack of other coverage indicates that the movie could be seen as 'just another release' as opposed to a major cultural event. Conversely to its treatment in *The Film Daily*, Joe Bigelow in *Variety* gave the film a much longer review, in fact, its entry is slightly shorter than its coverage of Lloyd Bacon's *42nd Street* on the same page. However, the notice is decidedly negative. The first two paragraphs are representative his repudiation of the film and its handling of its themes:

> The intentions were good but the result is just an echo, and not a very loud one. As an anti-war preachment, 'Men Must Fight' tells nothing that 'What Price Glory' and so many other pictures since 'Glory' have told, nor does it close its argument as forcefully as have most of the others. As a flop play on Broadway early this season, this Reginald Lawrence- S.K. Lauren manuscript was over-talkative, ponderous, and not popular entertainment. As a picture it's likewise. / There is much more to be said about and against war, but 'Men Must Fight' does not say it. It travels familiar lanes of reasoning and philosophy and while its argument is sound it is never moving.

The writer praises the cast, though criticizing Wynyard for her English accent, but otherwise finds the movie to be not 'entertainment.' He does not mention at all the science fiction elements and merely summarizes the film's position on gender. As quoted above, Bigelow sees the movie as being 'an anti-war preachment' but sees this as the primary theme of the film, whereas I have argued that it assumes that it assumes an anti-war position as given and is more concerned thematically with why individuals choose to fight it. This confusion about the film's discourse may have been one of the reasons the picture was not as popular as the others discussed- it may have been seen by some audiences as a retread of previous and superior Great War pictures.[411]

Upon its release in the general, *Men Must Fight* received mixed reviews. The anonymous critic for *The Washington Post* found that 'It is not the story that makes the picture interesting, but rather the portrayals of the several major characters, some thoroughly

[410] "Men Must Fight," *The Film Daily*, Mar. 11, 1933.
[411] Joe Bigelow, "Men Must Fight," *Variety*, Mar. 14, 1933.

consistent and others not so fired with the courage of their convictions...Lewis Stone, as the Secretary of State, whose excellent rendering of the part far exceeds the vacillation written into it.'[412] Another writer for the same paper later called it 'Daring in thought and speech...' Counterintuitively for a film with such a serious subject, the film was preceded by a stage show hosted by Milton Berle.[413] In the most positive review I could find, the critic for *The Atlanta Constitution* called the movie 'tremendously timely and effective' and termed the cast 'brilliant.'[414] In a longer review for the same publication, Ralph T. Jones argued the movie was 'quite good screen entertainment, though handicapped as must all films be that are burdened with a mission. The finest entertainment is invariably devised for entertainment purposes only and every injection of high purpose lowers the amusement value of the offering.'[415] In a negative review, Mae Tinee 'found the film rather lethargic and long winded' and also seemed to disagree with its message, noting in brackets 'And if some women rule the world there'll STILL be war.'[416] Although the notices of the picture were moderately positive, I found something telling in my research. Unlike most of the other films in the thesis, there were far fewer reviews written, and they tended to be shorter and less in depth. This indicates that the movie was not considered a 'prestige picture' as many others discussed and had less impact in the public's consciousness. With the exception of initial *The Atlanta Constitution* notice, these notices reveal a general lack of enthusiasm around the film. Mordaunt Hall's review in the *New York Times* generally focused on the film as a vehicle for Wynyard and the other actors and mostly avoided qualitative judgements on the movie.[417] There was rarely contemporary discourse of the film as an emotional powerhouse to audiences in the way many of the other films in this thesis have been. This is predicted to a degree by the film itself. After the death of Geoff, all of the trauma in the film is presumed to occur after it ends. Bob is going to suffering and death, but the audience does not see it. This placement of the trauma off-screen means the movie focuses more on its socio-political argument, but also may have taken away its emotional impact on audiences.

Box office records for *Men Must Fight* were unavailable to me, but it is fairly clear that if the movie was profitable at all, it was not a blockbuster. Despite the press attention given the

[412] "Lowe's Fox," *Washington Post*, Apr. 1, 1933.
[413] "Imaginative Drama Shares Fox Honors With Milton Berle," *Washington Post*, Apr. 2, 1993.
[414] "'Men Must Fight' Now at Grand Has 'Cavalcade' Star in Cast," *Atlanta Constitution,* Mar. 19., 1933.
[415] Ralph T. Jones, "Diana Wynyard Star Of "Men Must Fight"," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 18, 1933.
[416] Tinee, Mae, "Film Predicts Wars as Long as Men Rule," *Chicago Daily Tribune,* Mar. 13, 1933.
[417] Mordaunt Hall, "Diana Wynyard in a Pictorial Version of a Play by Reginald Lawrence and S.K. Lauren," *New York Times,* Mar. 11, 1933.

film on release, as evidenced by a feature interview with Wynyard in the April edition of *Photoplay*[418] and the magazine's praise of the film, the actress and Stone,[419] the movie later disappeared from popular cinematic memory. It is possible that the movie's lack of commercial success came from MGM's difficulty in assigning a marketable genre to the movie. The main character is a mother concerned with traditionally feminine aspects (motherhood, pacifism) and the movie has certain traits of a 'women's picture' yet it also has elements of the war and science fiction genres. The pressbook indicates several ways for studios to sell the film, as a woman's picture emphasizing Wynyard's stardom, as a war film (a suggested tagline is '"The Big Parade" of Peace!' among others) and as a science fiction novelty, emphasizing the future technology.[420] Perhaps the many varied themes and genres ended up alienating both men and women from the movie, or at least prohibited the studio from marketing it effectively. There are several other reasons for the movie's obscurity, but the most likely is the short life of Wynyard as a major star. After finishing her MGM contract she made a few other films, one for RKO and two for Universal, before her return to England. She would have a successful career as a stage actress and appeared only intermittently in movies.

Selwyn's film is also worth examining more generally as an example of the fear of a Second World War. This idea was an undercurrent in much of 30s popular culture and political discourse. According to historian Anne Perkins, the results of the 1935 General Election in the UK 'were generally interpreted as a mandate to rearm.' However, the government's subsequent perceived bungling of the Abyssinian Crisis hurt them in public opinion.[421] Like any geo-cultural event, there are probably many reasons for this, but probably the single direct cause of this fear was the rise of Fascism. Particularly as Hitler took power, accompanied by a great deal of sabre-rattling about rearmament and German grievances over the Versailles treaty, many began to fear that another war was inevitable, although whether the fault would be Germans or the conservative hawks who were trying to oppose them was in question. The generation that had fought the Great War had seen what was literally the most destructive war in human history, and many realized, given the advances in technology that a second war of that magnitude would be even more destructive, perhaps apocalyptically

[418] Doris Craig, "If You've Wondered About Diana-, " *Photoplay*, April 1933, 38, 108.
[419] "The Shadow Stage" *Photoplay*. April 1933 54-55.
[420] Men Must Fight pressbook, MGM, W.R. Ferguson, Manager of Exploitation, 1933.
[421] Anne Perkins, *Baldwin*, (London: Huas Publishing Limited, 2006), 100-103.

so. As *Men Must Fight* ends with an aerial assault over New York City, the belief that another war might lead to the destruction of major civilizations is clearly stated.

Men Must Fight reflects social anxiety about the future of the world, one that with the rise of Fascism seemed once again to be headed in a negative direction, arguing that a Second World War would be catastrophic and that there would be no logical reason to start one. The ideological content of the film takes as given that the war would be personally devastating to the soldiers who would fight it, building on the groundwork laid by the previous films in this thesis, but also argue that the result would be apocalyptic. The personal war trauma that had been discussed in previous films may now be extended to the entire world, with the destruction of great cities and indeed entire civilizations as a possible result. As the globe moved even closer to a Second World War, portrayals of the First tended to focus more on the 'brotherhood of man' concept, without the explicit portrayals of trauma seen in the early 30s, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: The Universal Fraternity

This chapter will focus on the late 1930s war film. This, the final period of cinema I will examine in my reception history between the World Wars, can often be characterised by what I have termed the 'Universal Fraternity.' The phrase does not refer to Universal Pictures, which produced one of the discussed films. Rather, it describes a theme found in war-related movies from this period: the idea that humanity transcends nationalistic, cultural, and political boundaries. Both films are about the suffering of German characters in the post-war environment, though the principal audience was a non-German one. This contrasts with the near sub-human portrayal of Germans in films such as *The Heart of Humanity* and *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse*, discussed in Chapter One. This Chapter focuses on two films about the aftermath of the Great War made as the situation in Europe was beginning to disintegrate. I will discuss two prestige pictures based on novels by Erich Maria Remarque: James Whale's *The Road Back* (1937) and Frank Borzage's *Three Comrades* (1938). I will argue that these films act as both a recapitulation of themes of war trauma found in previous war films, such as *All Quiet*, and as a contrast to the underlying geo-political situation found in the news at the time. The theme of Milestone's film- the idea that war was a terrible waste that led to a horrific dark void, was still present. However, these movies continued in a somewhat lighter tone, as they tended to take place in peacetime and concern themselves with people attempting to find happiness after the conflict ends.

Historical Background

The late 30s was a time of political uncertainty in the world. In Europe, tensions were increasing with the rise of Hitler and German re-armament. Much of the political discourse and cultural concerns at the time was about the possibility of a Second World War. Tensions in Germany and Eastern Europe provided international examples of the grave possibility of another European conflict. UK observers knew that if war were to break out, it would be almost impossible for Britain not to become involved, whereas American isolation was still a possibility. Father Charles Coughlin, a Catholic priest who had a large following among conservative circles due to his radio broadcasts and Charles Lindbergh, the aviation hero,

were popular figures that advocated avoiding an American withdrawal from Europe. During this period, there were many films that concerned themselves with the Great War, but, relatively few dealt with the actual fighting of it. I argue that the two films are representative of this milieu-both emphasise themes of brotherhood, humanism, and equality beyond cultures. Continuing on from the points made in the last chapter, these films, made against the backdrop of escalating political strife in Europe, play an important role in the discussion of Great War cinema as they discuss the psychological and, in a limited context, socio-political aftermath of the conflict. The commentary of these pictures is also often significant in what they *do not* state.

The Road Back

The film rights to *The Road Back* had been purchased in 1929, before the novel was even completed.[422] Universal had just as strong a financial incentive in making a sequel to their critical and commercial triumph as Erich Maria Remarque had in writing a sequel to his source novel. Both film and novel would pose numerous artistic and aesthetic challenges. The clearest example of a problem with any sequel would be the obvious fact that almost all the main characters in both versions of *All Quiet* had died in their respective texts, and given the gravity of the material, any kind of literary or filmic device revealing that they were'not really dead' would detract from the reality and ultimate themes of the works. A less apparent issue with a sequel would be that in many ways the themes of the story had been fully developed in the first book and film: the transition from naïve innocence to Black Void had been completed. There were no significant unresolved narrative elements to pick up and continue as both novel and film were essentially a long series of connected vignettes instead of a tightly constructed plot. A great deal of the novel *The Road Back* is concerned with the interior thoughts of Ernst, the protagonist. Much of the interplay between the characters would be difficult to film because the connection of the former veterans is based on a shared set of experiences that they do not have to speak about. They often know what the others are thinking or feeling, an idea that would be lost if it were to be reliant upon dialogue. The narrative does not really have an ending, with the closest thing to a resolution being Ernst's interior realisation about himself, his future and his place in the world. Finally, *The Road*

[422] James Curtis, *James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 168-169.

Back is far more reliant on German society and politics than *All Quiet*, something that could be difficult for non-German audiences to relate to.

Only one English translation of *The Road Back* had been made, again by A.W. Wheen, who also translated the first English printings of *All Quiet*. As I do not speak or read German, I am forced to use Wheen's English translation and I will be referring to it when discussing the novel in the following pages. Therefore, Wheen's translation may be thought of as my source text. In writing his sequel, Remarque decided to shift the focus from the war itself to the aftermath of the survivors, something he himself would also know about from personal experience. Although the fate of the one relatively minor character, Tjaden, had not been revealed in *All Quiet*, Remarque chose not to build a narrative around him. Rather, the sequel would use Tjaden as a supporting character and use Ernst, similar to but not quite the same as Paul Baumer, as the protagonist. Like *All Quiet*, *The Road Back* is more of a series of interconnected episodes as opposed to a single, tightly constructed plotline. One of the major differences is that *The Road Back* is told entirely in chronological sequence. Picking up on the morning of 11 November 1918 (a few weeks after Baumer's death) the narrative finds the survivors somewhat stunned when the war finally ends. The men, who are not emotionally ready for peace, suddenly are forced to return home. Ernst lives with his parents as he plans his next move. As the weeks pass, he maintains contact with many of his friends from the war, all of whom are coping in very different ways. Essentially introverted, Ernst observes the changes in himself, his war friends and German society with a kind of dispassion, often separating himself from his emotions, which verge on misery, despite his girlfriend. He and almost all of his veteran friends share contempt for German society, which they see as obviously apparent, a perspective that they are amazed that others, even those close to them, do not share. Unable to re-integrate into society, they become bored at daily life. Their war experiences have given them a perspective on death that few others share. A passage in which Ernst discusses quitting a teaching job with his father is emblematic and worth quoting at length:

> I listen to him sympathetically but am bored. How strange that this man on the sofa here should be the father who formally regulated my life! Yet, he was not able to look after me in the years out there; he could not even have helped me in the barracks- any N.C.O.there carried more weight than he.- I had to get through as best as I could by myself and it was a matter of entire indifferences whether he existed or not.
>
> When he has finished I pour him a glass of cognac. "Now listen, Father," I say and sit down over against him; "you may be right in what you say. But you see, I have learned how to live in a hole in the ground on a crust of bread and a little drop of thin

> soup. And so long as there was no shelling I was quite content. An old hut seemed to me to be positive luxury and a straw mattress in the rest area was paradise. So you see, the mere fact that I am still alive and there is no shelling, that is enough for me at the moment. What little I need to eat and drink I can rake together all right; for the rest there is my whole life before me."[423]

Later, after the elder man complains that the teaching job had a pension, offering financial security in old age, Ernst retorts: '…where's the soldier will live to see sixty? There are things in our bones that will only show themselves later..- We'll all have packed up before then, don't you worry.'[424] This excerpt demonstrates the general fatalism the men experience- given no psychological help or therapy, they return as changed men to a home and community that may be well intentioned, but is unable to understand the problems that the veterans are going through.

Towards the end of the novel, another veteran, Albert, murders a man who had an affair with his girlfriend. Ernst and his friend attend the trial, which ends in a near riot as it is argued that society was really at fault for teaching Albert to kill and then expecting him to stop. Albert himself comments that this murder is different than those committed in war in that in this case his victim had actually done something to hurt him. Despite the efforts of the soldiers, Albert is convicted and sentenced to three years in prison. The novel ends as Ernst comes to a realisation about himself: 'Perhaps I shall never really be happy again; perhaps the war has destroyed that, and no doubt I shall always be a little inattentive and nowhere quite at home- but I shall probably never be wholly unhappy either- for something will always be there to sustain me, be it merely my own hands, or a tree, or the breathing earth.'[425]

In a sense, the sequel is more cynical than the original. The first book followed a series of characters as they react to various kinds of suffering, hating the war while somehow being attached to it as they only thing that they understand. When the war ends, the men do not want re-integrate into German society and have difficulty when they try. They see it as fundamentally corrupt. The overall tone of the book is one of depression: Ernst exists in a kind of low-level misery, rarely motivated to do what the non-veterans want him to and not particularly interested in making a new life. A consistent theme of the book is that the veterans are surrounded by people, such as well-intentioned family members, society elders and political radicals who do not really understand their war experiences and yet have

[423] Erich Maria Remarque, *The Road Back,* trans A.W. Wheen (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1931), 260.
[424] Ibid., 261
[425] Ibid., 343.

extremely strong opinions about what should happen, which the men treat with a kind of bemused indifference and contempt.

The novel received mixed reviews.[426] An anonymous reviewer for *The New York Times* loved it, calling it '…a finer book than "All Quiet," first of all because it is a book with a wider vision, with a fuller range of life for its scope. And it is better written. It reveals Remarque as a craftsman of unquestionably first rank, a man who can bend language to his will.'[427] The book was certainly something the public was interested in reading, over 100,000 reserved copies were purchased in the United States alone.[428]

Carl Laemmle Jr. had enough faith in Remarque that the studio bought the rights before the author had even written the book, at the same time as the deal for *All Quiet*. According to Whale's biographer James Curtis, 'The terms for *The Road Back* were considerably stiffer than for *All Quiet*, and Remarque's agents refused to sell the rights in perpetuity. Instead, the agreement called for an initial payment of $50,000, in exchange for which Universal would have the right to make the picture for a period of five years. If and when the picture was made, a bonus payment would be due when the gross receipts surpassed a specified amount.'[429] Although copyrighted in Germany in 1930, the same year the film of *All Quiet* was released; it would take seven years for the sequel to reach the screen. By contrast, in 1933, RKO managed to rush the special effects-heavy *The Son of Kong* into release the same year as its original film.[430]

According to a 14 January 1932 *Los Angeles Times* article, *The Road Back* was scheduled to go into production in the spring.[431] The reason why Lewis Milestone, who had received an Academy Award for directing the original, was turned down for the sequel was simple: he wanted too much money.[432] After the Milestone impasse, James Whale was clearly a strong candidate, as he was both as a prestige artist, director of financially successful product, and war veteran himself. Happy to return to war material, Whale encouraged Universal to bankroll R.C. Sheriff, known from *Journey's End* as a war veteran who could write about the

[426] Barker, Christine R. and R.W. Last. "Erich Maria Remarque." London: Oswald Wolff, 1979. 69.
[427] "Remarque's Farewell to Arms," *New York Times*, May 10, 1931.
[428] "'All Quiet' Sequel is Published Today," *New York Times.* May 9, 1931.
[429] Curtis, 169
[430] Ray Morton, *King Kong: The History of a Movie Icon from Fay Wray to Peter Jackson, (*Milwaukee,WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005), 93.
[431] Schallert, Edwin, "Film Planned of 'Road Back,'" *Los Angeles Times*, January 14th, 1932.
[432] Curtis 169.

conflict from personal experience, to write the script.[433] It was estimated that filming the screenplay would cost half a million dollars.[434] With such a strong pedigree, the movie seemed like a clear choice as a profitable prestige film for the studio. However, Curtis reports that Universal shelved the project due to the fact that it would cost half a million dollars in a year that the studios was severely in the red.[435] This turn of events demonstrats either just how dire Universal's financial situation was at the time, or indicates a softness in confidence about the project, which is possible as Mark Gatiss indicates that Laemmle disliked the script.[436]

In his history *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*, Tino Balio depicts an American film industry severely hit by the Great Depression. He reports that 1931 tickets sales dropped to 70 million per week, a number that was reduced to 55 million per week the following year.[437] Balio reports that Universal had to sell almost all of their theatres.[438] There is no doubt that the studio had begun a financial slide that would ultimately result in its sale in 1936. But was it really strong financial sense to shelve the sequel to its single biggest success? To modern studios, there are few bigger financial guarantees than sequels to already successful properties. However, for much of Hollywood's history, this was not the case. A common belief was that sequels, though often profitable, will be less financially successfully than the original. Although the aforementioned *Son of Kong* was indeed rushed into production to capitalise on the success of the original, the budget was halved.[439] It is also indicative that Universal did not release sequels of its twin horror successes of 1931, Whale's *Frankenstein* and Tod Browning's *Dracula*, until 1935 and 1936, respectively. The novel *The Road Back*, while successful, lacked the cultural impact of the original. Lew Ayres was now a star but his character had died, meaning that he would not be in the sequel. It is worth noting that a bizarre announcement in the *Los Angeles Times* indicated that the studio was '…seriously thinking of securing as many members of the original cast as possible for the new picture.' including Ayres, Russell Gleason and William Bakewell. As the same article indicated that the Sheriff script was being used, it is probable

[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid., 189
[435] Ibid.
[436] Gatiss, Mark. *James Whale: A Biograph, or The Would-Be Gentleman.* London: Cassell, 1995. 129
[437] Balio, Tino, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 13-14.
[438] Ibid., 17.
[439] Ray Morton, *King Kong: The History of a Movie Icon from Fay Wray to Peter Jackson, (*Milwaukee,WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005). 95.

that this was just hyperbole on the part of an unknowing Universal press agent.[440] However, the large number of popular war-related films, discussed in the last chapter, provided proof that audiences would at least be interested in the material. A clear reason for the project's initial cancellation was provided in a letter by Harry Zehner in 1936, quoted by Curtis: 'When this story came in four years ago, we were loathe to produce [the] same then, solely due to the jeopardy in which the production would have placed our German business at the time.'[441]

As Ruth Vasey states in her book *The World According to Hollywood,* 'Between the world wars, the principal film companies derived an average of 35 percent of their gross revenue from the foreign field, a larger proportion of revenues than most other American export industries earned abroad.'[442] It is probable that German response to *All Quiet* in the short term helped the movie at the UK box office, providing it with controversy that would also double as publicity. But in 1933, the film's foremost critics, the National Socialists, had come to power. By 1936, Remarque, adamantly anti-Fascist, had moved to the United States. Curtis reports that the writer, his artistic output and most especially, his perspective on the war was so antithetical to the Nazi government that not only was Universal in danger of having *The Road Back* film banned in Germany, they were in danger of having the film banned in other nations friendly to the Fascist power.[443] Despite the fact that an American audience may have been receptive to a general anti-elite message in the early 30s, the complete opposition of the German government to the picture indicated that it probably was not worth the financial loss.

Since the Laemmles had made the calculation that a film of *The Road Back* would be a dangerous financial proposition in 1932, even before the Nazis had come to power, it may on first glance seem curious that the studio, under new management after their departure, believed that the movie would be a good investment in 1936, with German fascism ascendant. However, as H. Mark Glancy reports, by this time many Hollywood studios assumed that Germany was too problematic to American films to even attempt to release their films there, with a quota and special tax on imported films.[444] Curtis claims that the studio,

[440] Schallert, Edwin. ""All Quiet" Stars Considered for Sequel at Universal," Sep. 30, 1936.
[441] Curtis, 292
[442] Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 7.
[443] Ibid., 299.
[444] H. Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film 1939-45*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 7.

which had mostly produced B films and Deanna Durbin musicals under the new management, was in need of a prestige picture.[445] Even factoring this in, the choice of *The Road Back* still seems economically problematic. There were many bestselling novels on the market the studio could have purchased without the political baggage of the war book. Mark Gatiss reports that Whale himself was the impetus behind the project.[446] Whale was still thought of as Universal's star director and was by a very wide margin the most prestigious filmmaker attached to the studio, perhaps the only one thought of as an artist.

Even factoring in Whale's reputation, its re-emergence is surprising, considering the fact that Curtis documents that Whale did not share anything approaching good relations with the new studio management and the clear political problems the picture would find itself in. Representatives of the German government had pressured for the movie not to be made at all, and after for the film to at least have somewhat greater pro-German content.[447] The studio was unexpectedly resilient to the pressure for much of the way, only to cave at the final moment, discussed below, which ultimately did little to please either German sympathisers or anti-Nazi opponents.

The Road Back finally entered production in early 1937, with Sherriff's script retouched by Charles Kenyon.[448] Whale had pushed for an-all unknown cast, similar to the original, and selected John King, a non-star, as Ernst. The only carryover from Milestone's film was Slim Summerville, reprising his role as Tjaden, and offering mostly comic relief.[449] It would be a tumultuous shoot, the most difficult of Whale's career.

[445] Ibid., 293
[446] Gatiss, 129.
[447] Curits, 292-293, 296, 298.
[448]Curtis, 293
[449] Curtis, 293-294

Figure 14. The cast of The Road Back in the suitably bleak opening.

The production began with the trench scenes, shot at night during an unusually cold winter and rain, meaning that the film began behind schedule. The situation became worse when Whale became sick with a short illness and was unable to work. Following this, a technician was killed and actor Andy Devine injured in a special effects explosion. Cinematographer John J. Mescall would often show up drunk, and was ultimately fired, replaced by Universal veteran George Robinson. Whale was not at all pleased with John King's lead performance, and relations between actor and director were tense. Making matters worse, the studio complained that Whale was filming too slowly and spending too much money.[450] In addition to all this, Universal was facing increasing pressure from the German Embassy. Prior to this point most of the pressure was applied to the studio, but several actors from the film and the director received threatening letters. The letters seemed to have the opposite effect, with many of those receiving them becoming angry.[451]

[450] Ibid., 294-296, 300.
[451] Ibid., 298-299

The studio's weekly status reports, compiled by an unknown employee and available to me from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, help to demonstrate the difficulty of the shoot from a financial perspective as well as Universal's deteriorating relationship with Whale. The first report is missing, but the second, dated 8 February, states 'At the present writing this production is running 3 days behind schedule and this we can truthfully says [sic] is altogether due to illness of Mr. Whale.' After stating that the movie, originally budgeted at $750,000 should with 'reasonable luck' end up at $800,000, the employee reassures his audience: 'Whale has always proven himself to be a most conscientious worker and I feel sure that he will do everything within his power to make up any of the days we lose on account of his illness.'[452] Almost every subsequent report indicates that the film is becoming further and further behind and over budget. The March 1st report states that the production was now 14 days behind schedule and the movie would now probably come in at around $850,000. The writer says that the best way to avoid the high figure is to 'speed up Whale' and that 'Whale is the type of director who always wants to put on screen every bit of his printed script, including punctuation marks.'[453] A report near the end of the production stated just how troubled the movie actually was: 'Including the three days we were unable to work on account illness [sic] of Mr. Whale, this production was 73 days shooting. Our original schedule and the belief of Mr. Whale was the picture could be shot in 9 weeks [54 days].' The writer states that with no additional photography, the movie would come in at $915,000.[454]

A May 1937 *Photoplay* story on the film's production is of questionable value in terms of its accuracy but is helpful in terms of describing what must have been welcome publicity for the movie. Emphasising realism, the story describes the shooting of the opening war scenes: 'Young Larry Blake, coming off the battlefield, with a mud-clotted face, voices a unanimous sentiment: "If that's war, I'm not even enlisting in the clerical corps for the next one, I'm staying right at home and just waving a flag." We ask Director Whale if the scene calls for a retake. "Yes," he says. "That wasn't good enough, realistic enough."'[455] Another story from *The Atlanta Constitution* from a few months earlier quotes Whale as stating ''The Road Back' has made all of these youngsters pacifists." continues Whale. 'They've tasted the

[452] "Whale #865 'The Road Back'" Feb. 8th, 1937.
[453] "Whale #865 "The Road Back" March 1st, 1937.
[454] "Whale #865 "The Road Back" April 26th, 1937.
[455] James Reid, "We Cover the Studios," *Photoplay*, May 1937, 95.

hardships of war-lying in mud, carrying heavy packs on their backs-and they don't like it.'[456] These statements, which focus on the war scenes set almost entirely after the war, tended to emphasise the spectacle and grandeur of the conflict, as well as reinforcing the familiar advertising tactic of stating that the film was a realistic portrayal of the conflict.

The post-production of the film was also difficult. Despite the fact that the movie had gone 17 days over schedule, after initial editing, Whale re-conceived the opening and asked for and received an additional three days of shooting.[457] In need of cash, the studio decided to loan Whale as director-for-hire to Warner Brothers, meaning that he would be unable to supervise some of the cutting to the extent that he desired. The studio ordered Whale's longtime editorial collaborator, Ted Kent, to edit the film without Whale's input. The director was presumably angry at this, but ended up agreeing with the majority of Kent's choices. Finally, Whale was displeased with elements of Dmitri Tiomkin's score. Finding enough of what was left in the budget for another recording session, the music was then finished. Despite the numerous political infighting, his loan to Warner Brothers and the threats from the German Embassy, the film was generally finished to Whale's wishes.[458] However, his slow pace, some of which was due to bad luck and some of which was probably due to the director's perfectionism, had done irreparable damage to his professional reputation.

Figure 15. An advertising poster for The Road Back.

[456] "Hollywood Today," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 23rd, 1937.
[457] Curtis, 301.
[458] Ibid., 301-304.

Advertising of the film promoted the film's love story (really a subplot in the picture) and fidelity to Remarque's novel.

Whale's original version of the movie is now no longer available. In a last-second turn of events, the studio finally capitulated to the German pressure and ordered new cuts, and a new, less political and happier ending, directed by Edward Sloman. The changes were ill-timed and pleased no one.[459] Given the fact that the studio was unlikely to make much on a German release anyway[460], this last minute change seems ill-considered. Altering a film currently in release is rare, and one is tempted to look for alternative motivations, but the evidence does point to an attempt to dilute the anti-German content. Given the speed and last second nature of the decision, it is possible that it was an emotional whim of a studio executive or shareholder. Whale was almost certainly incensed and probably hurt that the project he had fought so hard over had been altered and understandably refused to watch the widely distributed version. The changes made little difference to its appeal in foreign markets- the movie was still banned in Germany and several other countries.

Despite the controversy surrounding the alterations, the industry felt that the film would be a money maker. The notice in *The Film Daily* indicated that the movie 'is likely to find its major b.o. [box office] strength. Whatever may have influenced the producer and director to give emphasis to the comic relief, there can be strictly from the mass appeal angel, no challenge of its expediency nor may the results be questioned.'[461] *Variety* did not mention the film's economic potential aside from mentioning 'The toning down [meaning cuts] was necessary, perhaps, for diplomatic reasons…Result is an emasculated scenario without a strong finish.' The mixed review but overall negative review found that the film was inferior to its predecessor, noting that '…the two films do not compare in quality or power. But it is probably necessary in case of this kind, for 'Road' will need all the warmth which is contained in the memory of 'All Quiet.'[462] These two disagreeing notice indicate that the movie was not seen unanimously as a money maker- it's economic potential lay in audiences seeking out the film as a sequel and as another prestige statement about war.

[459] Curtis, 306.
[460] Glancy, 15.
[461] "The Road Back," *The Film Daily*, Friday, June 18th, 1937.
[462] Kauf, *Variety*, Jun. 23, 1937, 12.

Word about the chaotic release did not help the film's reputation and Curtis reports the final released product was neither a critical nor commercial success.[463] The movie finally opened in New York on June 17th, over a month after its initial date for the premiere. Initial reviews were mixed, with a few positive and many mixed notices. Although almost no reviewers panned the picture, it certainly was greeted with a much different reception than its predecessor. Frank S. Nugent began his very negative review in *The New York Times* by remarking that:

> It is Universal's "The Road Back" not Erich Maria Remarque's, that they presented last night at the Globe. Remarque's "The Road Back" was a savage and bitter sifting of the ashes of war, the poignant record of the lives of a group of young German soldiers who tried to find the road back to life after they had spent four years with death. Universal's "The Road Back" is not that. It is an approximation of the novel; it is touched occasionly by the author's spirit. But most of the time it goes its own Hollywooden-headed way, playing up the comedy, melodramatizing rather than dramatizing reaching at last towards a bafflingly inconclusive conclusion.

Nugent continues by stating that he read R.C. Sherriff's original script for the film and that he did not think the problem lay in it or in Whale, but rather '…the weakness is in casting, in cast, or editing.' The review does not state how Nugent obtained Sherriff's screenplay or if he was referring to the final shooting script or re-write, but he does state that 'something must have gone out of it by the time it was entrusted to Director James Whale...' which seems inconsistent with his claim that Whale was not at fault for the film's shortcomings.[464] The general theme of Nugent's review is that the movie is not a faithful, or perhaps, truthful adaption of the book, which the critic clearly admires. Two days after his initial review, the paper published another piece in which Nugent discussed what he felt went wrong at length, interpolating material from his previous review. Mentioning the controversy regarding the German reception, Nugent describes: '…Universal knew in advance that no version of this story, even if it were whiter than a white book, would be acceptable to a German censor.' Later, he argues: 'And still it [the film] might have won through to some measure of dignity had it known what to say it is conclusion. I have studied the last scene over and over and it just does not make sense.' Describing a scene that is now cut and would later be replaced by a new, even more pro-German ending, Nugent finds that it is 'beyond my kin.' Repeating his statement about the perceived flaws of the film, 'in the casting, in the cast, and in the editing-which appears to have trimmed out meaningful sequences, stricken clinching lines from the

[463] Curtis, 308.
[464] Frank S. Nugent, "The Road Back", *The New York Times*, Jun. 18, 1937.

dialogue.' Arguing that '…Universal never has dared to trust Remarque's judgement too far. The presumption is that it felt his story lacked "box office," needed brightening up, pace and the swish of a skirt.' Going even further than his previous review, he closes by stating 'There seems to no explanation of its weakness other than the ineptness of its producers. I cannot defend it for them and I would warn those who treasure the novel not to attend the film unless they are prepared for vandalism. Those who have not read it will be more favourably inclined.'[465] It would be an understatement to say that this kind of review is not what a studio wants in its release of a prestige film based on a respected novel. Nugent's point about Universal's assured knowledge that the Third Reich would never be friendly to an adaptation of the book is cogent. Given that that novel and director were avowedly anti-German, it is probable that a realistic approach the studio may have taken would have been to write-off any chance for a German release and market the movie as a brave anti-war and anti-Nazi statement.

Despite this, I have found evidence that the film was at least commercially successful in New York City, with one publication stating that it 'produced long lines on Broadway.'[466] Phillip K. Scheuer of the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the movie was 'doing sock [meaning strong] business in major cities-either in spite of, or because of, the fact that it is only a milk-and-water version of the powerful original.'[467] Writing about the critical response to the film after the New York premier, Norbert Lusk commented that it 'was followed by reviews that left nothing to the imagination of the reader and made it difficult for Universal to discover quotes in sufficient number and enthusiasm to use in ads.' He went on to state that the main objection was the comedy scenes, but that they also found sections of the film, particularly the opening, to be 'magnificent,' and praised Whale and Sherriff.[468] On the other hand, Edwin Schallert raved about the film, finding that it was 'A powerful delineation of the experiences of the returned soldiers of a nation defeated is flashed on the screen in "The Road Back"…It is a strong, vital sort of picture, which chooses to bring the audience impressions rather than plot, and which is very real in its atmosphere and the poignancy of its incidents.'[469] Although Schallert was clearly a partisan of the film, unlike *All Quiet*, he did not find the movie to be a timeless classic. In fact, a common theme of the reviews of *The*

[465] Frank S. Nugent, "Talking 'The Road Back'," *The New York Times*, Jun. 20, 1937.
[466] "Remarque's "The Road Back"," *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), Sep. 11th, 1937.
[467] Phillip K. Scheuer, "John Beal Awarded Leading Role in "Romance to the Rescue"," *Los Angeles Times,* Aug. 19th, 1937.
[468] Norbert, Lusk, "Slapstick Mars War Picture," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 27, 1937.
[469] Edwin Schallert, ""Road Back" Stirring Tale of War Aftermath," *Los Angeles Times.* Jul. 21, 1937.

Road Back, even the favourable ones, is that the movie is not as important as a cinematic event than its predecessor. This is not explicitly stated, but implicit in the brevity of the notices. As indicated in Chapter IV, there was a sense that *All Quiet* performed a function in 'explaining' the war to audiences. In a sense, *All Quiet* was successful enough in its statements about the war that the sequel did not need to perform this function. If anything, *The Road Back*'s attempted commentary on German militarism was more a statement about a potential Second World War than a comment on the Great War.

Despite the fact that few reviews were overtly negative, it is clear that the response to *The Road Back* differed from *All Quiet* and *Journey's End* in one key respect: the movie was not a major event in popular culture, and did not significantly expand the contemporary discourse about The Great War. Unlike so many of the films I have discussed, I was not able to find a single example of a veteran stating that the movie realistically portrayed his experience. It is possible that the German setting had something to do with this, but it is equally likely that the movie simply did not move many audiences in the way that previous war films had.

Other reviews mirrored Schallerts' very positive but limited response. *The Atlanta Constitution* ran two reviews on the same day of the movie, both of which were positive but did not discuss the film's themes or its sociological significance in great depth. The first discussed the premier, and found the film 'Intensely human, powerfully dramatic, a skilful blending of comedy, pathos and suspense' and, unlike Nugent, praised the performances.[470] The other, by the anonymous reviewer known as 'The Boulevardier,' spent most of the review summarizing the plot, but was also quite favourable.[471] Mae Tinee was also positive in her very brief review in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Despite its brevity, Tinee's review mostly mirrored the original response to *All Quiet* in its emotional tone, finding the that 'The story tells itself, wearily, hopelessly, humorlessly. It rings a persistant knell of futility. / It is well acted and provocative of deep thought. But it's not entertainment-if that's what you're looking for.' She also finds the film '…especially signifigant because of the threatening war clouds in Europe…'[472]

Re-Release

[470] "'The Road Back' at Fox Theater, Strong Drama of War Aftermath," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 2, 1937.

[471] The Boulevardier, "The Road Back," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 25, 1937.

[472] Mae Tinee, "'The Road Back' Is a Well Acted, Cheerless Story," *Chiacgo Daily Tribune*, Jul. 31, 1937.

In what to the director must have seemed like a cruel irony, the film was re-released two years later with more new footage. Additions were now made to add more anti-German content, this time directed by Frank Tuttle. By this point, anti-German material was considered to be an advantage and not a liability. According to Curtis, the first version of the films is not available and possibly lost.[473] The analysis provided below is from the 1939 version, which is occasionally shown on television and was purchased by this author on DVD from a grey market website.

Because of the alteration from Whale's intention and speed at which the changes were made and ordered, the final film is a chimera of various viewpoints. The changes do not so much alter the original theme so much as obscure it. In fact, given the relative fidelity of the picture to Remarque's novel and portrayal of authority figures via Whale's casting and aesthetic choices, there was not much the studio could do to minimise the clear anti-war and anti-militaristic message. Perhaps the most obviously jarring aspect of the film is the comic relief, via Slim Summerdale and Andy Devine. The picture, about a serious and morose subject, veers tonally into broad comedy and then suddenly back into seriousness. This tonal inconsistency is almost certainly a result of the editorial problems caused by the cuts and reshoots. It is likely that in Whale and Kent's original cut the lighter scenes were better integrated into the whole of the picture, as broad comedy is a hallmark of many of Whale's films have very an English sense of humour. The very American Summervile and Devine playing Germans significantly alters the tone of this lighter material. Setting the comedy aside and even factoring Whale's original intentions, *The Road Back* is a film of paradox.

The most obvious paradox is the portrayal of Germanness. Any film set in a country that speaks a different language than is spoken by actors on screen poses a problem in terms of accent and language. Both Milestone and Whale cast mostly American actors to play German characters. A dominant theme of *All Quiet* was the brotherhood and equality of the human race, so German characters speaking with American accents seemed to combine with theme of the film and make the characters more relatable. However, *The Road Back* is thematically concerned with German society in the 1920s. We are told that that country is suffering. A widespread thought was that Germany was given poor terms in the Versailles treaty- but the reluctance to attribute blame to a particular group renders much of what was in the book a didactic political message merely confusing. Furthermore, King's performance is

[473] Curtis, 309.

problematic. Whale may have cast the actor in an attempt to portray a Spencer Tracy-like Everyman, but Sherriff's and Kenyon's screenplay chooses to portray Ernst's thoughts reflected verbally to other characters instead of as interior monologue. Given King's lack of talent as an actor, the only time that we understand what the character's feeling are is when they are explicitly verbalised. An example of this is a scene in which King shares his war experiences with his girlfriend. Instead of an interior monologue as featured in the book, Ernst tells another person about the experience, who embraces him sympathetically. Whether a performance is effective or not is subjective, but King seems to have trouble realistically portraying the emotional depth of the material. It is also unclear what the girlfriend is feeling. Is she empathetic, understanding the nature of the trauma, or is she sympathetic, trying to help Ernst while not being able to perceive his experience? The intent of the scene is difficult to discern, apparently not due to intentional ambiguity but to ineffective acting.

Describing the ideas found in the final cut of *The Road Back* is also difficult, as it an intentionally didactic film whose ideas were moderated awkwardly at the last moment. The dominant theme in the 1939 version is that the Great War was a terrible and traumatic experience, but much of the explanation of *why* or who is responsible is muted, though it leaves the general sense that someone, somewhere in authority is to blame. The psychological motivation of much of the characters is also left vague. However, even factoring in Whale's original ending, in which Ernst encountered a diminutive soldier drilling the youth of Germany,[474] thereby making fairly clear the director's thoughts on German militarism, it is likely that the movie still would not have met with the hoped for commercial success. The ultimate response to the movie was, not surprisingly, muted. What was intended as a prestige film received no Academy Award nominations and was mostly forgotten.

Even in its impure form, the movie is an example of what I referred to in the introduction to this chapter as a member of the 'Universal Brotherhood' cinema found during this period. Although Whale's cinematic style is quite different from Milestone's, *The Road Back* can be considered a true successor to *All Quiet* in the sense that it expands on the themes of the universal value of humanity that was so integral to the original. Whale clearly portrays Ernst and his friends as likeable and sympathetic. Although his intent was to attack German militarism, the picture portrays the group as being innocents who were caught up in events beyond their control and not morally culpable, or responsible, for its effects. Although the

[474] Curtis 305

emotional centre of most Hollywood films is in a romantic relationship, clearly Whale intended the camaraderie between the returning veterans to be the emotional core, something that the studio imposed ending undermines. Despite all of the veterans being of the same ethnicity, they are of different ages and personality types, but all share a common bond and trauma- in an emotional sense, they are brothers. The audience is intended to identify with the German characters as not being radically different from themselves, despite the intended commentary against the German government. This is an interesting statement from an English director at a time of increasing political and military tensions in Europe.

Three Comrades

The following year, another Remarque novel with similar themes was also adapted into the screen, this time at MGM. *Three Comrades* is sometimes thought of as the third book in a trilogy with *All Quiet* and *The Road Back*, although there are, to the awareness of this reader, who has read all three English translations by A.W. Wheen, no repeated characters from either of the first two novels appear in the third. Nonetheless, it is not difficult to see how the books may be perceived a unit, as they form a rough chronological narrative of the experience of the war (*All Quiet*), the immediate return to society (*The Road Back*), followed by the more general adjustment to life in the long term with the war experiences in the background (*Three Comrades*). The protagonist of each of three novels is similar: an introverted but sensitive Everyman with a large degree of bitterness caused by his war experiences.

Three Comrades follows the experiences of Robert Lohkamp, a disillusioned Great War veteran who co-owns, with his friends Gottfried Lenz and Otto Koster, an auto repair shop in an unnamed large German city. Lohkamp has a negative outlook on life. He lives a moderately hedonistic lifestyle, drinking too much and living mostly for the car assembly and races that the three friends engage in. His perspective begins to change when he meets the half-English, half-German Patricia Hollman, who is periodically ill with an unnamed disease that is probably tuberculosis. Due to Pat, Lohkamp finds that he has more to live for than he initially thought, and realizes that the relationship is, to his astonishment, making him happy. The novel takes place among the backdrop of the economic chaos of Germany in the 20s with Lohkamp often referring to prostitutes and riotous mobs. Lenz is eventually killed by a political radical, implied to be a Nazi (party names are not referred to in the book). Koster promises revenge and hunts down the assassin and kills him. Around the same time, Pat's

illness takes a turn for the worse and becomes terminal. The novel's final moments recount the end of her life, with the tragedy that both have found love and sense of peace just before it is shattered by death.

Despite the title, the relationship between the trio of Lohkamp, Lenz and Koster is the secondary focus after the romance between Lohkamp and Hollmann. Outside of the narrator, the characters are not particularly developed and Lenz and Koster are in particular somewhat interchangeable. Like the previously discussed works by Remarque, the novel has only a basic plot line, with the general narrative revolving around Lohkamp's gradual emotional thawing. Hollmann is also in many ways underdeveloped, falling into the stereotyped role of an empathetic female who serves to melt a man's cold heart. Although sections of the novel are devoted to the descriptions of poverty and the economic chaos, the four main characters are mostly apolitical. They share the beliefs of other Remarque characters that society is corrupt and all government is a reflection of that. Although the section involving the murder of Lenz by a presumed Nazi is more strongly worded than much of the rest of the book, it may be argued that Remarque views them as the worst of a series of bad options.

Like *The Road Back*, a reading of the novel indicates that it does not immediately lend itself to a cinematic translation. The story of an idealised female civilising a cynical man had long been a Hollywood trope, but not much else of the novel is particularly cinematic. Even the murder of Lenz and the vengeance taken by Koster are a relatively short episode in the novel. The book consists of many scenes of characters socializing through dialogue while not doing much that would be of visual interest, again with unspoken, shared thoughts that are not explicitly stated. Though Remarque's political and social commentary occurs in the background, translating this to a probably ignorant American audience and probably hostile British one (due to the growing anti-German sentiment) would be particularly difficult. Yet a big-budget, prestige film version of the novel appeared only a year after its publication, with four star actors and a major director, two respected screenwriters and overseen by a renowned producer. The main motivation for the adaptation is not surprising. Remarque was a popular writer, meaning that it was a known property to audiences and, as there were no war scenes, would presumably cost far less than *The Road Back*. Herve Dumont reports that the film rights to the book were bought before it was published.[475]

[475] Herve Dumont, *Frank Borzage: The Life and Films of a Hollywood Romantic,* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006), 258.

Out of all the star directors of the Classical Hollywood Era, Frank Borzage is possibly the most unknown to modern audiences. His films share a clear visual style and he was interested in the same thematic issues in movie after movie, the clear signs of an *auteur*. Borzage films are typically romances, in which a man and a woman fall in love. Their love is threatened often by events in society, such as war or economic upheaval that are beyond their control. Against all odds, their love prevails in the end, even though one of the characters often dies, implying a more cosmic love that lasts beyond death. A key element of Borzage's cinema is that the event that threatens the lovers is external. His characters are often in some way isolated or rejected from society and at the very least have little control or say in their own destinies outside of the romance. It is for this reason that a discussion of Borzage's war films (if they can be called that) is far more problematic to the researcher than that of Whale's. Borzage directed more Great War-related films than any other director in this thesis: *Seventh Heaven* (1927), *Lucky Star* (1929), *A Farewell to Arms* (1932), and *Three Comrades*. His 1934 film *No Greater Glory*, which is concerned with gangs of Hungarian children battling each other over turf, is also a metaphor for armed conflict. However, in the five Great War films listed above, Borzage is almost totally uninterested in politics or the causes of the war. As writer Kent Jones states in a 1997 *Film Comment* assessment: '…the world around Borzage's lovers and believers is a procession of interchangeable amorphous abstractions.' Jones later states that '*Seventh Heaven* and *A Farewell to Arms* have got to be the craziest portrays of WWI ever put on the screen, logistically complex undertakings that are so folded up and telescoped that they could just as well be bicycle-powered operatic backdrops…'[476] Jones's statement is strongly stated, but the analysis of the director's work is accurate. Borzage and his main characters are only concerned with the larger world around them to the effect it has on their love. Ironically, after the outbreak of the Second World War, he would direct one of the few explicitly anti-Nazi movies released by Hollywood before Pearl Harbor, *The Mortal Storm* (1940).

A cursory glance of his filmography indicates perhaps why Remarque's novel would have appealed to him, as it was in many ways very similar to another war-related novel he had already filmed, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). A key characteristic of both novels is the cynical (and in the case of Hemingway, nihilistic) protagonist who falls in love, finding the experience transcendent in his lives. In Remarque, Lohkamp's love for Pat gives

[476] Kent Jones, "Frank Borzage," *Film Comment*, September/October 1997., http://www.filmcomment.com/article/the-sanctum-santorum-of-love-frank-borzage

his life meaning beyond drink and cars, in Hemingway, Fredrick Henry's love for Catherine motivates both to desert and run away together. In what may not be a coincidence, both novels have the same ending: the man helplessly watches the woman die, and is left with a better acceptance of the tragedies of life.

Borzage's film adaptation of Hemingway's novel followed the plot relatively closely but made a major thematic change to end of the book. Just before the death scene, Hemingway provides a metaphor when Fredrick remembers camping and watching ants crawling on a log of wood, walking to their incineration. Even though Fredrick and his friends could have easily put out the fire, they just watch and allow the insects to die. The narrator realises that 'That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about.'[477] and it is implied that meaning, even love, is transient and will not last. In the movie, Catherine (Helen Hayes) still dies, but Borzage bestows the scene with religious imagery, indicating that their separation is only temporary. It would be an overstatement to argue that *Three Comrades* is an out and out re-write of *A Farewell to Arms*, but the central theme and narrative trajectory of the protagonist of both novels is essentially the same. Both even contain a line in which the protagonist realizes that the woman's body is empty. It should be stated that the ending of Remarque's novel is at least more ambiguous than Hemingway's, as we do not know what the future mental state of Lohkamp will be, whereas we can assume that it will be one of existential misery for Henry.

[477] Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, Simon and Schuster, 1929), 327-328

Figure 16. The closing shot of Three Comrades, in which the fallen friends are reunited despite death, is typical of Borzage's work.

The ending of the film is indicative of Borzage's artistic intents with the material. He is more concerned with the love between Lohkamp and Patricia than the socio-political commentary on Weimar Germany. As many of Borzage's films concern a kind of spiritual love, it is remarkable that he focuses on an implied afterlife for both Lenz and Pat. This idea, that beyond the mortal coil fallen comrades may be reunited with each other, provides a positive frame around an otherwise downbeat narrative. It is also worth noting that three films in this thesis, *Four Horseman, All Quiet,* and *Three Comrades* end in graveyards with spiritual or quasi-spiritual imagery. Though organised religion plays almost no role in Borzage's *Three Comrades*, the movies has a spiritual undercurrent. The final scene and shot is especially relevant to the concept of the Universal Brotherhood. The implication is that although life may provide illness, war and political turmoil that is beyond our control, and spiritual afterlife will unite all humans in a peaceful fraternity. The world itself may be too corrupt for the innocent, but in the end, love and compassion will win. This is a positive message, though probably not one intended by Remarque.

Like *The Road Back*, *Three Comrades* would be a prestige film for MGM (a studio known for prestige films). Also like Universal's Remarque adaptation, American actors using American accents would play most of the German characters. To modern audiences, *Three Comrades* may seem bereft of iconic stars who might have been associated with MGM at the time, such as Clark Gable or Greta Garbo; but the cast, especially the two leads, would have

been well known and exceedingly popular at the time. Robert Taylor, a handsome and very popular leading man was cast as Lohkamp, with Franchot Tone and Robert Young as Koster and Lenz, respectfully. Taylor was apparently considered for the lead near the very beginning but Jimmy Stewart and Spencer Tracy were also initially announced as Koster. According to his biographer Charles Tranberg, Taylor did not want to make the film because he did not 'want to play a German, especially a sympathetic one.'[478] Margret Sullavan, cast in the key role as Patricia, was widely singled out for praise and ended up receiving the film's only Academy Award nomination for her performance. She was also not associated with the project at its conception; the part was initially announced for Joan Crawford and then Luise Rainer.[479] In contrast, most of the supporting roles were taken up by character actors who could be seen at least vaguely Teutonic, such as Lionel Atwill and Henry Hull.

Figure 17. This promotional still of the four stars emphasizes a theme of the film- the four comrades march arm-in-arm away from the darkness and militarism that also overshadows them.

[478] Charles Tranberg, *Robert Taylor: A Biography,* (Albany: GA, BearManor Media, 2011), Kindle Edition.
[479] Ibid.

Mankiewicz' first choice to write the script was R.C. Sherriff, but the producer was dissatisfied with his work and Sherriff apparently completed only one draft.[480] On paper, it would be difficult to argue with the choice of replacement: F. Scott Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald is now almost universally considered one of the finest American writers of the 20th century. However, the writer had suffered a very difficult period in Hollywood, having trouble working in a factory-like environment. Although Fitzgerald worked on many films, *Three Comrades* would be the only one for which he would receive screen credit.

However, his script was rejected, with Sullavan complaining that she could not perform the writer's words.[481] The general thought was that Fitzgerald's screenplay may have been effective as a work of literature, but not necessarily as a work of cinema. It ended up being re-written under heavy protest by Edward Paramore and then by Mankiewicz, with other contributions from Waldo Salt, Lawrence Hazard, and David Hertz.[482] Along with the changes to the dialogue, Fitzgerald's social commentary against anti-Semitism was minimised.[483]

Like *The Road Back, Three Comrades* was targeted by the German government through its consul, George Gyssling. According to Borzage's biographer Herve Dumont, Gyssling had influenced Joseph Breen, the administrator of the Production Code to minimise certain anti-Nazi elements, such as book burning and to explicitly set the film in the period from 1918-1920, much earlier than the book. However, Mankiewicz threatened to walk off the film when it was suggested to change the political rally and assassination from Nazi's to Communists.[484] In the finished film, Nazis are implied.

Despite the presence of Fitzgerald as writer and Mankiewicz as producer, *Three Comrades* is really a director's picture. One of the differences between the typical dynamic found in Borzage films is Taylor's Lohkamp. Male Borzage protagonists are often somewhat rugged but emotionally available, Taylor's character is clearly an educated urbanite who at times rather stoic. It is unknown whether this is a artistic choice on the part of the director, or the actor's interpretation of the role. None of the documents I was able to find indicated that the director was displeased with the actor's performance, but an MGM player like Spencer

[480] Dumont, 259.
[481] Tranberg.
[482] Dumont, 259.
[483] Tranberg.
[484] Dumont, 260.

Tracy, who Borzage had directed in his previous film, *Mannequin* (1937) may have represented an interpretation of the role more in line with his intentions. Borzage's clear interest in the romance meant that aspects of the screenplay were toned down (probably to the pleasure of the studio, who presumably like Universal did not want to incur the ire of the Germans). The fact that the movie is about three male friends who fall in love with the same woman is present but mostly disappears after the first act. Likewise, the now familiar portrayal of the cynical and hedonistic war veteran was included, but reduced in importance as well.

Given the toughness and despair found in their work, it is not surprising that both Fitzgerald and Remarque would be disappointed in the film. The former 'broke down' and presumably wept when he saw the changes that had been made to his work in the finished film, and the later wrote an angry letter to Mankiewicz, complaining that too much of his book had been altered.[485] Remarque's reacted intensely even though the movie is reasonably close, at least in plot, to his novel, and probably the best he could have hoped for given the time and country in which it was made.

Three Comrades was a successful film. Herve Dumont reports that it 'did more than respectably at the box office, considering the moroseness of the subject.'[486] Internal industry publications boded well. *The Film Daily* claimed the film would 'Should ring the B.O. [box office] bell as one of the tenderest stories to come out of Hollywood in many a day.'[487] This notice is in line with Borzage's artistic intent of focusing on the love story over the politics and sociological commentary. However, the trade paper *Variety* was of the opposite opinion, claiming in the opening of its review 'Just what Frank Borzage is trying to prove in 'Three Comrades' is very difficult to fathom from watching the confusing performances of Robert Taylor, Margaret Sullavan, Franchot Tone and Robert Young. There must have been some reason for making the picture, but it certainly isn't the case of entertainment. It provides a dull interlude, and despite all the draught of the star names, it's in for a sharp nosedive at the box office.' Although the release of the film took place over the final year of peace in Europe, the reviewer claimed 'In the light of events on the continent in the past five years, the background of 1921 in Germany seemed like a century ago. There is developed in the film no relation between the historical events of that period and the Reich of today. The story is

[485] Dumont, 268.
[486] Ibid., 268
[487] "Three Comrades", *The Film Daily*, Tuesday, May 24, 1938, 6.

dated and lacks showmanship values of current European movements.'[488] These two trade notices indicate that the film would be best sold as a romantic film and that its ostensible subject- life and politics in postwar Germany, was among its weakest qualities. Extrapolating from the viewpoint of the *Variety* author, the movie would not find an audience among those wanting to see a film about the current European situation due to its failure to discuss the current political situation. This is the first, and only, primary document discussed in this thesis that finds the war (or in this case, post-war environment) as a subject believed to be not of interest to audiences due to its distance, and apparent lack of relevance, to contemporary life.

Other reviews tended to be more positive, yet short of enthusiastic. Writing for *The New York Times*, Frank S. Nugent called it '…a beautiful memorable film. Faithful to the spirit and, largely, to the letter of the novel, it has been magnificently directed, eloquently written and admirably played.' The only bit of criticism Nugent had was for Taylor's performance, which he found 'good occasionally but more often merely acceptable.'[489] Edwin Schallert predicted '"Three Comrades" will miss decisively of pleasing certain audiences. And even those who fall under its spell will find the initial stages rather tedious, and the climax an apparently needless sacrifice, despite its drama.' The critic does not explain who the certain audiences are or what specifically they would not like. Schallert gave high praise to Sullavan, calling her death scenes 'poignant and moving in the extreme.' He also accurately describes the movies' approach to politics, describing: 'there are vague overtones of revolution running through the picture, but mostly these pave the way for the tragedy that affects Young in his role as Gottfried.'[490] When the film opened in Atlanta, *The Atlanta Constitution* ran a positive but brief notice that mostly summarised the plot, calling the film 'an enthralling, though depressing, story.'[491] Mae Tinee of *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, who acknowledged in a medium length review that she had not read the novel, praised the performances but ultimately found the film '...unleavened by humor or philosophy that gets anywhere, was stale and dispiriting.'[492]

However, there was something remarkable in most of the reviews of the film. They barely mentioned the sociological significance of a film set in Germany about the German

[488] Flin, "Three Comrades", *Variety*, May 25, 1938.
[489] Frank S. Nugent, "The Screen in Review," *New York Times*, Jun. 3, 1938.
[490] Edwin Schallert, "Emotional Story Told in "Three Comrades"," Jun. 2, 1938.
[491] "'Three Comrades' Plays at Grand Featuring Bob Taylor, Tone", *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun. 5, 1938.
[492] Mae Tinee, "Cast Convinces in Bitter Film of Post-War Day," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun. 9, 1938.

experience during the Great War on the eve of the Second. Like Borzage, most critics seemed to want to focus on the love story. Although the movie was more favourably reviewed than Whale's film the previous year, neither seemed to be thought of as a major political or social statement, but both were made with explicit intent avoiding German controversy. Although neither book nor film is a direct sequel to *The Road Back*, Borzage's picture may be considered to be a companion piece to Whale's films as it continues the portrayal of decent, likeable characters caught in events beyond their control. *Three Comrades* is more apparently German than Whale's films, but like many of Borzage's pictures, the European setting is essentially window-dressing for what is intended to be universal human drama (the same might be said of the French setting of *Seventh Heaven* or the Italian locations of *A Farewell to Arms*). Even though the movie contains some muted anti-Nazi commentary, the main focus is on the romance between Lohkamp and Hollman. The fact that Hollman is half-English does not prevent the men from loving her. Even the vengeance upon the murderer of Koster is treated less a political assassination as opposed to a personal vendetta. At the end of the 30s, the war film in the minds of the public had shifted. Instead contextualising the last war, it was increasingly concerned with sheltering the public from the possible violence of the next.

Three Comrades was the last major film concerning the Great War to be released before the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, which started the Second World War in Europe. During the 20s, most big-budget Great War films were critically lauded and popular hits, usually praised by cultural elites as an opportunity for non-veterans to understand the war experiences of veterans, and pay tribute to them. *The Road Back* and *Three Comrades*, two films that can be at best described as moderately successful commercially were forgotten fairly quickly, and the absence of major cultural commentary on them is telling. It is possible that as a Second World War turned from a distant prospect to a real possibility to threatening probability, the desire of both audiences and artists to engage with the political causes declined. Both Whale's and Borzage's films clearly depict the Great War as being a traumatic and negative experience, but avoid (against Whale's wishes) targeting any political group or entity for them. The focus of these films is on the individual Germans, who are seen as just like anyone else, but powerless. In these films, the Great War has no understandable cause, but is simply a source of suffering and misery upon innocents. *Three Comrades* is also an indication of a progression of portrayals of the war. The idea that The Great War was a traumatic experience was by this time taken for granted. The portrayal of the Germans (or at

least, Germans outside of political leadership) had also gone from the militants in *Four Horseman* to a more sympathetic portrayal in *All Quiet*. It is significant that the two films, neither set in the 1930s, avoid (one through studio interference) overt criticism of the German government or German culture. As the military drums beat in the background at the close of 1938, war, a seemingly unstoppable event akin to an earthquake or hurricane, emerges from the background. Both films place blame vaguely on people in power, without describing who those people are, or why they made the choices they did. Neither Borzage nor the mutilated *Road Back* give clear warnings against Nazism or fascism, and tellingly neither film makes the argument that though war is hell, it is sometimes necessary. The idea of peace found beyond the realm of politics or culture at the end of *Three Comrades* may have been especially appealing to a generation who had lived through and fought the most destructive war in the history of mankind, and was only a short time away from experiencing its sequel.

Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction, the cultural reception of the Great War in cinema is a surprisingly understudied subject, particularly from the standpoint of Historical Reception. In this Conclusion, I will state my overall findings and close with a brief description of the Great War film beyond the inter-war period and some indications for further research.

Research Findings

1. **Realism and War Trauma**

Perhaps my most unexpected finding when I began my research was the repeated use of the phrase and concept of realism in the primary documents that I examined. Realism and war trauma were clearly interlinked in the minds of many who saw these films. As I have indicated several times, many of these movies were seen by veterans who felt that they captured what it the war was really like. However, the public discourse on these films rarely focused on realism in sense of formal cinematic elements as one might study in a film course. Rather, I argue that the idea of *presenting war trauma in an emotionally compelling way* was read by the public and by critics as realistic.

When people within the world of film scholarship discuss realism, they usually mean it in terms of cinematic techniques or formal choices by a director (which vary from cinematic historical moment to moment and culture to culture) that are said to be read by audience as realistic, or sometimes in the choice of subject matter or cycles associated with 'realistic cinema,' usually films about poor or rural characters that are said to capture a 'slice of life', such as Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1949), Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955) or Kelly Reichart's *Wendy and Lucy* (2008). Although audiences and critics did indeed discuss realism, they usually did not mean it in the ways described above. Rather, most audiences of non-veterans were describing a kind of feeling that the movie gave them- that depictions of brutality, humiliation, grief and pessimism must have been authentic to the war experience. With a few exceptions, I argue that although the term realistic was often used, a better concept to associate it with is *honesty*- the films described were perceived as honestly capturing the emotional feeling of the experience, which was known to be traumatic. Another reoccurring feature in much of the literature that I have read, both fiction and non-fiction about the conflict, was contempt for war propaganda as presenting an inaccurate and

overly rosy idea of the conflict. Soldiers and civilians would have different ways of perceiving this, with veterans often commenting that a work got specific details correct, such as the fliers cited in Chapter III in regard to *Wings*. However, in a larger sense, the realism or honesty of the war was associated with the trauma that the veterans who fought it experienced. A crucial moment in *The Big Parade* occurs when the protagonist is shocked that his friend Slim has been killed. The sheer injustice and terror of this fact leads him to shock. This moment is crucial to the movie, as it represents that the shock of the trauma that must occurred to a generation who were not emotionally prepared or expecting the carnage they experienced, or the psychological after effects left by the survivors.

2. **Ambiguity regarding what constitutes a 'Anti-War Film'**

A common theme in reception from the mid-20s onward is the idea that a particular film is opposed to war, an anti-war film, or a sermon against war. However, the reviewers rarely discuss what is actually meant by these phrases. In some circumstances, it is quite clearly that the writer means that the concept of war itself is unethical and undesirable- a hard pacifistic statement. In other circumstances, however, the phrase is used more ambiguously. Both King Vidor, R.C. Sherriff and Erich Maria Remarque commented that their aim was to accurately describe what occurred as opposed to a political statement (although, as I indicate in Chapter IV, I believe that Remarque was being disingenuous). *The Big Parade*, *Wings* and *Journey's End* have almost no discussion of politics. Aside from a general patriotism, the movies do not discuss explicitly whether the war (or any war) was a good idea or not, as *All Quiet, Men Must Fight* and *Things to Come* do. It is clear that labelling *All Quiet* and *Men Must Fight* as pacifistic films are an accurate description from the didactic content in them, but many other films with more ambiguous politics were labelled as anti-war. I assert that that many audiences read films that portray war trauma as supporting pacifism, even when there is no internal evidence in the films to support this case. I believe that this is a result of audiences reading portrayals of war trauma as a statement by a filmmaker against the idea of war. Intriguingly, many pro-war propaganda films, such as *The Heart of Humanity*, did not argue that the war was not traumatic.

3. **War explanation and responsibility**

As indicated above, relatively few of the successful war movies during this era concerned themselves with geo-political issues. The reviews of the films were, surprisingly, almost entirely silent on this aspect. In fact, in the hundreds of reviews I read from both countries, I

found very few outside of *The Heart of Humanity* that mentioned the politics of the war, nor the responsibility of Germany or other parties. Nevertheless, readings from the films can be helpful in this regard. I believe there were two dominant discourses in cinema on the causes of the war. Few of the movies are entirely in one camp (*All Quiet* being an exception). As evidenced by German villains in *Four Horsemen, Wings* and *Hell's Angels*, it can be argued that many in the US and UK, even after the war was over, felt that the Germans were to blame or German militarism was at least a major problem. The other idea of regarding the cause of war is that humanity itself is responsible, regardless of country. This can also be demonstrated by the explicit Christian imagery of war emerging from Hell in *Four Horsemen*, but also the general humanism found in *Men Must Fight* and the three Remarque adaptations. All three are American films that mostly de-emphasize the German culture. Although this can partially be explained by the intent to appeal to an American audience, the fraternity of man was also a common idea, as evidenced by Paul's encounter with the Frenchman in No Man's Land or Robert's love for the half English Patricia. The two futurist films are also of note here, they are vague on details of how a Second World War would break out, implying that the causes of any such war would be irrelevant to the actual effects.

4. **Honouring soldiers**

Somewhat paradoxically, I argue that every film in this thesis with the exception of *Men Must Fight* serves a memorial function to the soldiers that died in the Great War. Even the explicitly anti-war *All Quiet* does not blame the soldiers themselves, who are portrayed as innocent lambs. This is evidenced by the fact that most Great War films have scenes with either literal depictions of a graveyard or scene where a dead comrade is memorialized, and many also feature moments where the audience is intended to empathize with the struggles of a returning soldier. Again, with the exception of *Men Must Fight*, it is clear that none of these films are intended to blame individual soldiers for permitting the war by agreeing to fight in it, and every film mentioned contains the idea that good, honourable men died during the conflict and should be mourned.

Further Research Questions

Perhaps the most interesting and important research question is how the cinema interpreted the Great War during the Second World War. Given the fact that Great Britain entered the war two years before the United States, the period of from late 1939 to late 1941 offers a

unique perspective to study how the different cinematic cultures responded to war and peace with overtones of war, during this period. Two American war films are of particular interest. William Keighley's *The Fighting 69th* (1940) and Howard Hawks' *Sergeant York* (1941) were both advertised as being tributes to actual war heroes. The later can be contrasted to such pacifistic films as *All Quiet* in that the title character (played by Gary Cooper in an Academy-Award winning performance) is an avowed pacifist who nonetheless believes that fighting in the war is essential. The former film is a tribute to the eponymous infantry regiment and Father Francis Duffy (Pat O'Brien) and features James Cagney as Jerry Plunkett, a fictional self-centred soldier who over the course of the film learns the value of heroism and self-sacrifice. Both films often feature tropes and themes, such as the importance of patriotism and militarism that are far more common to WWII films than Great War cinema.

The history of the Great War cinema after the Second World War is mostly one of significant individual films as opposed to particular trends or cycles. Perhaps the Great War films that are most obviously thematically linked to many of the films discussed in this thesis are Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (1957) and Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun* (1971). Both films are about innocent characters who suffer needlessly due to the war and militarism of the culture around them. Similar in theme but more satirical is Sir Richard Attenborough's *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) an adaptation of the stage musical of the same name. By this time, elements of the war had achieved such a mythic status they could be used as a comic background such as in the beagle Snoopy's battles with the Red Baron in Charles Schultz's Peanuts comic strip, later the subject of a hit song by The Royal Guardsman. Although not concerned with the Western Front, Sir David Lean chose to focus a trilogy of superspectacle films set during the war: *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), and *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), concerning themselves with the Middle East campaign, the Russian Revolution, and Irish Rebellion, respectively. John Guillerman's air epic *The Blue Max* (1966) was also popular.

What is surprising is the small number of Great War films produced in the 70s, as generation that fought the conflict was reaching it senior years and beginning to die off of old age. A spate of World War II films in the late 90s, the most famous of which was Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1997) were marketed as memorializing the ageing generation, but there was no such film on either side of the Atlantic for the Great War. Among the few Great War films produced during this period are the British *Aces High* (1976, directed by Jack Gold), a

remake of *Journey's End* set in an aerodrome instead of a trench, and Peter Weir's *Gallipoli* (1981), an Australian film about the eponymous battle, found critical and commercial success worldwide.

At the time of this writing in 2015, the United Kingdom and many other European countries are in a four year process of re-memorializing and contextualizing the war during its centenary. The differing responses by both cultures, with the United Kingdom observing a 'lights out' in memory of the war's beginning and several events attended by the Queen can be heavily contrasted by the near non-existence of any large memorials by the American government. Clearly, the war holds a much more important place in the popular culture and memory of the British than it does for the Americans. This too, is an important avenue for further study.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

“Adams—“The Four Horsemen.”.” *Detroit Free Press*, Jan 9, 1922.

“Adult Population of City of 60,000 Helped in Filming Four Horsemen.” *New York Times*, Jun. 3, 1923.

A.E.. “”Journey’s End”.” *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Feb. 21, 1929.

"Aerial Film Attraction to Crowds." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 12, 1928.

Agate, James. “Love and War.” *The Saturday Review*, August, 1922.

"Air Picture Enters its Sixth Week." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 19, 1928.

“”All Quiet on the Western Front”.” *Evening Telegraph* (Dundee, Scotland), Feb. 17, 1931.

“’All Quiet on the Western Front” Opens Monday Night at Erlanger Theater in Premiere Road Show Production.” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jun. 8, 1930.

“’All Quiet’ Sequel is Published Today.” *New York Times*, May 9, 1931.

“America and the Treaty.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. May 25th, 1919.

“America’s Best Talkie: All Quiet on the Western Front.” *Evening Telegraph* (Dundee, Scotland). Jun. 20th, 1930.

“An American Film,” *Western Morning News and Mercury*, May 24, 1926.

"And Now All That Trouble Seems Not Half So Futile." *Washington Post*, Jun. 22, 1930.

Anderson, Antony. “Heart of Humanity.” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 17, 1919.

Anonymous, “Flashes from the Past.” *New York Times*, May 30, 1926.

Atkinson, Brooks. "War and Peace in a Drama That Is on the Side of Pacifism." *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1932.

“Australia Bars Big Parade,” *New York Times*, Jun. 18, 1926.

Babcock, Muriel. "Lyon Out of Air Pocket." *Los Angeles Times*, Jun.1, 1930.

“Backfire on Inspiration.” *Washington Post*, 26 Feb. 1922.

"Bath." *Leamington Spa Courier*, Aug. 25, 1933.

Bell, Nelson B. "About the Showstops." *Washington Post.* Apr. 7, 1936.

Bell, Nelson B. "Fantastic Tale is Revealed in Film at Palace." *Washington Post*, Apr. 27, 1936.

Bell, Nelson B. "Journey's End." *Washington Post*, May 26, 1930.

"Best War Film Yet Produced." *Dundee Courier*, Mar. 15, 1927.

"Big Advance Ticket Sale for 'Wings," *Moving Picture World*, September 10th, 1927.

"Biggest Money-Makers Among Past Memoirs." *New York Times*, Sep. 24, 1922.

"The Big Parade." *Film Daily* (New York), November 22nd, 1925.

"The Big Parade." *Photoplay*, October 1925

"The Big Parade." *Variety*, Nov. 11, 1925.

"'The Big Parade' at the Cinema De Luxe. Hastings and St. Leonards Observer." Feb. 19, 1927.

"'The Big Parade' Final Week Atlanta Theater." *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 7, 1926.

""Big Parade" Goes into its Third Week." *Washington Post*, Jan. 31, 1926.

"'Big Parade" is Attacked by Press of Great Britain," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 23, 1926.

""Big Parade" Premiere Coming", *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 25, 1925.

"Big Production at the Grand." *Express and Advertiser* (Burnley), Feb 11, 1928.

Bigelow, Joe. "Men Must Fight," *Variety*, Mar. 14, 1933.

The Boulevardier, "The Road Back," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 25, 1937.

"British Director's Views." *New York Times*, Apr. 13, 1930.

"Breaking Film Records." *The Washington Post*, Feb. 19 1922.

"Broadway-Strand Gets 'The Heart of Humanity'." *Detroit Free Press*, Feb. 25 1919.

Burgess, Beverly. "Life's Big Parade Made Easier by 'Big Parade" Screen Version Portraying Hope of the World," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 9. 1926.

Busby, Marquis. "'Hell's Angels' to Take Flight." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 3, 1929.

Busby, Marquis. ""Wings" Triumph of Youth." *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 15, 1928.

C.A.G. "The Greatest Picture." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 5, 1928.

"Canadians Resent Movie of U.S. Flag." *Detroit Free Press*. Feb. 16, 1919.

"Church and Cinema." *Burnley News*, March 7, 1923.

Corbin, John. "An Epic of the Movies." *New York Times*. May 27, 1921.

Cox, James M. "Prevention of War," © 1920 by Columbia Gramophone Manufacturing Company, 78 RPM.

Craig, Doris. "If You've Wondered About Diana-" *Photoplay*, April 1933.

"Dark Angels of the World War." *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1928.

"Details of 'Big Parade' are Vexing," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1925.

"Difficulties in Making "Wings"." *New York Times*, Jul. 8th, 1928.

Dooly, Isma. "The "Heart of Humanity" and the Peace Problems." *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 14, 1919.

"A Drama of the Skies: Paramount's Air Spectacle." *Bioscope*, Mar. 22, 1928.

Dubin, Al and Jimmy McHugh. "My Dream of the Big Parade." The Peerless Quartet with Henry Burr and Billy Murray. ©1926, 78 RPM.

"Details of 'Big Parade' are Vexing." *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 12, 1925.

E.C.S. "'All Quiet on the Western Front'." *Christian Science Monitor*, (Boston, MA), May 30, 1930.

E.C.S. "The Big Parade," *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), Jan. 19, 1926.

"Estabrook Will Start Work on 'Hell's Angels'," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 31, 1929.

Ex-Prisoner. "Reality of War." *Yorkshire Evening Post*, Jan. 28, 1927.

"Fantasy Breaks Theater Records," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 1936.

F.D.G. "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." *The Bookman*, September, 1922.

F.G.S. “Films of the Week,” *Yorkshire Evening Post*. Jun. 26, 1926.

F.G.S. “’Journey’s End’- A Truly Impressive British Picture.” *Yorkshire Evening Post*, Apr. 19, 1930.

“Famous Motion Picture Director Sees World Cure in Islam Faith.” *Washington Post*, Sep. 10, 1933.

"Film Now in Eighth Week Here." *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 4, 1928.

“Film Premiere,” *Times* (London), Oct. 5, 1937.

“Film Stars Will Greet Veterans at Screen Party.” *Los Angeles Times*. Mar. 21, 1926.

“Film to Feature Party,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 10, 1921.

Flin, “Three Comrades”, *Variety*, May 25, 1938.

“Flying Called "No Fun”," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 15, 1930.

“For and Against War.” *Lancaster Daily Post*. Sep. 22, 1933.

“The Four Horsemen.” *Times* (London), Aug. 15, 1922.

“”The Four Horsemen,” Biggest Film Drama, Coming to Atlanta.” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sep. 7, 1921.

“Four Horseman Film Deleted for Germans.” *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 1916.

“”The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse”-And After.” *Daily Mail* (Hull, England), Feb. 6th, 1923.

“”The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” At Poli’s, Proves a Camera Masterpiece,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 29, 1921.

“Four Horsemen of Apocalypse Screen Feature at Columbia.” *Washington Post*, May 31, 1923.

“The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” *Bioscope*, August 17, 1922.

“”Four Horsemen” Starts Off at $15,000-Week Gait.” *Variety*, March 11, 1921.

Fred, “What Price Glory,” *Variety*, Dec. 1, 1926.

“Gaumont Attractions.” *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, Dec. 11th, 1937.

"Greatest of Trench Dramas Converted into Tense Film." *Washington Post*, May 25th, 1930.

H.H. "'Journey's End' Radiocast." *Christian Science Monitor*, (Boston, MA), Dec. 28, 1929.

Hall, Mordaunt. "Diana Wynyard in a Pictorial Version of a Play by Reginald Lawrence and S.K. Lauren," *New York Times*, Mar. 11, 1933.

Hall Mordaunt. "Dialogue in Pictures", *The New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1930.

Hall, Mordaunt. "Exciting Air Battles." *New York Times*, Aug. 24, 1930.

Hall, Mourdant. "The Flying Fighters." *New York Times,* Aug. 13, 1927.

Hall, Mordaunt. "Hell's Angels." *New York Times*, Aug. 16, 1930.

Mordaunt Hall, "Journey's End," *The New York Times*, Apr. 9, 1930.

Hall, Mordaunt. "Ten Best Films of 1925 Helped by Late Influx." *New York Times*, Jan. 10, 1926.

Hall, Mordaunt. "What Price Glory." *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1926.

Hall, Mordaunt. "Young Germany in the War." *New York Times*, Apr 30, 1930.

"Hall Weary of Hero-Ing." *Los Angeles Times*. Oct. 20, 1929.

Hammond, Percy. "The Theaters." Chicago Daily Tribune, May 22, 1921.

Harding, Warren G. "Americanism." © 1920 by Columbia Gramophone Manufacturing Company. 78 RPM.

Hardy, Albert S. Jr. "Notables To See Premiere of "Big Parade" Tonight," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 1, 1926.

Hawkings, Lewis. "All Quiet on the Western Front,", *The Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 12, 1930.

""Heart of Humanity'." *Chicago Defender*. Apr. 19, 1919.

"The Heart of Humanity." *Variety*, Jan. 03, 1919.

""The Heart of Humanity" Held Over at the Tudor." *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 23, 1919.

"Hell's Angels," *Photoplay*, August 1930, 56.

"'Hell's Angels' Almost Ready," *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 2, 1929.

Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, Simon and Schuster, 1929.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Collier Books, 1926.

Hobson, Harold. "Wells on the Screen." *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Mar. 24, 1936.

"Hollywood Today." *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 23rd, 1937.

"How Ingram Rose," *Washington Post*, Jan. 8, 1922.

"Imaginative Drama Shares Fox Honors With Milton Berle." *Washington Post*, Apr. 2, 1993.

"Ingram's "Four Horsemen" A Pictorial Triumph." *Wid's Daily* (New York, NY), Feb. 20, 1921.

J.D.B. "'Three Comrades' Vital Film." *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Jun. 11, 1938.

"James Murray May Have Leading Role." *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 12, 1929.

"John M. Saunders Suicide in Florida," *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1940.

Jones, Ralph T. "Diana Wynyard Star of 'Men Must Fight.'" *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 18, 1933.

"Journey's End." *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Apr. 23, 1930.

"Journey's End", *The Film Daily*, Apr. 13, 1930.

"Journey's End", *Variety*, Apr. 18, 1930.

'Journey's End' Manuscript For Nation." *Courier and Advertiser* (Dundee, Scotland), Nov. 15 1929.

Kauf. *Variety*, Jun. 23, 1937, 12.

Klumph, Helen. ""Big Parade' Lauded." *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 29, 1925.

L.A.S. "'All Quiet' Filmed." *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Jun. 3, 1930.

"Lawrence Stallings' "Big Parade" Film, Atlanta Theater Soon." *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 21, 1926.

"Letters to the Editor," *Photoplay*. September, 1922, 114.

Littell, Robert. "What Price Glory". *The New Republic*, September 24th, 1924.

"London Preview for Wells Film." *New York Times*, Feb. 21st, 1936.

"Lowe's Fox". *Washington Post*, Apr. 1, 1933.

Lusk, Norbert. "Slapstick Mars War Picture." *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 27th, 1937.

A "Mail" Critic. "The Big Parade." *Daily Mail* (Hull, England), Feb. 15, 1927.

Mantle, Burns. "'Journey's End' Finds Favor in Its Film Form", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 20, 1930.

"Many to Attend Preview of Film at Hotel Here." *Washington Post*, Apr. 6, 1936.

Marcotte, Roy. "Screen Close-Ups." *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 15, 1921.

"Men Must Fight," *The Film Daily*, Mar. 11, 1933.

"'Men Must Fight' Now at Grand Has 'Cavalcade' Star in Cast," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar 19., 1933.

Metcalf, Walter W. "More of "What Price Glory"." *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1924.

"Monitor Movie Guide." *Christian Science Monitor*, Jul. 10, 1937.

Moran, Robert. "Journey's End." *Atlanta Constitution*, May 27, 1930.

Mosely, C.C. "War Ace Gets Thrill From Air Combat Film." *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 1, 1930.

"Movie Fans Are Enthusiastic Over "The Heart of Humanity"," *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 20, 1919.

Nangie, Roberta. "All Movies of War Fade When This One's Seen." Chicago Daily Tribune, Dec. 27, 1926.

"Neutral War Fiction." *New York Times*, Sep. 1, 1918.

"New Films in London." *Times* (London), Oct. 4th, 1937.

"News of the Film World." *Variety*, Feb. 07, 1919.

"Noted War Veterans See Film." *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 24, 1926.

Nugent, Frank S. "H.G. Wells Presents an Outline of Future History in 'Things to Come' at the Rivoli." *New York Times*, April 18, 1936.

Nugent, Frank S. "It's a Buyer's Market." *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1936.

Nugent, Frank S. “The Road Back”, *New York Times*, Jun. 18, 1937.

Nugent, Frank S. “The Screen in Review” *New York Times*. Jun. 3, 1938.

Nugent, Frank S. “Talking ‘The Road Back’,” *New York Times*, Jun. 20, 1937.

Nye, Myra. "Society of Cinemaland." *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 1, 1930.

“The Palladium.” *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, Nov. 11, 1930.

“Pavilion,” *Motherwell Times*, Jul. 22, 1921.

“Pavilion.” *Motherwell Times*, Jul. 29, 1921.

“Peace Argument Seen as Motive of ‘Big Parade’”. *Los Angeles Time*, Jan. 3, 1926.

Peters, Rollo. “What Price Glory.” *New York Times*, Sep. 28, 1924.

“Poli’s.” *The Washington Post*. Feb. 8, 1926

“Premiere Air Report Promised.” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 4, 1925.

“Producers Not Troubled by $2 Picture Special Scare.” *Variety*, Apr. 22, 1921.

“Projection Jottings.” *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1926.

“Projection Jottings.” *New York Times*, Oct. 9, 1927.

Quirk, James R. “Speaking of Pictures”, *Photoplay*, December 1925, 27.

R.G., “A Colossal War Film.” *Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 1930.

Rascoe, Burton. “”The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” by V. Blasco Ibanez.”

Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct. 19, 1918.

Rascoe, Burton. “Publishers Puzzled by the Problem of Public’s Preferences.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1919.

“The Reel Players.” *Detroit Free Press*, Apr. 3 1919.

“The Reel Players.” *Detroit Free Press*, Apr. 7, 1919.

Reid, James, “We Cover the Studios.” *Photoplay*, May 1937.

Remarque Erich Maria. *The Road Back*. Translated by A.W. Wheen. New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1931.

“Remarque’s Farewell to Arms.” *New York Times*, May 10, 1931.

“Remarque’s “The Road Back”.” *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), Sep. 11th, 1937.

“’Rick’ Tells Story of Fighting in Air.” *Detroit Free Press*, May 5, 1919.

Rickenbacker, Eddie. *Fighting the Flying Circus*. Dodo Press.

Rickenbacker, E.V. “U.S. in League Means Menace of Militarism.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct. 9, 1920.

“The Road Back,” *The Film Daily*, June 18th, 1937.

“’The Road Back’ at Fox Theater, Strong Drama of War Aftermath,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul. 2, 1937.

Rogers, Bogart. “4 Million Dollars and 4 Men’s Lives.” *Photoplay*, April 1930

Saunders, John Monk. “The War-in-the-Air.” *New York Times*, Jul. 31, 1927.

Schallert, Edwin. “”All Quiet” Stars Considered for Sequel at Universal.” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 30, 1936.

Schallert, Edwin. “”The Big Parade” Sensational War Spectacle,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 11, 1925.

Schallert, Edwin. "Can There Be a Cinema Classic?" *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 22, 1928.

Schallert, Edwin. "Diana Wynyard's Hollywood Return Delayed by Successful Engagement in London." *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 6, 1934.

Schallert, Edwin. “Emotional Epic Stirs Audience,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 21, 1930.

Schallert, Edwin. “Emotional Story Told in “Three Comrades”,” Jun 2nd, 1938.

Schallert, Edwin. “Film Planned of ‘Road Back.’” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 14, 1932.

Schallert, Edwin. "Great Thrills in Air Feature." *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1930.

Schallert, Edwin. “”Journey’s End” Well Enacted,” *The New York Times*, Apr. 12, 1930.

Schallert, Edwin. “Notable Realism.” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 10, 1921.

Schallert, Edwin. “Loew Foresees More Progress.” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 13 1925.

Schallert, Edwin. “”Road Back” Stirring Tale of War Aftermath.” *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 21, 1937.

Schallert, Edwin. “War Shown in Stern Reality.” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 22, 1930.

Schallert, Edwin. “When Does the Actor Win?” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 3 1926.

Scheuer, Phillip K. “John Beal Awarded Leading Role in “Romance to the Rescue”,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 19, 1937.

Scheuer, Phillip K. "Hughes Expects to Laugh Last." *Los Angeles Times*. May 25, 1930.

“The Screen,” *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1918.

“The Screen.” *New York Times*. May 3, 1919.

“The Screen.” *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 1919.

“The Screen.” *New York Times*, May 7, 1921.

"Screen Notes." *New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1936.

“Screen Soldiers Are Real.” *Washington Post*, Sep. 4, 1921.

“The Shadow Stage.” *Photoplay*, April 1933.

Shaffer, Rosalind. “’Hell’s Angels” in Spectacular First Showing.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 8th, 1930.

Shaffer, Rosalind. "Glimpses of Hollywood." *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 31, 1929.

Shaffer, Rosalind. "Tragedy Stalks Realism in Films," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 31, 1929.

Sherwood, Robert E. “Wings.” *Life*, September 8, 1927, 24.

“Silent Director of “Big Parade” Got Results with Mental Telepathy.” *New York Times*. Dec. 6, 1925.

Silverman, Sime. “All Quiet on the Western Front”, *Variety*, May 7., 1930.

“Some Difficulties of a Producer.” *New York Times*, Jul. 10, 1927.

"The Spectacular Career of a Director of Spectacles." *Washington Post*, Aug. 12, 1928.

Stallings, Laurence. "The Big Parade." *New Republic*, September 17 1924.

Stallings, Laurence. *Plumes*. Columbia, SC., University of South Carolina Press, 2006.

Stevenson, Paul. "'Big Parade' Appeal Grows as it Enters Second Week," *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 9, 1926.

Symon, Arthur. "Scandal of 'The Big Parade'." *Sunday Post*, (Dundee, Scotland), May 30, 1926.

"Tabloid Book Review." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun.1, 1919.

"Theater Talk: The Big Parade" Final Week Atlanta Theater." *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 7, 1926.

"'Things to Come,'" Wells Cinema, Sets London Agog." *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 18., 1936.

"Three Comrades", *The Film Daily*, Tuesday, May 24, 1938.

"'Three Comrades' Plays at Grand Featuring Bob Taylor, Tone", *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun. 5, 1938.

Tinee, Mae. "All Quiet on the Western Front", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1930.

Tinee, Mae. "Blanche Sweet "Comes Back" in Great Picture." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 21, 1919.

Tinee, Mae. "Cast Convinces in Bitter Film of Post-War Day," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun. 9, 1938.

Tinee, Mae. "Famous "Best Seller" Makes a Fine Photoplay." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1921.

Tinee, Mae. "Film of 'Things to Come' Sees Century Ahead." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 30, 1936.

Tinee, Mae. "Film Predicts Wars as Long as Men Rule." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 13, 1933.

Tinee, Mae. "Great Game- Teaching the "Mrs." To Heel!." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 25, 1920.

Tinee, Mae. "Long Awaited Air Spectacle Wins Four Stars." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 23, 1930.

Tinee, Mae. "Richard Dix is Good Indian in Picture of West That is Gone." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 2, 1926.

Tinee, Mae. "'The Road Back' Is a Well Acted, Cheerless Story," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul. 31, 1937.

Tinee, Mae. "Shell's Screech Chills You at 'Journey's End'", *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1930.

Tinee, Mae. "Showing Miss Ward Expertly Emotionalizing." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul.7, 1919.

Tinee, Mae. "'This Legion of Condemned'" is Rival of 'Wings'." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 12, 1928.

Tinee, Mae. "The Voice of the Movie Fan," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 25, 1926.

Tinee, Mae. "A War Picture, Yes! But You Must Not Miss Seeing It!" *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Feb. 10, 1919.

Tinee, Mae. ""Wings" Is Brilliant, Poignant, and in Spots' Most Too Real." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov.1, 1927.

"Tolerant Attitude Towards Flyers Stressed in Film," *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 17, 1927.

"Total of Almost One-half Million See 'Big Parade." *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 21 1926.

"Town and Country Gossip," *Derry Daily Telegraph*, Jul. 8, 1926.

"Tragedy Near to Comedy," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 27, 1927.

"Tragic Reminder." *Northern Daily Mail*, Jan. 27, 1931.

"Trench Life Depicted in War Film." *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 7, 1930.

"Two More "Super-Productions."" *Times* (London), Dec. 11, 1922.

"Two Theaters for Talkie." *New York Times*, Jul. 25, 1930.

"The Ultimate War Drama." *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 1, 1926.

""The Unpardonable Sin" Attracts Huge Crowds." *Detroit Free Press*, Mar. 5 1919.

"V.C. Watches Himself Make History." *Yorkshire Post*, Oct. 26, 1925.

"Version of a Famous Novel." *Times* (London), Aug. 14, 1922.

"Version of "Blood and Sand."" *Times* (London) Nov. 20, 1922.

"War Featured by Remarque in Local Bow." *Washington Post*, Sep. 28, 1930.

"War Film Author Pleased," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 7, 1930.

"War Hero the Mentor of 'Wings'." *New York Times*, Dec. 4., 1927.

"What Price Glory," *The Film Daily*, Nov. 28, 1926.

""What Price Glory" and Its Authors," *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1924.

"What the Cinemas Offer." *Daily Mail* (Hull, England). Jan. 20, 1931.

Whitney, W.A. "Loew's Fox." *Washington Post*, Apr. 1, 1933.

"Wilkes-Barre, PA.," *Exhibitors Trade Review*. December 17, 1921.

"Wilmington, N.C." *Exhibitors Trade Review*. December 10, 1921, 143.

"Wings." *Bioscope*, March 29, 1928.

"Wings." *Film Daily* (New York), Aug. 21, 1927.

"Wings." *Washington Post*. Jan. 28, 1929.

"'Wings' Adventurous Feat." *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 29, 1928.

"'Wings' Hypnotises London." *Bioscope*, May 30, 1928.

"Wings" on Tour." *Bioscope*, April 26th, 1928

Woodruff, Fuzzy. "'The Four Horsemen' Marks Arrival of New Screen Era," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sep. 13, 1921.

Woolridge, A.L. "Soldiers and Trenches Coming Back to Films." *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 28, 1925.

"World War Pictured Through Veterans Eyes." *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1925.

"Written on the Screen," *New York Times*. Apr. 4, 1920.

Ybarra, T.R. "Blasco Ibanez, Movie Fan." *New York Times*, Jan. 23,

1921.

"Yorkshire V.C.'s." *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Nov. 12, 1929.

"Youths Faint at Cinema." *Nottingham Evening Post*, Jan. 3, 1931.

Young, Stark. "New Iconographies." *New York Times*, Sep. 21, 1924.

Young, Stark. "What Price Glory." *New York Times*, Sep. 6th, 1924

Secondary Sources

Abel, Richard. *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Adamson, Joe. *Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Sometimes Zeppo: A History of the Marx Brothers and a Satire on the Rest of the World*. London: Coronet Books, Hodder and Stoughton, 1973.

Ainger, Michael. *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

All Americans Ads of the 20s, edited by Jim Heimann. Madrid: Taschen, 2004.

Anderson, Maxwell, and Laurence Stallings. *Three American Plays*. New York: Hardcourt, Brace and Company, 1926.

Ansdell, Caroline. "Journey's End." *whatsonstage.com*. May 24 2004. http://www.whatsonstage.com/west-end-theatre/reviews/05-2004/journeys-end_25539.html.

Balio, Tino. *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

Barker, Christine R. and R.W. Last, *Erich Maria Remarque*. London: Oswald Wolff, 1979.

Barlett, Donald L., and James B. Steele. *Howard Hughes: His Life and Madness*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.

Barton, Ruth. *Rex Ingram: Visionary Director of the Silent Screen*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

Baxter, John. *King Vidor*. New York: Monarch Press, 1976.

Blasco Ibanez, Vicente. *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Translated by Charlotte Brewster Jordan. Dodo Press.

Bonk, David. *Chateau Thierry & Belleau Wood 1918: America's Baptism of Fire on the Marne.* Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007.

Bourke, Joanna. *An Intimate History of Killing*. London: Granta, 1999.

Bristol, Nancy K. *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Brown, Peter Harry and Pat H. Broeske. *Howard Hughes: The Untold Story*. London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996.

Canham, Kingsley. *Michael Curtiz Raoul Walsh Henry Hathaway*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1973.

Carlson, Mark. *Flying on Film: A Century of Aviation in the Movies, 1912-2012*. Duncan, OK: BearManor Media, 2012. Kindle edition.

Crafton, Donald. *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997.

Crosby, Alfred W. *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Kindle edition.

Curtis, James. *James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Dekker, George. *James Fenimore Cooper: The Novelist*. London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1967.

Dick, Bernard F. *City of Dreams: The Making and Remaking of Universal Pictures*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1997.

Dumont, Herve. *Frank Borzage: The Life and Films of a Hollywood Romantic*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006.

Durgnat, Raymond and Scott Simmon. *King Vidor, American.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1988.

Eksteins, Modis. “The Cultural Impact of the Great War.” In *Film and the First World War*, edited by Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp, 201-213. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995.

Ferrell, Robert H. *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Frayling, Christopher. *Things to Come*. London: BFI Publishing, 1995.

Garrett, George. Introduction to *Plumes*, by Laurence Stallings, xi-xxvi. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.

Gatiss, Mark. *James Whale: A Biography*. London: Cassell, 1995.

Gerstner, David A, “The Practises of Authorship.” In *Authorship and Film*, edited by David A. Gerstner and Janet Staiger, 3-25. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Glancy, Mark. *Hollywood and the Americanization of Britain from the 1920s to the Present*. London: I.B. Taurus, 2014.

Glancy, H. Mark. *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood ‘British’ film 1939-45*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.

Gore-Langton, Robert. *Journey’s End: The Classic War Play Explored*. London: Oberon Books, 2013.

Hammond, Michael. *The Big Show: British Cinema Culture in the Great War 1914-1918*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2006.

Hammond, Michael and Michael Williams, eds. *British Silent Cinema and the Great War*. Baskingstoke: Palgrave Macmillion, 2011.

Isenberg, Michael. “The Great War Viewed from the Twenties.” In *Hollywood’s World War I: Motion Picture Images*, edited by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor, 39-59. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997.

Isenberg, Michael T. *War on Film: The American Cinema and World War I, 1914-1941*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: 1981.

Jacobs, Lea. *The Decline of Sentiment: American Film in the 1920s*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.

Jeansonne, Glen. *Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker 1928-1933*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.

Jones, Kent. "Frank Borzage." *Film Comment*, September/October 1997. http://www.filmcomment.com/article/the-sanctum-santorum-of-love-frank-borzage

Keegan, John. *The First World War*. London: Hutchinson, 1998.

Kelly, Andrew. *All Quiet on the Western Front: The Story of a Film*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002.

Kennedy, David M. *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Kindle edition.

Klinger, Barbara. "Film History\Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies." *Screen* 38, no. 2 (1997): 107-128.

Koszarski, Richard. *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1990.

Kulik, Karol. *Alexander Korda: The Man Who Could Work Miracles*. New Rochelle, N.Y: Arlington House Publishers, 1975.

Kuhlman, Erika. *Of Little Comfort: War Widows, Fallen Soldiers, and the Remaking of the Nation After the Great War*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Lee, Arthur Gould. *Open Cockpit: A Pilot of the Royal Flying Corps*. London: Grub Street, 2012.

Massey, Raymond. *A Hundred Different Lives*. Boston: Little Brown, 1979.

McElvaine, Robert S. *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*. New York: Times Books, 1993.

Meckier, Jerome. "Dickens Discovers Dickens." In *Global Dickens*, edited by John O. Jordan and Nirshan Perera, 205-247. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012.

"Men Must Fight." *Internet Broadway Database.* http://www.ibdb.com/production.php?id=11646.

Midkiff-Debauche, Leslie. “The United States’ Film Industry and World War One,” edited by Michael Paris, 138-162. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Midkiff-Debauche, Leslie. *Reel Patriotism: The Movies and World War One*. Madison, WA: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Miller, Nathan. *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003.

Mitchell, George J. “All Quiet on the Western Front.” In *The Cinema of Adventure, Romance & Terror*, edited by George Turner, 60-72. Hollywood: The ASC Press, 1989.

Morgan, Kevin. *Ramsay MacDonald*. London: Haus Publishing, 2006.

Morton, Ray. *King Kong: The History of a Movie Icon from Fay Wray to Peter Jackson*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005.

Moss, Marilyn Ann. *Raoul Walsh: The True Adventures of Hollywood’s Legendary Director*. Lexington: The University of Press of Kentucky, 2011.

Murphy, Brenda. *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Nicholson, Juliet. *The Great Silence 1918-1920 Living in the Shadow of the Great War*. London: John Murray, 2009.

O’ Leary, Liam. *Rex Ingram: Master of Silent Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1980.

Peach, Linden. *British Influence on American Literature*. London: The MacMillian Press Ltd, 1982.

Perkins, Anne. *Baldwin*. London: Huas Publishing Limited, 2006.

Russell, Francis. *The Shadow of the Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times*. New York: McCraw-Hill Book Company, 1968.

Ryall, Tom. *Britain and the American Cinema*. London: SAGE Publications, 2001. 1

Shingler, Martin. “Interpreting *All About Eve*: A Study in Historical Reception.” In *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, edited by Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, 46-63. London: British Film Institute, 2001.

Shulman, Irving. *Harlow: An Intimate Biography*. New York: Random House, 1964.

Soares, Andre. "Pioneer Female Producer June Mathis: Q & A with Author Allen

Ellenberger." *Alt Film Guide*. Accessed January 12, 2012. http://www.altfg.com/blog/classics/june-mathis/

Staiger, Janet. *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Tabori, Paul. *Alexander Korda*. New York: Living Books, 1966.

Tranberg, Charles. *Robert Taylor: A Biography*. Albany, GA: BearManor Media, 2011. Kindle Edition.

Trout, Steven. Afterward to *Plumes*, by Laurence Stallings, 349-353. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.

Vasey Ruth, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

Vidor, King. *King Vidor on Filmmaking*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972.

Wellman, William Jr. *The Man and His* Wings*: William A. Wellman and the Making of the First Best Picture*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006.

Wells, H.G. *The Shape of Things to Come*. Thirsk: House of Stratus, 2002.

Wiley, Mason and Damien Bona. *Inside Oscar: The Unofficial History of the Academy Awards*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1986.

Williams, Michael. *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism: The Rise of Hollywood's Gods.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Wohl, Robert. *The Generation of 1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Filmography

7th Heaven. Directed by Frank Borzage. With Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell. Fox Film Corporation, 1927.

Aces High. Directed by Jack Gold. With Malcolm McDowell and Christopher Plummer. S. Benjamin Fisz Productions and Les Productions Jacques Roitfeld, 1976.

Across the Atlantic. Directed by Howard Bretherton. With Monte Blue and Edna Murphy. Warner Bros., 1928.

All About Eve. Directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz. With Bette Davis and Anne Baxter. 20th Century Fox, 1950.

All About My Mother. Directed by Pedro Almodovar. With Cecelia Roth and Marisa Paredes. El Deseo, Renn Productions, France 2 Cinema. Via Digital.

All Quiet on the Western Front. Directed by Lewis Milestone. With Louis Wolheim and Lew Ayres. Universal Pictures, 1930.

The Battle of the Somme. No director credited. Produced by William F. Jury. British Topical Committee for War Films, 1916.

Bicycle Thieves (*Ladri di biciclette*). Directed by Vittorio De Sica. With Lamberto Maggiorani and Enzo Staiola. Produzioni De Sica, 1948.

The Big Parade. Directed by King Vidor. With John Gilbert and Renee Adoree. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1925.

Birth of a Nation. Directed by D.W. Griffith. With Lillian Gish and Mae March. David W. Griffith Corporation, 1915.

Cavalcade. Directed by Frank Lloyd. With Diana Wynyard and Clive Brook. Fox Film Corporation, 1933.

Civilian Clothes. Directed by Hugh Ford. With Thomas Meighan and Martha Mansfield. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1920.

The Coconuts. Directed by Robert Florey. With The Marx Brothers and Oscar Shaw. Paramount Pictures, 1929.

The Crowd. Directed by King Vidor. With Eleanor Boardman and James Murray. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1928.

The Dawn Patrol. Directed by Howard Hawks. With Richard Barthelmess and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. First National Pictures, 1930.

Doctor Zhivago. Directed by David Lean. With Omar Sharif and Julie Christie. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1965.

Dracula. Directed by Tod Browning. With Bela Lugosi and Helen Chandler. Universal Pictures, 1931.

A Farewell to Arms. Directed by Frank Borzage. With Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes. Paramount Pictures, 1932.

The Fighting 69th. Directed by William Keighley. With James Cagney and Pat O'Brien. Warner Bros., 1940.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Directed by Rex Ingram. With Rudolph Valentino and Alice Terry. Metro Pictures, 1921.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Directed by Vincente Minnelli. With Glenn Ford and Ingrid Thulin. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1962.

Four Sons. Directed by John Ford. With Margaret Mann and James Hall. Fox Film Corporation, 1928.

The Fountainhead. Directed by King Vidor. With Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. Warner Bros., 1949.

Frankenstein. Directed by James Whale. With Colin Clive and Mae Clarke. Universal Pictures, 1931.

Full Metal Jacket. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. With Matthew Modine and Adam Baldwin. Warner Bros., 1987.

Gabriel Over the White House. Directed by Gregory La Cava. With Walter Huston and Karen Morley. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1933.

The Girl Who Stayed at Home. Directed by D.W. Griffith. With Adolph Lestina and Carol Dempster. D.W. Griffith Productions, 1919.

Grand Illusion (*La Grande Illusion*). Directed by Jean Renior. With Jean Gabin and Dita Parlo. Réalisation d'art cinématographique, 1938.

The Heart of Humanity. Directed by Allen Holubar. With Dorothy Phillips and William Stowell. Universal Film Manufacturing Company, 1918.

Hearts of the World. Directed by D.W. Griffith. With Adolph Lestina and Josephine Crowell. D.W. Griffith Productions, 1918.

Hell's Angels. Directed by Howard Hughes (and James Whale, uncredited). With Ben Lyon and James Hall. The Caddo Company, 1930.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame. Directed by Wallace Worsley. With Lon Chaney and Patsy Ruth Miller. Universal Pictures Corp., 1923.

The Invisible Man. Directed by James Whale. With Claude Rains and Gloria Stuart. Universal Pictures Corp., 1933.

J'Accuse!. Directed by Abel Gance. With Romuald Joube and Maxime Desjardins. Pathé Frères, 1919.

Johnny Got His Gun. Directed by Dalton Trumbo. With Timothy Bottoms and Kathy Fields. World Entertainment, 1919.

Journey's End. Directed by James Whale. With Colin Clive and Ian Maclaren. Gainsborough Pictures and Tiffany Productions, 1930.

King of Jazz. Directed by John Murray Anderson. Paul Whiteman and His Band and John Boles. Universal Pictures Corp., 1930.

The Kiss. Directed by Jacques Feyder. With Greta Garbo and Conrad Nagel. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1929.

Lawrence of Arabia. Directed by David Lean. With Peter O'Toole and Alec Guinness. Horizon Pictures, 1962.

The Legion of the Condemned. Directed by William A. Wellman. With Gary Cooper and Fay Wray. Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, 1928.

Lucky Star. Directed by Frank Borzage. With Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell. Fox Film Corporation, 1929.

The Magician. Directed by Rex Ingram. With Alice Terry and Paul Wegener. Metro Goldwyn, 1926.

Men Must Fight. Directed by Edgar Selwyn. With Diana Wynyard and Lewis Stone. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1933.

The Mortal Storm. Directed by Frank Borzage. With Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1940.

The Mummy. Directed by Karl Freund. With Boris Karloff and Zita Johann. Universal Pictures Corp., 1932.

No Greater Glory. Directed by Frank Borzage. With George P. Breakston and Jimmy Butler. Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1934.

Oh! What a Lovely War. Directed by Richard Attenborough. With Wendy Allnutt and Colin Farrell. Accord Productions, 1969.

Pather Panchali. Directed by Satyajit Ray. With Kanu Banerji and Karuna Banerju. Government of West Bengal, 1955.

Paths of Glory. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. With Kirk Douglas and Ralph Meeker. Bryna Productions, 1957.

Peter Pan. Directed by Herbert Brenon. With Betty Bronson and George Ali. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1924.

The Phantom of the Opera. Directed by Rupert Julian. With Lon Chaney and Mary Philbin. Universal Pictures Corp., 1925.

Pilgrimage. Directed by John Ford. With Henrietta Crosman and Heather Angel. Fox Film Corporation, 1933.

The Profiteers. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. With Fannie Ward and John Miltern. Astra Film, 1919.

Rasputin and the Empress. Directed by Richard Boleslawski. With John Barrymore and Ethel Barrymore. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1932.

The Road Back. Directed by James Whale. With John King and Richard Cromwell. Universal Pictures, 1937.

Ryan's Daughter. Directed by David Lean. With Robert Mitchum and Trevor Howard. Faraway Productions, 1970.

Saving Private Ryan. Directed Steven Spielberg. With Tom Hanks and Tom Sizemore. Dreamworks SKG, Paramount Pictures, Amblin Entertainment and Mutual Film Company, 1998.

Sergeant York. Directed by Howard Hawks. With Gary Cooper and Walter Brennon. Warner Bros., 1941.

The Service Star. Directed by Charles Miller. With Madge Kennedy and Clarence Oliver. Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, 1918.

The Silence of the Lambs. Directed by Jonathon Demme. With Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins. Orion Pictures, 1991.

The Sin of Madelon Claudet. Directed by Edgar Selwyn. With Helen Hayes and Lewis Stone. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1931.

The Song of Kong. Directed by Ernest B. Schoedsack. With Robert Armstrong and Helen Mack. Radio Pictures, 1933.

Things to Come. Directed by William Cameron Menzies. With Raymond Massey and Edward Chapman. London Film Productions, 1926.

Three Comrades. Directed by Frank Borzage. With Robert Taylor and Margaret Sullavan. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1938.

The Thief of Bagdad. Directed by Raoul Walsh. With Douglas Fairbanks and Snitz Edwards. Douglas Fairbanks Pictures, 1924.

Two Arabian Nights. Directed by Lewis Milestone. With William Boyd and Mary Astor. The Caddo Company, 1927.

The Unpardonable Sin. Directed by Marshall Neilan. With Blanche Sweet and Edwin Stevens. Blanche Sweet Productions and Harry Garson Productions, 1919.

The Vanishing American. Directed by George B. Seitz. With Richard Dix and Lois Wilson. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, 1925.

Way Down East. Directed by D.W. Griffith. With Lilian Gish and Richard Barthelmess. D.W. Griffith Productions, 1920.

Wendy and Lucy. Directed by Kelly Reichardt. With Michelle Williams and David Koppell. Field Guide Films, Films Science, Glass Eye Pix, Washington Square Films, 2008.

Wings. Directed by William A. Wellman. With Clara Bow and Charles Rodgers. Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, 1927.

The Wizard of Oz. Directed by Victor Fleming. With Judy Garland and Frank Morgan. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayor, 1939.