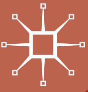

BRITAIN AND THE WORLD

War Representation in British Cinema and Television

From Suez to Thatcher, and Beyond

Kevin M. Flanagan

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Britain and the World
ISBN 978-3-030-30202-3 ISBN 978-3-030-30203-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30203-0

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Cover image: Keystone Press/Alamy Stock Photo
Cover design by eStudio Calamar

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To the teachers, librarians, and video store clerks of the world,
who made this possible.

Acknowledgements

The author has innumerable debts. First, the libraries and archives that gave the book legs: D. H. Hill Library at North Carolina State University, Hillman Library at the University of Pittsburgh, Fenwick Library at George Mason University, BFI Special Collections, the Imperial War Museum, Cambridge University Library, the Bill Douglas Cinema Museum at the University of Exeter, and the Borthwick Institute for Archives at York University.

I am the product of great academic departments that have given me opportunities to teach and conduct research, including the English Departments at North Carolina State University, the University of Pittsburgh, and George Mason University. Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image and the English Department at the University of Nebraska at Kearney provided opportunities to share research and network during key moments in the completion of this project.

Much of the work in this book benefited from being presented and discussed at international conferences, in particular in Brussels (Imagining the Past: Ken Russell, Biography and the Art of Making History, 2014), Montreal (Society for Cinema and Media Studies, 2015), Austin and Kansas City (Britain and the World, 2017 and 2019), and Washington, DC (Popular Culture Association, 2019).

This project began as a dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh. Parts of Chapter 4 are adapted from my previously published essay "Displacements and Diversions: *Oh! What a Lovely War* and the Adaptation of Trauma," in *South Atlantic Review* 80. 3–4 (2015), 96–117.

Many folks helped me write this book, whether through mentorship, friendship, providing access to materials, inviting me to things, or several of the above: Michelle Brock, Jonny Davies, Martin Farr, Lucy Fischer, Joseph A. Gomez, Matthew Harle, Kevin Jackson, Sarah Joshi, Adam Lowenstein, Colin MacCabe, Laura Mulvey, David Petterson, Paul Sutton, Michael Temple, Samuel J. Umland, Phil Wickham, and Eric G. E. Zuelow. A special shout-out to my cohort and fellow graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh from 2009 to 2015 for keeping each other sane!

At Palgrave, I would like to thank Lina Aboujieb, Molly Beck, Ellie Friedman, and Balaji Varadharaju for their help in getting the book produced.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for supporting my thinking and research over all these years. Thanks to Kay for enduring an apartment full of books and films, and for her willingness to sing song parodies with me at a moment's notice.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Toward an Alternative Tradition of War Representation

War and Britain: The Mainstream Inheritance

In the one hundred years between the late Victorian era and the Prime Ministership of Margaret Thatcher—the decades that saw the meteoric rise of cinema around the world, as well as its gradual decline as a publicly exhibited form of entertainment—Great Britain was in a state of continuous transition. During this time, the British Empire went from the most powerful supranational entity in the world to a junior player in a standoff between two colossal, ideologically opposed superpowers; went from being a geographically massive group of allied nations, one of the biggest empires the world had ever seen, to wheezing into the 1980s as a lean parliamentary democracy under an economic pinch; and went from boasting a modern army and an unsurpassed navy in the nineteenth century to a small, all-volunteer (though still highly professional) army by 1980.

These sweeping generalizations only give a broad outline of British military and political exploits during this century. From Queen Victoria's "little wars" of Imperial maintenance (campaigns in India, Russia, and China) in the nineteenth century, Britain eventually found itself on the front line of The Great War (1914–1918), a stalemated struggle that brought previously unimagined loss of life to the public eye (Farwell 1985). After a period of worldwide economic depression and gradual arms accumulation, World War II followed, this time as a response to the conquering antagonisms of fascism. Britain and her allies won a hard-fought victory in 1945,

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K. M. Flanagan, *War Representation in British Cinema and Television*, Britain and the World,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30203-0_1

emerging broke and under the auspices of strict material austerity, but with what Kenneth O. Morgan calls "a new kind of consensus," under Labour Prime Minister Clement Atlee, "a social democracy based on a mixed economy and welfare state which took Britain well enough through the difficult post-war transformation and endured in its essence for another generation or more" (2001, 633–634). While a general economic consensus held until the "reforms" of Thatcher (the bullying rise of free markets and the privatization of everything), Britain's boom and bust decades—the mid-1950s through the late 1970s—saw plenty of argument, discontent, protest, and outrage, a social revolution greeted by attenuate aesthetic experimentation.

Although Britain never again fought on the scale of 1939–1945, war and military culture persisted in the national imaginary. From Britain's emergence from austerity in the 1950s until Thatcher's orchestrated revival of old-school patriotic militarism with the Falkland War in 1982, the culture of war provided a set of remembrances, memorializations, wish fulfillments, exploitations, marketing ploys, exercises in nostalgia, and genuine historical investigations that formed an important narrative niche about national self-imaging.[1] This recourse to war was both genuine social expression and, peripherally, an ongoing facet of what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer famously called "the culture industry," the reification and commodification of expression sold to the public in pre-digested packets (1997, 120–167). How Britain's conflicts and military history got presented to the nation, and the world at large, often fell into predictable themes and clusters, some more sweeping and normalized than others, such that the business of showing war came to be as much about genre codes as about original points via provided by individual ideas and experiences.

War representation in Britain is tied to commodity culture and to notions of citizenship and sovereignty. Graham Dawson has identified the primary ideological trend in war representation, especially in the post-World War II period, as the "pleasure culture of war," a set of texts across media in which the figure of the soldier-hero provides a site of identification for young men (the rhetoric explicitly targets constructions of masculine action) that builds on nostalgic notions of the stability of Britain and its empire (1994, 3–4, 282). Michael Paris reads this favored cultural relationship to war

[1] Stuart Hall has commented that "The Falklands War allowed Thatcherism to play, when required, from two different ideological repertoires, with resonance in apparently opposing reservoirs of public sentiment: marching towards the future clad in the armour of the past" (2011, 18).

as “teaching that war was moral, legitimate, and above all, exciting and romantic” (2000, 9). How war gets talked about, circulated, framed, and visualized determines its pedagogical function as a locus for notions of duty, deference, and self-sacrifice. The values of “the pleasure culture of war” interface with dominant values of citizenship, with lessons applicable even to those who do not follow martial careers.

The dominant consensus of framing war as ethically necessary, dutiful, and politically justified is especially strong in film and television. As relatively expensive and labor-intensive enterprises, film and television works made for commercial purposes and for popular audiences often hew especially close to longstanding agreements of good taste, genre decorum, and narrative intelligibility. In cinema and television texts, the positions of heroism and the righteousness of war frequently accompany a set of similarly codified types of style and construction, including a broad recourse to the conceits of the Classical Hollywood Style (editing and narrative geared toward motivated clarity, unity, harmony, continuity); narratives motivated by clear goals of individuals that do not dwell too extensively on abstraction or collectivities; and stories punctuated by scenes of violence that feature attempts at recreating the excitement of combat, usually through a mixture of physical effects, convincing equipment, and legible and unobtrusive framing and lighting.[2] War is almost uniformly represented in narrative terms, as a coherent story with an inevitable end, rather than as a random, chaotic sequence of loosely aligned events and counter-events. In other words, film and television texts that express the history and culture of war or military life through the common values of “pleasure culture” notions are often (erroneously) granted equivalent status to the genre itself. By this logic, scholars, critics, and everyday viewers make the rhetorical move of categorizing British representations of war in film and television with dominant, loudly expressed cultural values that mask more essential features of genre organization like iconography, historical themes, and subtle formal/stylistic choices.

This imagined ideological and national consensus about war appears across subgenres and decades. Despite visible social change across periods, this dominant approach to war representation retains stable features. For instance, *The First of the Few* (1942), a biopic of Spitfire inventor R. J.

[2]See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson’s book *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) for an expanded set of recurrent formal elements.

Mitchell directed by and starring Leslie Howard, is presented both as a war film that shows the professionalism of fighter pilot crews in the present and as a retrospective re-reading of the life of a noted expert. The most popular British film of 1942, it is, to use David Edgerton's phase, "a vindication of the armament firm Vickers," Mitchell's employer, and couches his workaholic attitude as a symptom of his total dedication to British defense (2011, 154). Whatever his individual genius, all is sacrificed for the good of the nation. *Malta Story* (1953, Brian Desmond Hurst), a melodramatic dramatization of the defense of the island nation of Malta, a key logistical location between North Africa and Italy, makes a similar appeal, offering the eccentric Peter Ross (Alec Guinness), a reconnaissance pilot, as the redeemer of this area of the war.[3] His personal loss—as a patriot, and as a man engaged to be married to Maltese woman Maria (Muriel Pavlow)—personalizes the war, yet stands in as a proxy for a wider set of tales about redemptive selflessness. Even something like *Where Eagles Dare* (1968, Brian G. Hutton), despite its use of spy and thriller tropes like betrayal and double-crosses, ultimately tells the story of elite professional soldiers who execute a daring mission against a Nazi Alpine redoubt, showing a set of actions that become equivalent to the enacted moral superiority of the Allied troops. In each of these three films, war is justified, it is "won" in a way that gels with an audience's preconceived ideas about the virtues of the fairly fought "good war," and a stress is put on a relatively uncomplicated representation of the world, a slightly heightened form of bourgeois realism that naturalizes the actions of those it depicts.

War Representation: Expanded Theaters

This construction merely tells part of the story of the history of British war representation. What about films that show war as a failed or unjustified enterprise? What about television programs that downplay the adventure of war in favor of its basic monotony and all-encompassing boredom? What about texts that belittle, deflate, or satirize war and warmongering? What about allegorical or symbolic treatments of war? Instead of war as triumphant and life-affirming, what about films that construct it as tragic and emotionally stultifying? Instead of war representation as expressed through

[3] Malta was bombed continuously from Summer 1940 until Summer 1943 (Holland 2003, 417).

narrative and visual modalities like melodrama and realism, what about war as imagined as fantastic, or even surrealistic?

This book argues that seemingly outlier and anomalous trends in war representation are actually central to understanding the range of attitudes toward Britain's military past that competed during the postwar period, especially as relates to the history of film and television, but also generally, as pertains to cultural trends *writ large*. As with the general historical narrative in the history of British cinema (from stability during and immediately after World War II to a disrupted, unsettled production base, a changing audience, and the loss or modification of old genre traditions by the 1970s), war representation is best understood as a fracturing, diversifying phenomenon (Newland 2010, 12–13). Even as dominant representational registers persist—tales of heroism, patriotism, national heritage, the inherent necessity of war—a staggering range of oppositional voices sound-off. This book repositions the comparatively unpopular, obscure, and offbeat. These neglected films from one of Britain's most long-lived genres bring a remarkable polysemy to what is often considered to be a monotonous and intellectually rote type of filmmaking. In general, this book seeks to restore messiness to the story of British war representation by looking at films about war that do not fit any neat generic definitions; films by expatriate filmmakers operating in Britain (and bringing to bear outsider sensibilities on an insular culture); and films that question every aspect of the military and war, in the process scrutinizing traditional class roles, deference, hierarchies, and the stiff upper lip.

In *War and Film*, James Chapman writes about the arbitrariness of the "war film" genre and instead organizes his investigation of war in film not as a matter of delineating precise boundaries, so much as mapping representational trends across many different modes (2008, 8–9). This contrasts with the approach in Ivan Butler's foundational *The War Film*, which differentiates the "war film" ("concerned either directly with the actual fighting, or very closely with the effects and aftermath of a conflict") from "fringe films" (e.g., cold war spy movies) (1974, 11). The tendency to break down the genre into groupings that create a hierarchy of relevance, or a generic centrality, is best explored in Jeanine Basinger's work. In *World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (1986, revised in 2003), Basinger constructs a dominant version of what a war "combat film" looks like, even as she problematizes the very concept of genre (which she refers to as an "alive," "fickle and inconstant" way or organizing) (2003, 252). The kind of war film that looms largest in the popular imaginary of the Anglophone

world is the squad-based combat film in which an ethnically mixed group of soldiers overcomes its own internal obstacles and succeeds against a largely faceless, abstract enemy in a struggle that confirms the opposing ideological nature of the different sides, and affirms the preconceived political notions of its established audience (56–57). That World War II has become the most recreated war in human history, and that its favored genre template has been so successful a guide to films about other conflicts, suggest that the conflation of "war film" with "combat film" likewise invites a comparison between the ideological work of this type of war film and the very *raison d'etre* of the genre itself.

With this in mind, my own approach to war is closer to Chapman's in that my interest is in mapping this mode of conflict across several other genre clusters. Throughout, I have selected film and television examples of British responses to war over several decades that follow Robert Eberwin's "inclusive" definition of the "war film": "I think that a film belongs to the genre if it focuses, with varying emphases: (1) directly on war itself (battles—preparation, actual, aftermath/damage); (2) on the activities of the participants off the battlefield (recruitment, training, leisure, recovery from wounds); and (3) the effects of war on human relationships (home front, impact on family and lovers). While some films easily meet all three criteria, others are notable for qualifying on the basis of one in particular" (2005, 45). In order to trace changing cultural attitudes to war, as well as organize new subgenres or types of genre hybridity, I have conceived war as a "total" enterprise, as something like Raymond Williams's influential definition of culture as a "whole way of life" whose effects reverberate over diverse, often conflicting aspects of being and experience (2001, 63). In calling for this comprehensive and inclusive definition of culture, Williams acknowledges that the enormity of the undertaking could overwhelm the whole prospect of such analysis. His solution, a kind of organizational sleight of hand, provides the basic template for how I have organized the sections of this project:

> Analysis of particular works or institutions is, in this context, analysis of their essential kind of organization, the relationships which works or institutions embody as parts of the organization as a whole. A key-word, in such analysis, is *pattern*: *it is with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind that any useful cultural analysis begins, and it is with the relationships between these patterns, which sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities, sometimes again reveal discontinuities*

> *of an unexpected kind, that general cultural analysis is concerned.* (Williams 2001, 63)

In looking at war representation in British culture released between 1956 and the early 1980s, I am producing a new organizational history of an idea, a thematic reading of explicitly concerned with providing a revised place for war in the twentieth-century British visual culture.

I deliberately push back against overly generalized accounts of the genre and of the visual legacies of war in general. Many writers, like Alan Burton and Steve Chibnall, recognize the equivalence between British war representation and the preferred national narrative of World War II, in which other conflicts (the Anglo-Boer war, even World War I) and other points of view (political dissent, women's experience) are less central to the national mythology than contemporary accounts of the underdog successes of the "good war," or, in later decades, the nostalgic reimagination of war as a privileged type of masculine adventure (2013, 425–427). Robert Murphy characterizes British wartime cinema—and, by extension, a large body of films about war made after this period—as inordinately associated with realism, a received wisdom that downplays other equally important aesthetic options that have had equally extensive impacts on the imagination of war (2009, 224). In line with *The First of the Few*, *Malta Story*, and *Where Eagles Dare*, the stresses of Britain at war correspond to a favored, usually seriously inclined, mode of action-melodrama that purports to honestly show the tasks, technologies, and trials of the war, in the process legitimizing such conflict in the name of national righteousness. What many accounts of British war representation on-screen miss is the fantasy, the out-there humor, the abstraction, irreverence, and the inconsolable desolation that does not fit into the genre's dominant tendencies.

Surveying an Alternative Tradition

From roughly 1939 through 1982, a deeper and more associative analysis uncovers a startling diversity of representations of war, nationalism (and internationalism), the experience of military life, and Britain's legacy of armed conflict, many of which run counter to supposedly foundational tendencies of the genre at large. Despite the evident propaganda function of nearly all films made during the war (1939–1945), even this period boasts films that are hard to account for in typical histories of war on-screen. Compare them to apparent outliers from the 1960s.

In *Let George Do It* (1940, Marcel Varnel), a vehicle for George Formby, dreams about war find an extended, raucous expression. Formby often played "a shy young man with an irrepressible grin and ever-ready ukulele to accompany his risqué songs," combining an unassuming persona with moments of non-verbal slapstick and double entendre laden dialog ("Formby" 2011). Along with Gracie Fields, he was the highest paid English entertainer of his time and was "one of the few regional entertainers to become nationally famous in Britain" ("George Formby" 2001). Jeffrey Richards describes Formby's (and Field's) appeal in the 1930s and 1940s as having to do with their "optimism, cheerfulness, and indomitability," with Formby especially "the little man who wins through against all odds, as Chaplin had been on the silent screen and as Norman Wisdom was to be in the 1950s" (1997, 259, 261). Audiences at the time recognized the metonymic link between themselves, Wigan-born Formby, and the nation as a whole. As a representative of Northern working-class identity, Formby's stardom established the centrality of that region to the national as a whole. That his films during the war years made him Britain's premiere comic hero created a connection between the working class and the ultimate fate of the nation.

On one level, *Let George Do It!* is a routine war thriller: Formby (playing George Hepplewhite) gets involved in intrigue in Norway and eventually helps break a Nazi naval code that had been used to sink British ships. On another, it is a strange thing indeed, a musical comedy about war in which the hero is a sympathetic clown who exists outside of traditional notions of authority and expertise.

Let George Do It truly flirts with the collective wishes of its audience in its fantasy sequences. At one point in the film, Hepplewhite is duped into drinking poison, which causes him to have a fever dream. This sequence is clearly demarcated from the rest of the causal narrative thanks to bookending dissolves that segue from Hepplewhite's prostrate body to the space of his dream. In his dream, Hepplewhite rescues love interest Mary (Phyllis Calvert) from captivity, visits heaven, and later returns to England in order to mount a one-man mission to Germany. Hepplewhite's dream is to end the war early, on personal terms. He flies a dirigible over Nuremberg, lands during a Nazi rally, charges the stage, and begins pummeling Hitler as other Nazi soldiers scramble.

For Jeffrey Richards, this is a key visual image of the war years (he notes that the sociological survey Mass Observation ranked it as a demonstrable "morale booster"): "It was the visual encapsulation of the People's War

with the English Everyman flooring the Nazi Superman" (1997, 261). Yet, this contingent hope—this wishful means of suddenly ending the war—has to be bracketed off from the rest of the movie. The slapstick brutality of the sequence is thematically uncharacteristic for Formby's star persona. Rather than stand as a typical or pedestrian comic moment, it emerges as a disruptive, eruptive wish.

Aesthetic inconsistency, or the blending of seemingly incongruous forms, remains an under-discussed aspect of war representation. There is an obvious homologous reason: the dominant view of war films is that they express unity (whether at the level of the squad or the nation), a fact doubled by their consistency of presentational style. A justifiably celebrated film in this vein, though one more often couched in *auteur* discussion than those of genre, is *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger), a film about the afterlife of a war pilot (David Niven) who stands trial in heaven to determine if he can be sent back to the land of the living to be with his love (Kim Hunter). Mixing three-strip technicolor and black and white (to differentiate earth, seen in color, and heaven, rendered in monochrome), the film explicitly connects wartime sacrifice to the legacy of the nation—and in this way, it is conventional—but does so by plunging headlong into a fantastic world where transit between life and the afterlife happens by walking up a big stairway. Although very different in look, another hybrid film made for propaganda purposes is the earlier *The Big Blockade* (1942, Charles Frend), a curious mixture of didactic documentary about economic strategy and sketch comedy, one that combines a nominal plot, comic bits, and intermittent actuality footage, all explained through on-screen narration. This is a film about the importance of supply chains and economics on a macro-scale. It is wholly the stuff of a technocratic war dominated by logistics, but is precisely the kind of strange and unclassifiable movie about war that hardly rates in larger discussions (Edgerton 2011, 158–159).

One trend in war representation after 1956 is a noticeable move toward overtly tragic, existential, and cynical stories. Whereas a hopeful consensus underpins dominant accounts of war in British cinema, a sense of despair, defeatism, atomization, and distrust is quite new. A good example of this tendency is *The Hill* (1965, Sidney Lumet), a film about a British army prison located in North Africa in charge of insubordinate or A.W.O.L. soldiers during World War II. The camp, ostensibly overseen by old-school disciplinarian R. S. M. Bert Wilson (Harry Andrews), is undergoing a crisis caused by the sadistic Sergeant Williams (Ian Hendry), who taunts, beats,

and overworks to the point of death the men under his command. Prisoner Joe Roberts (Sean Connery), a "good" soldier who winds up in jail for refusing the misguided orders of a superior officer, stands up to Williams.

The film is entirely concerned with the dark underbelly of the British military: racism, classism, outdated ethics, blackmail, cronyism. Lumet imagines the proceedings with a startling clarity. Filmed in crisp black and white, much of the action takes place in the prison yard, which is invariably shot in deep focus with a strong awareness of the bustling spaces beyond.[4] The camera, which is frequently mobile and often on a crane, dwells on the pain of the prisoners under Williams even as it picks up the exercises, punishments, and reeducation of the other prisoners in the background. In the interior scenes, Lumet's camera eschews conventional medium shots and instead often isolates bodies in uncomfortably tight close-ups (Fig. 1.1).

Like his film of holocaust remembrance *The Pawnbroker* (1964), *The Hill* is an ostensibly realist story that breaks rank with stylistic conventions to accentuate the psychological instability of the world it depicts. The film ends tragically, with Roberts beaten out of submission and Williams, who

Fig. 1.1 *The Hill* (1965): Deep focus on punishment and pain

[4]The Pressbook notes that the film was shot near Almeria, Spain, and that 500 men were required to build the set that served as the prison stockade location (on top of what was already in place at the location). See Bill Douglas Cinema Museum Item 89116.

seems to be about to face justice, beaten by prisoners (hardman McGrath [Jack Watson] and Jacko King [Ossie Davis]) while Roberts implores them to stop. This is an attitude toward war that did not exist publically during wartime: a cynic's view of a broken institution that will not change with the times and is doomed to fail.

Although there is a longstanding history of combining comedy and war on the British screen, some kinds of comedy serves to normalize dominant experience. The massively popular television series *The Army Game* (ITV, 1957–1961) and the phenomenally successful *Dad's Army* (BBC, 1968–1977), about National Service and the Home Guard respectively, are occasionally critical of the institutions they depict, yet often retain the sense of duty, belief in the virtues of military service, and sense of patriotism below the funny veneer of slapstick and endearing incompetence. Increasingly self-reflexive and politically critical comedy about war and Britain's military culture offers key insights on changing social attitudes.

In the "Beyond the Fringe" revue, the 1960 comedy stage show that launched the careers of Jonathan Miller, Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett and Peter Cook, the "Aftermyth of War" sketch lampooned the cliched social types used most frequently in film and television versions of World War II (effeminate Germans, clueless upper-class ladies, inarticulate working-class gardeners), in the process using the chronology of the war to frame a series of sketches that exaggerate and deflate aspects of wartime experience (the blackout, shelters). The most sustained engagement with war of any comedy team probably belongs to Monty Python's Flying Circus (Katarzyna Malecka finds that their work constantly grapples with "the army, soldiers, war, violence, and horror"), whose television show (1969–1974) and films invert and deconstruct typical aspects of war remembrance and visualization (2011, 16). In "The Funniest Joke in the World/Killer Joke," an extended sketch from the first episode of the television series, writer Ernest Scribbler (Michael Palin) concocts a joke that is so funny that he dies upon reading it. This is treated as a weaponizable invention, and the British establishment soon takes it upon itself to isolate and translate the joke into German, to test it, and to put it into the field. The sketch brilliantly mimics the public discourse of technology and weaponry of World War II, in the process demonstrating the arbitrariness of propaganda rhetoric. The sketch is a strange combination of television news reportage (the interviews with the police who discover and attempt to recover the dangerous joke), documentary, action-thriller (the Gestapo interrogation scene), and combat picture

(in which soldiers run around reciting the joke in lieu of firing bullets). Elsewhere, Monty Python delights in exposing military characters to disruptive forces from the world at large. In the "Army Protection Racket" sketch, Dino and Luigi Vercotti (Terry Jones and Michael Palin, playing a pair of East End gangsters vaguely modeled after the Kray twins) threaten an army officer with vandalism of tanks and equipment unless he pays them a protection fee. The inversion of masculine power makes the premise work: the army, traditionally the protector of the nation, is now so hobbled that it has to bow to two-bit thugs. Moreover, in line with the group's general dissatisfaction with the formal constraints of short-form comedy, the sketch ends with the officer breaking character and drawing attention to how he is ending the sketch because he has not had any good lines. Beyond the Fringe and Monty Python, perhaps the most iconic and influential sources of intellectual comedy of the day, revisit the war and regard the military with a previously unprecedented sense of subversive playfulness.

Beginning in the late 1950s, British film and television representations of war focus increasingly on occluded, abstracted, simulated, or historically counterfactual (speculative "what if") stories.[5] Some of these films do not even attempt to show war *as it happened in history*, but instead speculate on the symbolic buildup around war, offering insight into the rituals around its waging, or around the possible outcomes of imagined courses for war. A good example of this trend is Peter Whitehead's *Benefit of the Doubt* (1967), a documentary about theatrical director Peter Brook's anti-Vietnam play *US*. In *US*, Brook uses confrontational, anti-naturalistic theatrical techniques such as chanting, actors formed into expressive tableaux, gesture, and dance instead of direct actions to de-naturalize the necessity of America's involvement in Vietnam. The play makes no attempt to depict war in anything approaching a true-to-life way, instead making seem an alien and abhorrent enterprise. Whitehead's film interviews cast and crew about their commitment to critiquing US imperialism and employs an inquisitive camera that brings the spectator right into the performance space of the play.[6]

[5] For a general overview of the historian's recourse to the game of counterfactual narratives, see Niall Ferguson's *Virtual History* (1998).

[6] The anonymous *Variety* reviewer of the film found this deliberate attempt at rendering the play cinematic to be largely unsuccessful. See "*Benefit of the Doubt Review, Variety, 1967*" (2011, 341–342).

This is a distanciated recreation of war that reads loud and clear as critical commentary while using only the minimal iconographic or behavioral attitudes normally found in war representation.

Another film, this one an explicit exercise in war as an imagined historical launchpad, is *It Happened Here* (1965, Kevin Brownlow), the remarkable alternative history story that imagines what would have happened if Britain had been invaded by Nazi Germany. Hitler's "Operation Sea Lion" outlined how a Nazi invasion would have been executed, but a variety of factors, ranging from required buildup for Operation Barbarossa and the drive toward Moscow, and the relative success of the Battle of Britain, meant that it never materialized (Fleming 1957). Set in 1944 in an alternate timeline for the war, the film concerns Pauline (Pauline Murray), an Irish nurse who reluctantly joins with the British fascist collaborators in order to be allowed to practice her trade. *It Happened Here* displays, often through implied offscreen hints like radio broadcasts, propaganda posters, and snippets of conversation, how the Nazi hold on Britain is fraying in the face of a new resistance movement aided by US entry into the war (in the world of this film, this does not happen until 1943). The film demonstrates Pauline's "education" into fascism and her subsequent disgust. Director Kevin Brownlow used some actual fascists in the making of the film and turned the camera and microphone to them. David Robinson suggests that in giving these people a place to publicize their views, "Fascism would condemn itself out of its own mouth" (Robinson, in Brownlow 2007, 16). *It Happened Here* uses an aspiringly realist style—handheld camerawork from Peter Suschitzky, with lots of lingering close-ups on faces, drab lighting schemes that reflect destitute surroundings, and authentic locations—but dwells on moments of terrible fantasy. The centerpiece to the film is contained in a newsreel projected in the film's diegesis called *The Mirror of the World*, a work of propaganda that shows footage of uniformed Nazis marching around Whitehall and Westminster and, in the most shocking moment, holding a rally in the middle of Trafalgar Square. According to John C. Tibbetts, the film contains no "B" roll or "found" World War II footage, but instead features a dazzling array of 16-mm and 35-mm shots of combat, military uniforms, period-correct vehicles and assorted paraphernalia, all staged specifically for Brownlow (2007, 231). Military advisor Andrew Mollo brought reenactors and collectors together to outfit this otherwise low budget film.

On the whole, *It Happened Here* is very downbeat: as Pauline sees more and more of the evils of fascism and is sent to a rural hospital that euthanizes

patients on a mass scale. Upon leaving (the film implies that she escapes), she is "captured" by resistance forces and begins to treat their wounded. The film ends with untold death and destruction engulfing the country.

In line with British cinema's turn to distanced and simulated representations of war is the move toward grappling with the atomic bomb. The bomb was everywhere in British life of the postwar period: in literature, on the news, on radio, and especially on film and television screens. From big-budgeted films by major studios like *Dr. Strangelove* (1964, Stanley Kubrick) to television documentaries like *Advice to Householders* (1964, Nicolas Alwyn: a series of programs explaining civil defense procedures in the event of an imminent attack), the bomb was discussed at many levels. For instance, *A Short Vision* (1956, Joan and Peter Foldes), a poetic, animated film about the bomb, was funded by the BFI Experimental Film Fund, one of the most prolific incubators for short films by young filmmakers of the twentieth century (Dupin 2003). Their evocative warning about the effects of nuclear inferno on the environment would be taught in schools for years to come.

A Short Vision is a series of sequentially ordered paintings animated through languid editing, accompanied by spoken text from James McKechnie and music by Mátyás Seiber. The film depicts how animals react to the coming of a bomb which, to the slumbering population of humans, "came unnoticed, uninvited." The somewhat peaceful, idyllic beginning is supplanted by an extended sequence of unflinching horror: the bomb hits, and a man melts, his eyes popping and then exploding, leaving only empty sockets that soon fill with blood. Within seconds, his skull cracks from the heat, collapsing in on itself. According to the reviewer in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, who uses characteristic British understatement, "the horror of the subject is presented quite unflinchingly" (1956, 86).

In place of a hopeful, justified, winnable, and supportive narrative about war, these films signal a whole neglected tradition of thinking about war and the military, a challenge to a genre and its attenuate rhetoric long considered the preserve of masculine certainty. In the postwar period, war and a glorious military are not just something recollected in tranquility or mobilized to recruit a new generation of men to serve national goals. They are a contentious aspect of Britain's participation in wider discussions about the functions of film and television in society, the stakes of historical remembrance, and the limits of new discourses of socialist consensus, egalitarianism, and the empire's relation to feelings of cultural decline.