

Film and the Mechanization of Time in the Myth of the Great War

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MILITARY HISTORIANS CLAIM WITH SOME JUSTICE that, since the 1960s, the Western Front of 1914 to 1918 has been partitioned into a “Western Front of history” and a “Western Front of literature and popular culture,” the latter being “profoundly unhistorical” (Badsey 51, 39). Much of the blame for this state of affairs is fairly placed on “Paul Fussell’s very influential book of 1975, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, which has played a major part in the teaching of war literature. “In particular,” Stephen Badsey claims, “Fussell and his followers argue that the Western Front can only be understood as a uniquely *unhistorical* event, taking place outside time” (43). Brian Bond more generally blames “teachers of English rather than history,” who “still have more influence in the shaping of views on the First World War, through the teaching of war poetry, and from a narrow selection of poems, especially those of Owen and Sassoon” (*Unquiet* 88).

I largely agree with Bond about the necessity and justice of Britain’s participation in the Great War (2–13) and see real merit in his idea that “popular notions of the First World War in general, and Britain’s role in particular, were largely shaped in the 1960s, in part reflecting the very different concerns and political issues of that turbulent decade, but [also]

in part resurrecting ‘anti-war’ beliefs of the 1930s” (51). As a teacher of English and an interdisciplinary scholar of the Great War, I admit to being shocked on occasion by the historical ignorance, not only of students but of colleagues with expertise in Canadian and/or Modern literatures. At the same time, I am troubled by the historian’s uncomplicated reliance on “fact” versus “fiction,” as when Bond takes “the famous official film *The Battle of the Somme*” as clear-cut evidence that “the film helped to give viewers some idea of what war was really like,” strengthening “their resolve to persevere to achieve victory” (13), or when he insists that authors of “war literature” at the end of the 1920s were concerned with “individual experience,” not with the public record (26).

In analyzing the form of *The Battle of the Somme*, I detect a rather different truth in this film because of its embedment in the industrial process. Poets and novelists who were quite bitter about their “individual experience” were no less bitter about a film that hailed the mechanized temporality of industrial assembly and its denaturing of the human body. The cinematic war thus became a synecdoche for vast changes taking place in the mode of production and in the conditions of modern life. Here, it seems to me, military historians will have to do far better than carp at “postmodern” culture (Badsey 43) for popularizing a “myth” of the Great War that “has displaced truth” (Bond 77)—first, by ceasing to privilege the referent over the form in which it appears, and, second, by asking how cultural change may be linked to changes in the mode of communication. In turn, literary scholars will have to take a more dialectical approach to the processes of cultural transformation in order to show how changes in the mode of communication are linked to changes in the mode of production, a method that I failed to consider in previous work.

“The Myth of the War”

According to the British cultural historian Samuel Hynes, the First World War “altered the ways in which men and women thought not only about war but about the world, and about culture and its expressions” (xi). As he sees it, “That change was so vast and so abrupt as to make the years after the war seem discontinuous from the years before, and that discontinuity became a part of English imaginations” (xi). Yet, when Hynes turns to cinema, its cultural impact, like that of print literature in the first decade after the war, looks very traditional. British Instructional Films, the leading producer of film, was set up in 1919 to recreate key military campaigns of the Great War. In works like *The Battle of Jutland* (1921), *Ypres* (1925), *Mons* (1926), and *The Battle of the Coronel and Falkland Islands* (1927),

BIF re-enacted the major battles on sea and land to create a visual record of the war. “*Ypres*, for example, is a history of the Salient from the autumn of 1914 to the final retaking of the ground by the British in August 1918” (Hynes 444). One title, *The Retreat from Mons*, even “had to be changed: *retreat* is not a monumental word. Yet the film remains a story of heroic losing against odds, the sort of story that so dominated boys’ papers and boys’ minds at the war’s beginning” (445). As Hynes admits unabashedly, “One can see the monumentality of these films in their titles alone: they are historical in the traditional sense—narratives about battles and campaigns, rather than about individuals” (444). But then the change in cultural perception was neither so “vast” nor “abrupt” as Hynes had asked us to believe, whether the medium in which that war was represented was film or print. So when and where did this “modern” sense of rupture with the past originate, and in what forms was it manifest?

Hynes finds that the “Myth of the War was given its fullest definition in the years around the end of the 1920s, when the great war memoirs and novels, and the first full edition of the poems of Wilfred Owen, were published” (xii). It is the “sense of radical discontinuity of present from past” that underlies what he calls “the Myth of the War,” a phrase employed “to mean not a falsification of reality, but an imaginative version of it, the story of the war that has evolved, and has come to be accepted as true” (xi). As ever, the villains of the story are the “callous” and “incompetent” generals who sacrificed a whole generation in an unnecessary war that “had ‘meant nothing, solved nothing and proved nothing,’ and in the process had killed eight and a half million men.”¹ Here, then, is the germ of a “Myth” that, for Hynes, “has come to be accepted as true” (xii).

As Brian Bond points out, however, the allied generals followed a steep “learning curve” (*Unquiet* 79) and won an astonishing victory in the face of impossible odds, a fact that is inconvenient for the myth. But “once the war experience has been transformed into ‘myth,’” this “notion takes on a cultural reality of its own impervious to historical *caveats* or objections” (39). This is where both ideological positions—one holding to a “Western Front of history,” the other to a “Western Front of literature and popular culture”—end in stalemate. One camp justly protests that “Myths prevail over historical reality” (Bond 1), while the other rightly points out that “No generation” since the 1920s has questioned the validity of the Myth, which “remains the accepted interpretation of the war” (Hynes xii).

1 Brian Bond, “Passchendaele,” 487, citing the nihilistic conclusion of Leon Wolff.

So what is the point of a myth of futility? Hynes says that it contributed to the way “English culture was transformed, and English imaginations were altered, by what happened between 1914 and 1918.” Still, he views the war mostly as an “agent of change and not as a narrative of military actions” (xiii). Ideology replaces history, as the war novelist Robert Graves frankly admits in suggesting that “propaganda novels” stand or fall on their own terms: “as propaganda they are all the more effective in that they are not dated records but dramatic generalizations” (286). One of the leading mythmakers of the era thus concedes that literature generalizes while history specifies by means of fact. But Hynes counters that Graves says “goodbye to *all* that” in a “general rejection of the past that marks the post-war period,” a “motive that Graves shares with many other ex-soldiers of that time, a decade after the war’s end: the impulse to exorcize the war by mythologizing it” (429). So now a “Myth” of “radical discontinuity” (xi) can “be reduced to two terse propositions: the old betray the young; the past is remote and useless” (xii).

Here, as Hynes admits, a new problem arises, as “the Autobiographical” departs from “the Historical,” splitting the narrative of the war into “the Personal and the General, or the Small Picture and the Large” (425). While the public story for Bond has in fact been overwritten by the personal story, there are other historical forces at work in this idea that “the past is remote and useless,” for each of Hynes’s “two terse propositions” is deduced from Wilfred Owen’s *Poems* (1931), particularly “Dulce et Decorum Est,” which “took its place among the classic myth-making texts, as the truest and most sensitive record in verse of a modern poet’s war” (Hynes 437). What Hynes fails to remark, however, is that “Dulce” actually rejects the culture of the public grammar school. It is the classical poetry of Horace and the culture of imperial Rome that are the real antagonists in Owen’s double sonnet; for the Latin tongue and the colonizing ideals of antiquity continue to inform “The Old Lie” taught “To children ardent for some desperate glory.” As I have argued elsewhere, Owen mimics the style of a cinematic newsreel to ground his protest against, as well as his cultural break with, that imperial past: “If ... you too could pace ... And watch the white eyes writhing in his face ... If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood / Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs” (*Media* 119–21). What I ought to have said more clearly is that the “Old Lie” of the public school really looms out of the battlefield in this mimicry of a modern newsreel. In this “film script” of modern warfare—even when “screened” in the medium of chirographic culture—we suddenly see writ large the communicative bias

of the cinematic image—its immediacy, its presentism, its total immersion in the moment, all of which Owen equates with “truth.”

It is such a bias toward the present that Bond takes as “a confirmation ... that the myth has displaced truth,” quoting a review by Hugh Brogan (21) of David Haig’s recent play *My Boy Jack* to censure a younger “generation that has succumbed to sentimentality and ‘presentism,’ that is, inability to grasp that different values prevailed in the past” (Bond 77). Neither the military nor the cultural historian, however, seems aware of the intrinsic bias toward the present in the presentation of films and stage plays. Hynes sees only a heap of fragments, for example, in *The Battle of the Somme*, a hidden result of the war’s assault on perception. Finding formlessness as well in the memoirs of Robert Graves, Vera Brittain, and Siegfried Sassoon, Hynes reduces not just film but print narratives to merely “disjunctive memoirs for a disjunctive time, parts of the myth of disruption and fragmentation that is the Myth of the War” (436). It is now bad form to look to the past.

Hynes’s misreading of the form of *The Battle of the Somme*, however, is symptomatic of a larger failure in his reading of the “Myth.” For “British cinema” at the time was in fact “more Rupert Brooke than Siegfried Sassoon” (Kelly, *Filming* 24). Hynes recalls that, at the premiere of the *Somme* picture, Lloyd George, newly appointed Secretary of State for War, had called it “the war’s epic” in a letter “projected on the screen,” both then and “at all subsequent showings” (Hynes 122–22). No one who was present at these screenings was likely to have agreed with Hynes that “there is no real battle, armies don’t meet, no advance is visible, nothing really *happens*” or that what we see is simply “masses of men and materials, moving randomly through a dead, ruined world towards no identifiable objective; it is aimless violence and passive suffering, without either a beginning or an end—not a crusade, but a terrible destiny” (125). Hynes, of course, is bent on making the “fragmentary” form of cinema a model for “disjunctive memoirs” written “for a disjunctive time” (436). Once we see, however, what form *The Battle of the Somme* actually takes, and how that form is the reverse of Hynes’ myth of fragmentation, the Western Fronts of history and literature enter into another type of historical dialectic.

The Battle of the Somme (1916)

Like most political and military leaders in Britain, Arthur Balfour, Lord of the Admiralty, was deeply hostile to film as an instrument of war, a medium typically identified by the ruling class with lower-class music halls. As he wrote in September 1915 to Admiral Jellicoe of the Grand Fleet, “I

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hate cinemas ... at least as much as you do, but after consulting again with the Government Committee, they have I regret to say persuaded me that it really is of importance to enlighten the public in both neutral countries and among our Allies as to the reality and magnitude of the Fleet" (quoted by McKernan 135). The War Office was only persuaded of "the value and integrity of film" by the persistence of the Kinematograph Manufacturers Association, which drew "attention to the excellent series of films taken during the South-African War" (130), most of which were produced by Charles Urban of the Warwick Trading Company. Urban then founded another company in time to film the Russo-Japanese War, the films of which "were a triumph" (50).

Urban was an Anglo-American who had settled in London in 1897. His Bioscope projector and camera, his "Urban Film Printing Machine," and his "Film Measuring Machine" (46) all made him "the human embodiment" for Britons "of the American technology that he espoused" (12). But it was less his investment in film technology than in "the film of record" (36) that made him a household name in Britain before 1914. McKernan recalls that, "Between 1905 and 1909, over 50 per cent of British film titles were non-fictional, of which half were produced by Charles Urban" (66). Moreover, in *The Cinematograph in Science, Education, and Matters of State* (1907), a fifty-six-page pamphlet written to promote his films as well as his patented equipment, Urban proclaims an unwavering faith in "accurate pictures" (Urban 10)—or, more tellingly, their "scientific accuracy" (12)—in presenting "a truthful and permanent record" (46), whose "accuracy of detail" (48) derives from the "automatic and unerring record" (56) of the machine itself. Urban was evidently predisposed by his own technology to "the film of fact" (McKernan 35), a circumstance which aligns him with "the Western Front of history."

It was also Urban who made the historic decision to edit footage taken on the Somme by Lieutenant Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell in the last week of June and the first day of July 1916, not in the newsreel format to which Malins had been contributing since early January but in a full-length feature production. At its release on 21 August, *The Battle of the Somme* created a public sensation, being viewed by some twenty-one of forty-three millions of Britons within six weeks and setting box-office records that have never been broken (Horrall 208). Part of its genuine appeal was the sense it communicated of being there, of offering an "unerring record" of this historic occasion. As one reviewer wrote in *The Times*,

If anything were needed to justify the existence of the cinematograph, it is to be found in the wonderful series of films of the opening of the British attack on the Somme on July 1 which were shown privately at the Scala Theatre yesterday and which will soon be exhibited in every part of the country. In years to come, when historians want to know the conditions under which the great offensive was launched, they will only have to send for these films and a complete idea of the situation will be revealed before their eyes—for we take it as a matter of course that a number of copies of them will be carefully preserved in the national archives. (*The Times* 11 August 1916)

The “truth” of cinematic seeing is naively assumed in this account, echoing Urban’s own sense of “faithfully reproducing” (47) “an automatic and unerring record” (56).

At the same time, the film had a notably “traumatic effect on people in Britain,”

not because it contained horrific scenes, but simply because the majority of civilians had only the vaguest conception of modern war. Those who were there remember screams from the audience. People had seen pictures in the magazines and the topicals of the elements of the *Somme*—the guns, the troop movements, the trenches, and the explosions—but never had a film shown in Britain contained the full range of permissible war scenes; jammed together, one amazing spectacle upon another, it was a revelation that inspired the highest praise. (Brownlow, *The War* 61)

The cultural historian Andrew Horrall describes a “public frenzy for the film” which

prompted unprecedented reactions from audiences who believed it to be the first “true” representation of how their friends and relatives were fighting in France. In the way they had learned in music hall, cinema and pantomime, audiences expressed pity at the sight of Allied suffering and death, cheered British troops, and screamed abuse during scenes showing German prisoners. Audiences, therefore, responded to *Battle of the Somme* as they had to other topical films. (209)

Indeed, the film appeared to justify a basic principle of Urban’s cinematic pedagogy, that “living pictures” impart “more knowledge, in a far more interesting and effective manner, in five minutes, than does an oral lesson

of an hour's duration," simply by "stimulating the imagination, especially of the visualising eye" (*Cinematograph* 15, 14). Indeed, historical audiences responded much as Abel Gance's fictional villagers would later respond in "The Return of the Dead" sequence in his postwar film *J'accuse* (1919), demonstrating the literal power of cinema to bring the dead back to life.²

These days, such reactions are hard to understand, given the sophistication and refined aesthetic judgment of audiences. As Kevin Brownlow suggestively notes, "Malins has an eye for mass movement, as in a battle painting, with squadrons of troops on the move half a mile from the camera.... What is curious about the film is that it gives the impression of being an outsider's film. It shows everything from a distance—both figuratively and literally" (*The War* 64). More generously, Hynes points out that it was "an impossible task" with heavy equipment that "allowed them no mobility: the camera had to remain stationary while action moved past it. Their lenses were ineffectual for either close-ups or long-distance shots, and all scenes were set in a uniform middle ground" (121). But, Brownlow insists, "there is very little action" (64)—apart, that is, from the recoil of the big guns firing on distant, unseen targets. Worse yet, the enemy is invisible; the Germans appear on screen only as smiling prisoners or as ghastly corpses.

To read the rhetoric of the titles, however, is to witness the War Office's efforts to minimize British losses and to maximize damage to the enemy, as in "British Wounded and German Nerve-Shattered Prisoners Arriving" (49.17). The majority of these titles is reserved for the final quarter of the film to represent the "Effect of British Shell Fire on German Trenches" (59.59); "The Toll of War: German Dead on Field of Battle" (61.23); or "The Devastating Effect of British Shell Fire" (63.40), followed by "The Battered German Strongholds of Fricourt" (65.52). A grim tally of the cost appears in four panning shots that present a "View of the Shattered Village of Mametz" (68.56). For a full minute, the camera does a slow, 360-degree *tour d'horizon* filled with the rubble of broken buildings and jagged splinters of trees. A slow reverse pan ends with a mounted officer riding slowly past the smoking wreckage, as if in stunned silence. What emerges from this catalogue of dubious "victory," however, is a renewed emphasis on patriotic rhetoric, as in "Some of the Booty: German Trench Mortars" (71.02). Even so, nobody wins in the visual record; one begins to

² See my "Spectres of Time: Seeing Ghosts in Will Bird's Memoirs and Abel Gance's *J'accuse*," in which I find, contrary to film's association with "mechanization," the emergence of a "ghost in the machine" of early war cinema, from which quite literally there emerges a fourth dimension of time.

doubt the truth of the intertitles, given “the complete idea of the situation” as it passes before our eyes.

To complicate matters, Urban had cut nine disturbing shots (61.52 following) into the tally of German “costs.” Three are overhead shots of bodies lying as they fell in a trench or in shallow craters, before a panning shot reveals the torn earth pocked with bodies. Two more full shots reveal a body lying beside some sandbags, then scattered bodies lying motionless in the heaving soil. Two final shots focus on a burial detail laying British corpses in a row, before the camera pans over several tommies scooping out shallow graves amidst more corpses. The images, if not the titles, begin, in this halting admission of loss, to look like the unvarnished truth, since they tell a distinctly different story from the rhetoric. Here is one likely source of “the abiding modern memory of the war as tragic” (Hammond 100), given that home-front viewers, wanting “to know the conditions under which the great offensive was launched,” here come face to face with death.

There is also the matter of those ghostly faces smiling as they pass the camera, many of them already dead if somehow alive in flickering images passing in review before the eyes of grieving relatives and friends. As Lloyd-George’s mistress, Frances Stevenson, wrote in her diary of the private screening she attended with the future prime minister, “It was like going through a tragedy.” She had lost her brother Paul in the first days of the battle, and so, like countless other viewers, the film most surely “reminded me of what his last hours were. I have often tried to imagine to myself what he went through, but now I know, and I shall never forget. I felt something of what the Greeks must have felt when they went in their crowds to witness those grand old plays—to be purged in their minds through pity and terror” (Taylor 112).

But those viewers attuned to images more than titles might feel that they had been given “a complete picture of the situation” because the images revealed so much more than the newspapers did about the fact that 19,240 British soldiers died on the first day of the assault, with twice as many wounded, while *The Times of London* was reporting: “‘The Day Goes Well’: Semi-Official Reports: British HQ July 1” (3 July 1916). Even so, the confident tone of the newspaper report differs little from the overall effect of the film, which climaxes in scenes of German prisoners boarding boxcars for transport to Britain. Only in its middle has the film failed to suppress glimpses of the carnage that are nowhere in evidence in the journalist’s report that “Many prisoners have already fallen into our hands, and as far as can be ascertained our casualties have not been heavy.”

As a matter of course, the British High Command denied newspapermen access to the Front because gentlemen in their clubs paid close attention to print, and frank reporting would cost the government support. Films for the ignorant masses were inconsequential, which is why the War Office reluctantly agreed to make Urban's "film of record." But "endorsements" of the film "from Lloyd-George and the King" (Horrall 208) would not be necessary to induce a "better" class of citizen to attend. The pull of those ghostly faces marching cheerily to their deaths, together with the longing of millions to glimpse a familiar face, were so powerful that people of social standing got caught up in the craze, eroding traditional cultural and social barriers in a new equality of seeing independent of the standards of literacy. As the trade reviewer reported for the *Southern Daily Echo* of 2 September 1916, "At times one almost imagined one recognised the face of a friend ... [I]t is as a human document that it will make its strongest appeal to the people. They see their own flesh and blood, these soldiers who march before them, there are thousands of faces, each of which will be recognised by someone!" (quoted by Hammond 115).

The style and narrative structure of the *Somme* picture were not designed, however, as they were in Gance's fictional film to dramatize the "Return of the Dead," which explains in part the negative reception that the film had among British front-liners: "the soldiers' main complaint was its failure to capture the sound of battle" (Gilbert 150). But there was also something like contempt from combatants like Wilfred Owen, writing to his mother how, "Those 'Somme Pictures' are the laughing stock of the army—like the trenches on Exhibition in Kensington" (*Letters* 429). To viewers at home, the film opened a window of fleeting farewell. But "screened for British soldiers at rest areas in France, to provide new recruits with some idea of what they were about to face" (Gilbert 149–50), the film became a "laughing stock"³ for what it said of men as cogs in an industrial machine.

As Michael Hammond points out, the genre to which *The Battle of the Somme* belongs is the "industrial process film [whose] ... structure hinges on the depiction of a process. Primarily associated with industrial process films, this method of narrative followed the production of an object through the series of tasks necessary to its creation" (111). The process is apparent from the first shots of lorries arriving and men unloading artil-

³ Quoting this passage from Owen's letter, though mislabeling it as being to "his sister" (95), Hammond emphasizes "not only the disparity between homefront imagination and those at the front but the private communication of it to those at home" (262, n43).

lery shells. But this industrial process is writ large in a five-part structure to the film, moving from “Materiel” to “Tactical Preparations” in shots of the great barrage in advance of the attack. The third act contains the infamous sequence of “Going Over the Top” (likely faked), before a fourth part renders a “Tally of the Cost.” A fifth and final act displays “The Spoils of War,” or, in the language of one “heroic” title, regiments “Seeking Further Laurels” (79.37), after which the film ends in a long shot of German prisoners marching under guard beside a railway track to waiting boxcars. While Urban fully understood “the need to shape the material to dramatic ends” (McKernan 135), he was keenly aware as well of the War Office’s need to show the BEF in full control, with Germans pictured en masse “Departing Under Escort for Britain” (80.11), the last stage in a carefully designed line of production set up to assemble prisoners of war.⁴

Urban’s public patents for cinematic technology, not to mention his abiding faith in the “scientific accuracy” of the “mechanical record,” made it perfectly logical to show footage from the Front as an industrial process. He was well aware of Henry Ford’s Time-Motion Department and its use of the moving image to analyze waste motion, monitor production, and control “the movement and pace of workers, dramatically increasing productivity and the extraction of surplus value from laboring bodies” (Grieverson 27). Ford’s use of pedagogical films to acculturate his workers to the twin logics of the cinema and the assembly line portrayed car manufacturing as an activity akin to filmmaking. Ford himself had encouraged this comparison by circulating “photographs of the machines that perforate raw film, print positive film, develop negatives, and dry film reels” (31). Ford would likely have purchased some of his machines from Urban, whose “drying room” in Urbanora House in London contained “drums capable of drying 12,000 feet of film per hour,” as well as “rooms for film processing and equipment manufacture” (McKernan 74). In terms every bit as flattering to Urban as they were to Ford, one writer described “a production process from raw film to finished motion picture” at the Ford plant, hailing “the machines’ potential to reproduce negatives like Model T’s rolling off the assembly line” (Grieverson 31). Even the process of assembling images from diverse sources in film editing to create new wholes clearly resembled “the practices established for the mass assembly

4 Here is a better explanation for what Hynes sees as the fragmentation of “a film without a narrative line, made up of disconnected vignettes,” where “war is not a matter of individual voluntary acts, but of masses of men and materials” (124–25), for the assembly of discrete fragments *is* the story of film and industrial production alike.

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of the automobile” (32). The industrial process film wasn’t only a film; film itself was part and parcel of the industrial process.

For such reasons, Urban’s editing of an industrial “epic” in *The Battle of the Somme* was then designed to show viewers at home that the BEF was an efficient and modern going concern, for this form of cinema literally unites content (industrial production) with form (the industrial process film) to present the British Army, industrialism, and the medium itself as heroes of a collective epic. From the early scenes in part 1 of “Munitions Dumps Receiving Vast Supplies” (5.00) in an assembly line of hands, on through titles 9 to 23 in part 2, we see a production line at work in assembling its “goods.” For example, a segment entitled “Meanwhile the 7-inch Guns,” appears on screen for fifty-four seconds at about the ten-minute mark, followed by “6-Inch Howitzers in Action” (eighty seconds), and then “Canadian 60 Pounders” (composed of four shots, the longest of which is a slow, fifty-second panning shot of shells exploding on the horizon). “Meanwhile More Troops” (14.05) arrive in two lengthy head-on shots (twenty-eight and forty-seven seconds), followed by a slow panning shot of a Church Parade (twenty-three seconds). After church, the camera shows off a “Supply of Plum Puddings” in three brief shots, followed by “Firing Plum Puddings from Trench Mortars” and “Bombarding the Germans with 9-inch Howitzers.”

After this chain of activity, a pastoral interlude of “Royal Warwickshires Having a Meal” (19.26)—with nary a “plum pudding” for dessert—comes both as relief and reassurance. At once strange and familiar, it opens with a thirty-four-second panning shot of the Warwickshires waiting in line, as if in a company cafeteria, followed by a full shot of a kitchen detail ladling soup or stew (nineteen seconds). As more men approach with mess tins (nineteen seconds), a straight-cut brings a close-up of seated men holding tins (seventeen seconds), then another panning shot of standing and seated men eating (fifteen seconds), before a final mid-shot of men seated about the fire (eleven seconds). Some twenty-one minutes into the film (the end of part 2), the eye of the viewer is systematically disciplined by this evident order and system of the British Expeditionary Force to put its trust in an overwhelmingly efficient line of production. Or, as the *Ford Times* (July 1916) puts it in describing these twin processes of production in metal and on celluloid, “Discipline, order and system prevail everywhere” and, “as far as possible nothing is left to chance and the human element is eliminated in the making of Ford moving pictures” (quoted in Grieveson 31).

To soldiers under military discipline watching the film in the rest areas of Flanders and Picardy, however, those fleeting images of British corpses

cut into that sequence of havoc wreaked upon the Hun were less reassuring. Even more telling than the images of British dead is the sentimental euphemism of the title, “The Manchesters’ Pet Dog Fell with His Master” (61.39). The melodramatic cliché undercuts the starkness of the visual record that, without violating the dignity of the dead, makes an honest attempt to tally the “victor’s share” of the cost. If the response of home audiences was “predominantly one of silence and respect” (Hammond 117), the reaction of combatants to this scene of neatly ranged corpses was scathing, for images of a burial detail stacking stiffened bodies (62.55) recall that labour detail (5.00) stacking artillery shells. The “old Lie” of an “epic” film is writ large; heroism is reduced to the automatism of the assembly line, where the human body is denatured by a relentless mechanization of time. The industrial process film has let slip more than it intended, framing corpses as the “finished” product of the “assembly line.” Worse yet, the War Office now markets its wares with sentimental nonsense, making a laughing stock of a scene of tragedy. The gap between the two audiences—the home-front viewer and the soldier out on rest—was as vast as the gulf between the speakers of different languages. It would take a novelist to bridge the gap.

Generals Die in Bed (1930)

In tones of reproof quite as scathing as Wilfred Owen had used against the “Old Lie” of “the Somme pictures”—“If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace ... And watch” and “hear”—the narrator of Charles Yale Harrison’s *Generals Die in Bed* (1930) aims to force an audience of laughing civilians in London to see what he has seen on the Western Front: “They should be made to remember” (89), he blusters in anticipation of the cinematic method he will use in his narrative. A combatant novel that “has become a staple of undergraduate, and indeed history courses in Canada” (Vance 35), *Generals Die in Bed* is the work of a Canadian-American soldier invalided out of the war in August 1918, who would later work on the margins of the film industry in Montreal and New York (Williams, *Media* 295–96). A deep mistrust of language informs the story, based on what the narrator forces us to *see*. He makes good on his threat that “they should be made to remember” by mimicking cinematic techniques such as chapter titles that resemble establishing shots, by making straight-cuts between chapters (and even scenes within chapters), and by constantly using present-tense narration where time is reduced to an ongoing present—what might be called the “past-progressive-present tense” of film (Williams, *Media* 5). At the same time, the story is told “in short fragments,”

a method Samuel Hynes takes to be the definitive “narrative model of individual experience in war” in *All Quiet on the Western Front*.⁵ “Nothing here,” as Hynes says of Remarque’s novel, “causes what follows; everything is broken and fragmentary, and the relations between fragments are not logical or causal, but ironic” (426), although he fails to notice the chicken-and-egg nature of this problem of fragmentation.

Ironic as these fragments may be in *Generals*, they are more than the sum of their parts—what Hynes would reduce to the “incoherence” of “individual, autobiographical narratives of war” (427), marking the social shift away from stories of leaders to stories of the led. The process depicted in one scene of troop transport, for example, is intercut and spliced with other scenes of “industrial” process that assume a mocking coherence:

The road becomes rougher. There must have been a battle in this vicinity, for the roads are full of fresh, yellow shell holes. It is impossible to lie down to rest; there is little room and the jolting of the truck is almost unbearable. We recline against the fenced sides of the lorry. We have not stopped for hours.

We defecate from between the bars at the side of the bouncing truck—a difficult and unpleasant task.

We stand, sit, or recline in attitudes of hopeless despair. We are hungry, thirsty—we have smoked our last few cigarettes. A light drizzle begins to fall; there is no tarpaulin covering over the top of the truck. (119–20)

The scene presents an ironic counterpoint to Urban’s scene of “Royal Warwickshires Having a Meal” (19.26), or tommies “Seeking Further Laurels” (79.37), as they march up a dusty road in Picardy, mugging for the camera and cheerily waving their helmets.

Indirect allusion turns to direct reference at the end of this scene where Harrison’s characters talk about assembly lines that are the real model for their “industrial process.” Watching a munitions dump exploding in the distance, the men joke cynically about those who make “a profit on those shells whether they are fired at the Germans or whether they just blow up..’Just think of all the people that’s getting a big hunk of swag out of it. Shoes, grub, uniforms, bully beef” (121), following which, “There is a

⁵ Harrison’s novel, like that of Remarque, first appeared in serialized fragments in magazines during 1928 (Vance, “Soldier” 29; Eksteins, “All” 349), both of them thus pre-dating 1930, that “*annus mirabilis* for the anti-war film” (Kelly, *Filming* 33). An autographed copy of the first edition of *Generals* presented by Harrison to the Imperial War Museum (Record no. 13412) is dated 25 May 1930, well in advance of the general release of Milestone’s film, which “premiered nationally in August” (Eberwein 64).

sudden downpour of rain. We are soaked to the skin. The lorry rumbles and bounces on. We are tossed about like quarters of beef on the way to market” (123).⁶ Soldiers, “we” realize, are also reduced to parcels of “bully beef” for processing on the meatpacking line.

Viewed in this light, other details in the narrator’s story form a harsh indictment of the industrial process celebrated in *The Battle of the Somme*. Even the sexual act is reduced to the efficiency of mass-production, as the queue outside a French bordello “becomes a long silent line of avid men who stare hungrily at the brightly lit door of the house as it opens every now and then and emits a khaki-clad figure which hurries off into the dark. The line moves up one pace” (81). “Out on Rest” further extrapolates this time-motion study: “We are taken from the trenches and march for endless hours to billets. The first day out we really rest. Then begins an interminable routine of fatigues. We march, drill, shine buttons, do guard duty, serve as batmen for the officers, practice grenade-throwing, machine gunnery, and at night we are taken by lorry behind the lines to do wiring and trench-digging. This is called out on rest” (19). Counseled to doubt the doublespeak of military speech, readers are further warned to disregard the visual euphemisms of “A Welcome Rest/ Roll Call” (*Somme* 72.34).

Just as cogent as this cynical mockery of the industrial process is the present tense of a cinematically styled narrative: “It is September and the night is warm,” the narrator says of his arrival at the Front. “We have been warned that the enemy is but a few hundred yards off, so we speak in whispers. It is perfectly still. I remember nights like this in the Laurentians. The harvest moon rides overhead” (8). Without the lamp of the moon to illuminate the image, it would cease to exist: “I try to imagine what Montreal looks like. The images are murky. All that is unreality. The trench, Cleary, Fry, the moon overhead—this is real” (10). In fact, the past has no separate existence outside the past-progressive-present tense of film.⁷ What is unseen is unreal; the only thing that is real is the immediate presence of the image:

So this is war, I say to myself again for the hundredth time.
Down on the firing-step the boys are sitting like dead men.

⁶ Wilfred Owen mocks the same “industrial process” in the opening line of his “Anthem for Doomed Youth”: “What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?” (*Poems* 80).

⁷ “This is partly an expression of that general rejection of the past that marks the post-war period—goodbye to *all that*” (Hynes 429). It is also shaped in part by film’s temporal bias, its presentism.

The thunder to the right has died down. There is absolutely no sound....

From the stories I heard from veterans and from newspaper reports I conjure up a picture of an imaginary action. I see myself getting the Lewis gun in position. I see it spurting darts of flame into the night. (10–11)

In this filmic projection of the narrator's imaginings, neither past nor future has any existence now outside of his voicing of a past-progressive-present tense.

From the opening words of the first chapter, the narrator continues to speak in a continuing present that is simultaneous with events: "It is after midnight on payday. Some of the recruits are beginning to dribble into the barracks bunk room after a night's carousal down the line" (1). At the end of "Recruits," the battalion boards a train bound for the transport ships: "The boys lie like sacks of potatoes in the red plush-covered seats. Some of us are green under the gills. White-faced, we reel to the toilets. The floor is slimy and wet" (6). The next words form the next chapter title, "In the Trenches," eliminating intervening time and space in a cinematic straight-cut that functions as an establishing shot as well as a filmic montage or visual simile, for the train floor in Montreal, "slimy and wet," turns into the muddy floor of a "muddy communication trench" outside what "was once a little Flemish peasant town ... Fry, who is suffering with his feet, keeps slipping into holes and crawling out, all the way up. I can hear him coughing and panting behind me. I hear him slither into a water-filled hole" (7).

In similar fashion, the chapter titles in *Generals* do the work of Urban's intertitles, enabling the narrative to mimic cinema. Cutting from "Recruits" in Montreal to chapter 2, "In the Trenches," we follow the narrator and his unit "Out on Rest," then "Back to the Round" in chapter 4, before we go "On Rest Again." The entire narrative follows this sort of cinematic rhythm from "Bombardment" to "Béthune" to "London," where a straight-cut brings us to the site of his leave; then to "Over the Top," where the battalion is torn to shreds, followed by "An Interlude," before we see "Arras" (not the battle but a scene of drunken looting) in the penultimate chapter, only to arrive, in chapter 12, at "Vengeance," an ironic antithesis to the heroic structure of the twelve-book *Aeneid*.⁸

The single difference between the "establishing shot" of silent film and the "camera eye" of this mimicry of cinema are the means used (linguistic,

⁸ Even today, the Roman poem continues to be seen through the "civilized" lens of Brooks Otis's *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (1964).

not photographic) to render the image present. In “Bombardment,” for example, “We sit like prehistoric men within the ring of flickering light which the candle casts. We look at each other silently” (52). Yet this is more than regression to the Stone Age; as the range of German guns zeroes in on them, “The force of the detonations causes, [sic] the light of the candle to become a steady, rapid flicker. We look like men seen in an ancient, unsteady motion picture” (53). The past comes to life again in the grammatical tense of cinema—the present, not the past. To the camera-eye narrator, time is now reduced to a single truth: “Tomorrow we may be dead” (77). Without past or future, the sense of passing time is purely mechanical, like an automated process: “We do not know what day it is. We have lost count. It makes no difference whether it is Sunday or Monday. It is merely another day—a day on which one may die” (14). The cultural critic Andreas Huyssen has shrewdly observed that, “in the wake of the information revolution,” the relationship between past, present, and future is being transformed.” But what Huyssen sees as “the draining of time in the world of information and of data banks,” and hence as a loss of “temporal anchoring” (7–8), was anticipated long ago in the telescoping of past into present by means of the cinematic image.

The only glimpse we get of actual temporal horizons comes in the chapter “On Rest Again,” as the men swim in the Somme. Yet even here, “We never escape this ominous thunder. It is the link which binds us to our future” (37). On cue, a corpse comes floating down the river from the French sector, as if to demonstrate the invasive power of the cinematic image from the past, while reducing the future to a closed film loop of death-in-life. The body, like the film image, also arrives from a distance. But the collapse of distance between viewer and image also mimes the deadly collapse of distance between the German guns and Allied targets now beset by shells. Cinema and its prose equivalent in *Generals* begin to take on something of the explosive force of artillery. When “We have learned who our enemies are—the lice, some of our officers, and Death,” we may well feel that “our persistent and ever present foe” is not “the louse” (23) but the denaturing of time in the past-progressive-present tense of faux cinema.

Harrison’s narrator, who feels tied to “Death” as an ever-present “foe,” also feels interminably traumatized by a shrieking man “at the end of my bayonet” (61). “In this flickering light, this German and I enact our tragedy” (63), the narrator laments, as if to link their personal tragedy to the public level of “flicks.” Later, he will suffer flashbacks as the image returns with all the immediacy of the cinematic image to haunt him: “The image of Karl, he

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who died on my bayonet, seems to stand before my eyes” (70). Eventually, the trauma of a closed and inescapable present leads him to the nihilistic conclusion of so many other war classics that, “The world is shot to pieces. Nothing matters. There are no ten commandments. Let ’er go” (77).

Without a moral ground to stand on, Harrison’s soldiers stoop to looting, then to “mutinous” (119) talk, where the sight of an “ammunition dump blowing itself up” (120) becomes a figure for the entire system of production.⁹ Utterly demoralized by the moral and material “economy” of industrial warfare, the men now descend to an atrocity which is worthy of History Television, if still tendentiously portrayed as the fault of print:

The *Llandoverly Castle*—carrying war supplies—war material [sic]—I see the general reading us the report of the sinking just before the battle of Amiens—I see the bright sun shimmering on his brass ... I remember the funny jerky steps of the prisoners as they came running towards us with their hands held high above their heads—I see the clasped hands lifted over the lip of the shell hole as we fired into it—clasped hands silently asking for pity. (152)

The image of German POWs boarding boxcars at the end of the assembly line in *The Battle of the Somme* is finally savaged in this image of a production line that ends not in captured prisoners but in the slaughter of “beef” in the abattoir.

Haunted by “the return of the dead” in all their cinematic immediacy, the “camera eye” of the narrator is thus helpless to pose the sort of questions that attend the written document.¹⁰ And yet, to print-formed minds, it is usually some form of corroborating or contradicting document that compels belief.¹¹ But to a victim of the production line, such questions are by now irrelevant: “the funny jerky steps of the prisoners” go on running in the cinema of the mind like the ongoing assembly of images on film.

9 In *The Big Show*, Michael Hammond comments on “the spectacle of mass-produced ordnance and destruction” in Urban’s *The Battle of the Somme* in the context of a “commodity form of entertainment” designed to exhibit “the world-wide power of capitalism” in its “industrial efficiency” (114).

10 See Tim Cook’s *Shock Troops* for contradictory accounts in the battalion diary of the “treachery” of “surrendering” German troops (426).

11 See Williams, *Media* (135–37) for discussion of the “lie” involved in Harrison’s retelling of the sinking of the *Llandoverly Castle*.

Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)

If Harrison's cinematic style parodies the industrial logic of *The Battle of the Somme*, the cinematic style of the German Erich Maria Remarque—who was unlikely to have seen a British propaganda film—serves to train a cineaste like Lewis Milestone to realize the full possibilities of film's immediacy and its immersion in the moment. The Hollywood director's decision to film Remarque's global bestseller soon after its German publication (a mere seven months after the first English edition)¹² was facilitated by its abundance of cinematic images. In the scene of fresh recruits undergoing a first attack, for example, Milestone portrays Paul Bäumer staring at “two severed hands gripping barbed wire after an explosion has torn an advancing soldier apart” (Kelly, *Filming* 9), as if to confirm that there is a “distinctly modern dramaturgy of shock” in cinema, relating it to “the other daily ‘shocks’ of modern life” (Gunning 89–90). In the novel, this gruesome image does not appear until much later, where the battle-hardened veteran is less likely to be shocked by the sight, although it still suggests his complete immersion in the moment: “I see one of them, his face upturned, fall into a wire cradle. His body collapses, his hands remain suspended as though he were praying. Then his body drops clean away and only his hands with the stumps of his arms, shot off, now hang in the wire” (112–13). So too, the film's powerful concluding image, although not realized until filming was complete and Lew Ayres (Bäumer) had left the set (Kelly 93), is at least embryonic in the book, if only as a passing irony: “One morning two butterflies play in front of our trench. They are brimstone-butterflies, with red spots on their yellow wings. What can they be looking for here? There is not a plant nor a flower for miles. They settle on the teeth of a skull” (Remarque 127). In the film, Bäumer's immersion in a cinematic moment of beauty gets him killed as he “tries to reach for the butterfly but fails. He then stands and his hand inches towards it. A French sniper shoots and kills him” (Kelly, *Filming* 93). Even abstract images in the novel come to personify the trauma of immersion in the present as an artillery bombardment turns into a monster: “The dark goes mad. It heaves and raves. Darknesses blacker than the night rush on us with giant strides, over us and away” (66).

12 Production of the film “commenced on Armistice Day, 1929” (Kelly, *Cinema* 44), while the book, after a “clever marketing campaign” in Germany, “was published triumphantly on the last day of January, 1929” (Kelly, *Filming* 42). The first English edition, translated by A. W. Wheen, followed in March 1929, the American edition in May, and a French edition in June 1929 (Eksteins, “*All*” 353).

Similarly, Remarque makes use of present-tense narration that works, much as it does in *Generals Die in Bed*, to create a powerful sense of cinematic immediacy.¹³ From its opening scene at mess: “We are at rest five miles behind the front and now our bellies are full of beef and haricot beans,” with its visual immediacy of “The cook with his carrot red head” (Remarque 1), right through to the novel’s final moments: “I am very quiet. Let the months and years come, they can take nothing from me, they can take nothing more. I am so alone, and so without hope that I can front them without fear”(295). Here, Bäumer’s relentless present tense precludes the existence of any past.

In similar fashion, “cinematic” straight-cuts in the novel serve to flatten time and to conflate the past with the present. In a scene of soldiers chatting, Kropp insists that “the ministers and generals of the two countries” should be stripped to their underwear to “have it out among themselves. Whoever survives, his country wins.” Immediately, “The subject is dropped. Then the conversation turns to drill. A picture comes before me. Burning midday in the barrack-yard. The heat hangs over the square” (41). The flashback appears, as it does in cinema, with all the immediacy of a “picture” that “comes before me.” Later, “It is chilly. I am on sentry and stare into the darkness ... the parachute-lights soar upwards—and I see a picture, a summer evening, I am in the cathedral cloister and look at the tall rose trees that bloom in the middle of the little cloister garden where the monks lie buried” (119). The tense of the verb in the cloister of memory simply extends the present tense of the verb in the trench.

This primacy of present over past, and of the image over the word, is directed in large part here against institutional authority, specifically against teachers but more generally against “the world of work, of duty, of culture, of progress,” against “the old men”: “The idea of authority, which they represented, was associated in our minds with a greater insight and a more humane wisdom. But the first death we saw shattered this belief ... We loved our country as much as they; we went courageously into every action; but also we distinguished the false from true, we had suddenly learned to see. And we saw that there was nothing of their world left” (12–13). *We had suddenly learned to see*. Here is the crucial step in the

13 Modris Eksteins writes that “It is indeed possible that the structure of Remarque’s novel was influenced by silent film” (“War” 62). Hynes, while describing the fragmentary form of a novel which “is told ... in short fragments, ninety-two of them by my count,” chooses to align Remarque’s technique with “a narrative model of individual experience in war” (426) rather than with the rise of film as an assemblage of fragments and a dominant mode of communication.

cultural turn away from verbal discourse, or print imaginings, to cinematic vision as a “self-evident” *truth*.

In other respects, Remarque anticipates Harrison’s “take” on the industrial process:

There are rumors of an offensive. We go up to the front two days earlier than usual. On the way we pass a shelled schoolhouse. Stacked up against its longer side is a high double wall of yellow, unpolished, brand-new coffins. They still smell of resin, and pine, and the forest. There are at least a hundred. “That’s a good preparation for the offensive,” says Müller astonished. The others jest too, unpleasant jests, but what else can a man do?—The coffins are really for us. The organization surpasses itself in that kind of thing. (99–100)

No less scornful than the British tommy or the Canadian-American novelist, Bäumer scoffs at the “industrial process”¹⁴ of the High Command: the devil is clearly in the “organization.” The German soldier thus adds his voice to what British tommies would take to be the “truth” of *The Battle of the Somme*—the infantryman is simply a “finished” object in a mode of production whose goal is the production of corpses.

Milestone’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)

Film historians like Andrew Kelly are quick to praise Lewis Milestone’s fidelity to the novel in his adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front*: “Though truncated, and with a straight chronological narrative replacing the flashback structure, the film proved to be a faithful adaptation” of Remarque’s book” (*Cinema* 47). But the cineaste surely improves upon the German novel by the crucial use he makes of an English poem—Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est.” When Kantorek, the schoolteacher cum army recruiter, resorts to “the Old Lie” of Latin poetry and its imperializing project, he unwittingly finds a common denominator between the cultures of the belligerents: “I believe it will be a quick war, that there will be few losses, but if losses there must be, then let us remember the Latin phrase which must have come to the lips of many a Roman when he stood embattled in a foreign land, ‘Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.’ Sweet and fitting it is to die for the Fatherland” (quoted in *Filming* 7–8). Quoting

14 Eksteins argues that Remarque tapped into a widespread “experience of postwar disillusionment and distress” in Germany and elsewhere, rather than to any real “understanding of the actual war experience” (“War” 60), which does not preclude the sense among front-line soldiers and civilians of deep hostility to the industrialization of the war years.

from the screenplay, Kelly describes Paul Bäumer's visit to his childhood schoolroom where his former teacher continues to profess the classical ideal of Horace's ode. Bitterly, his former student warns Kantorek's recruits about "the Old Lie" of their schooling: "I heard you in here reciting that same old stuff. Making more iron men. More young heroes. You still think it's beautiful and sweet to die for your country. Well, we used to think you knew; but the first bombardment taught us better! It's dirty and painful to die for your country. When it comes to dying for your country, it's better not to die at all" (*Filming* 11). Much as Owen had portrayed the Latin grammar school and its teacher as the enemy, Milestone makes Bäumer's flat rejection of classical literature his basis for privileging cinema as a more reliable form of truth.

Kelly further identifies a series of themes and visual conventions that will come to define the anti-war film, based on the sort of "presentism" that is native to film viewing: "It brings together—indeed, helped establish—the classic themes of the anti-war film, book, play and poem: the enemy as comrade, the brutality of militarism; the slaughter of trench warfare; the betrayal of a nation's youth by old men revelling in glory; the incompetence of the High Command; the suffering at home, in particular by women; the dead, and the forgotten men who survived" (*Filming* 158). As Robert Eberwein remarks, these conventions are still used today in anti-war films, a genre built upon the ideas and themes that Milestone translated into visual terms: "The film contains a number of conventional scenes and situations that will recur in later war films" (67), including "oppressive scenes of killing"; the "large meal" where men "sit around, in a pleasantly lazy manner, simply enjoying being alive"; the "poster of a young girl," which prompts the soldiers to "imagine what it would be like to be with her"; "a hospital" where the terrors of a living death are writ large; and the "ghostly parade" at film's end "of dead soldiers superimposed over a shot of a cemetery" (69), recalling (although Eberwein does not do so) Gance's *J'accuse*, shot in the final month of the war. This pioneering work of French cinema had featured soldiers on loan from the army who, after the "shooting" was finished, returned to Verdun where most met their deaths.¹⁵

Arthur Edeson, Milestone's cinematographer, likewise pioneered a new visual style in war films, such as in "his use of the long take," where

15 As Gance recalled, "I wanted to shoot the sequence of the Return of the Dead. These men had come straight from the Front—from Verdun—and they were due back eight days later. They played the dead knowing that in all probability they'd be dead themselves before long. Within a few weeks of their return eighty per cent had been killed" (cited in Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* 614).

the camera is restricted to a confined space, “creating a claustrophobic sense” (70) of bombardment, since escape from the “frame” of exploding shells is impossible. Nor is the viewer allowed to escape from the shell hole where Paul Bäumer is forced to watch a French soldier he has stabbed die a slow and agonizing death. Taking full advantage of the immediacy of the medium to “personalize” the experience of war (Sanders 139), the camera “shoots this protracted sequence in a way that forces us to observe the face of the dying and then dead man. We cannot turn away, much as we would like to, just as Paul is trapped in the trench with his victim and silent accuser” (Eberwein 71). Furthermore, there is “a characteristic camera movement throughout the film”; when the camera pulls back from a “parade of soldiers” passing out of view early in the film, we recognize “a signature shot: showing military activities photographed from the relative safety of an interior space. But the safety of the interiors will increasingly be threatened by what’s outside” (65). The intimacy of the close-up shot and its valorization of individuals devalue the long shots of “films of fact” like *The Battle of the Somme*, exposing the mechanical nature of “epic” panoramas.

Edeson’s cinematography and Milestone’s editing further undercut the industrial logic of Urban’s propaganda film by showing the potential complicity of film technology with the industrial process in denaturing the human body and mechanizing time. In riveting crosscuts, the film director alternates “between panning shots of the attacking forces and static shots of a firing machine gun. Robert Baird suggests: “Milestone joins the clackety mechanization of cinema (camera/projector) to the mechanization of the machine gun, the success of the mechanical camera panning/projecting ironically critiquing the ease of machine-gun panning—a horrible harmony of form with content” (Eberwein 70). Here is a ready-made summation of the role played by Milestone’s film in demystifying the creed of glory, exposing the teleology of the industrial process, and critiquing its resulting mechanical denaturing of time. Much as Owen and Harrison had used print cinematically to undercut the “Old Lie” of writing, Milestone’s *All Quiet* used film to undercut this new “Lie” of an “automatic and unerring” record of mechanical writing with light.

In so doing, Milestone paved the way for Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* (1936) to bring home the lessons of war-time cinema to people who had never seen a battlefield, or endured the harassment of a company sergeant, or heard “The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells” (Owen, *Poems* 80) but who *had* worked on the factory floor, or been harassed by a shop foreman, or been reduced, like Chaplin’s Little Tramp, to a cog

in a huge machine run amok. In bringing the teachings of the war film down to everyman, in dramatizing “the struggle to eschew alienation and preserve humanity in a modern, mechanized world” (Jeffrey Vance 229), Chaplin rendered literal and visible the latency of mechanical temporalities within the work of anti-war poets, novelists, and filmmakers. Thus, a war that had been so costly and difficult to win all too quickly and easily became a lost war in the new, visual state of mind. For once, the medium was in fact the message.

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The 20th century's seminal event, World War II has sprouted its fair share of myths and glaring untruths. Be they fueled by propaganda, politics, national pride, hoaxes, a wish to believe, or simple gullibility, quite a few of WWII's myths and untruths have had the staying power to persist for decades and into the present, even after being debunked. Even after the debunking, contents of the Hitler Diary still surface from time to time to support this, that, or the other thing. Following are 12 of World War II's more persistent myths. Hitler's "Diary" in Stern Magazine. The reason it did not start earlier, goes the myth, is because Hitler got entangled in the Balkans, invading Greece and Yugoslavia in April of 1941, which delayed the launch of Operation Barbarossa. "Film and the Mechanization of Time in the Myth of the Great War". Military historians have reason to complain that the cultural historian's "Myth of the War has displaced truth." But there is another "truth" that neither side recognizes—that the Great War, won at such cost on the battlefield, was more. Military historians have reason to complain that the cultural historian's "Myth of the War has displaced truth." But there is another "truth" that neither side recognizes—that the Great War, won at such cost on the battlefield, was quickly lost through a change in the mode of communication. "October"—a film difficult both in mission and realization, a film that must communicate to the viewer the powerful pathos of the days that shook the world, that establishes our new approach to filming objects and events, that influences the viewer with filmic art's difficult new methods, that demands sharp and breathless attention—is completed. Now the viewer will be the judge! ("In the Battles for October"). The newspaper Pravda grandly announced: "100 cinemas in the RSFSR are simultaneously presenting the revolutionary war film October." After 1933, the film vanished from cinemas, although *The Great War* (Italian: *La grande guerra*) is a 1959 Italian comedy-drama war film directed by Mario Monicelli. It tells the story of an odd couple of army buddies in World War I; the movie, while played on a comedic register, does not hide from the viewer the horrors and grimness of trench warfare. Starring Alberto Sordi and Vittorio Gassman and produced by Dino De Laurentiis, the film won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. Its crew also included Danilo Donati (costumes) and Mario Garbuglia