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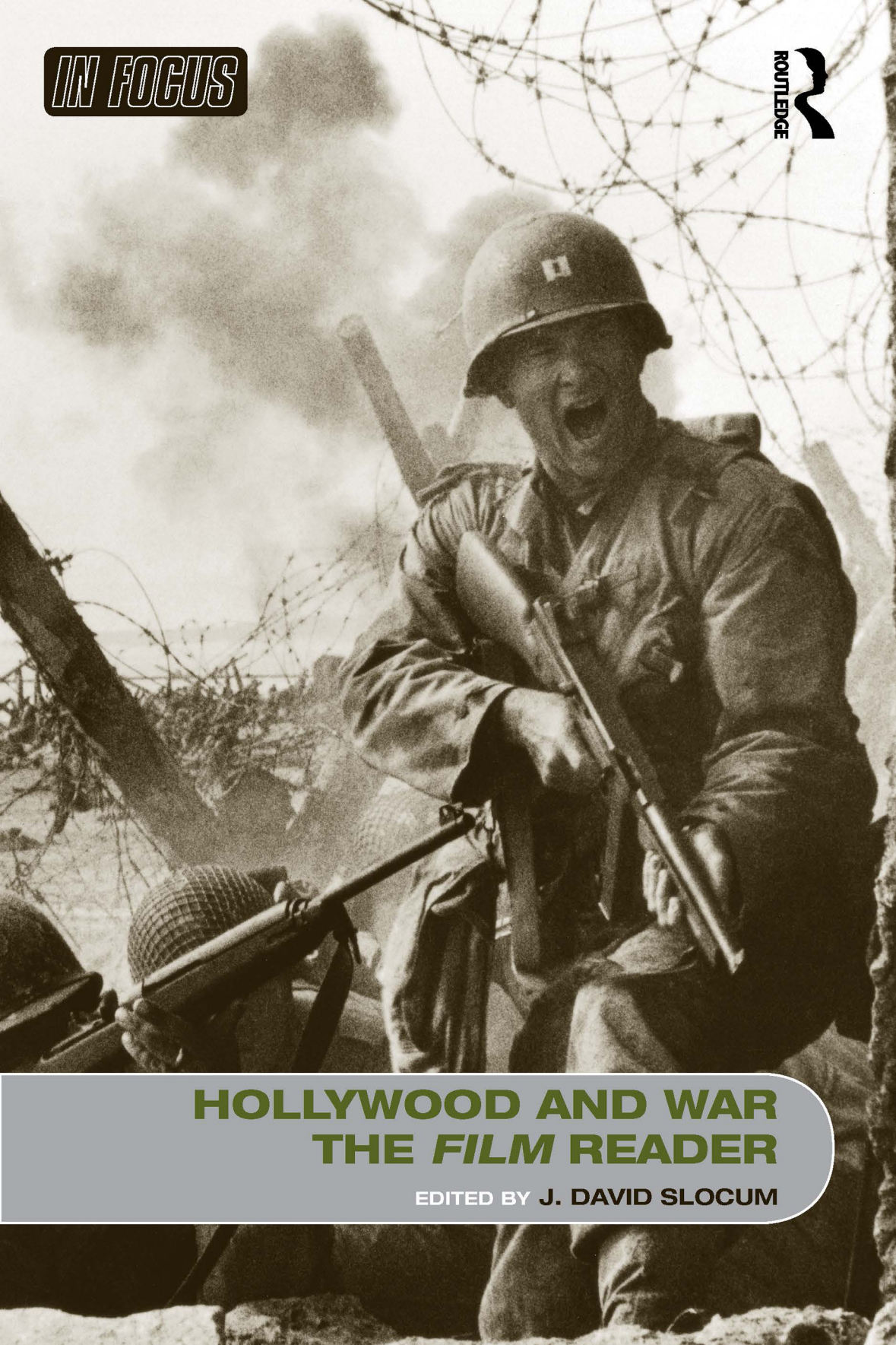

# HOLLYWOOD AND WAR
# THE *FILM* READER

EDITED BY J. DAVID SLOCUM

# HOLLYWOOD AND WAR, THE FILM READER

*Hollywood and War, the Film Reader* brings together key theoretical texts from multiple critical approaches to broaden the reader's understanding of the relationship between war and cinema.

Contributors examine how the images, narratives, and myths that war movies provide have been pivotal to America's social, political, and economic development since the late nineteenth century.

The reader is divided into five thematic sections, each with an introduction by the editor:

- **War as a way of seeing** examines the way we think about and process images, and how this may depend on representational media practices, and the depiction of war on screen, both politically, and morally
- **Early formations of war cinema in the United States** considers the history of war cinema, with special reference to World War I and the Spanish-American war.
- **The apotheosis of the Hollywood war film** discusses how movies have been used as propaganda, and looks closely at World War II cinema.
- **Shadows of ambivalence** analyses war in the modern period, in Vietnam and Korea, and looks closely at antiwar and brainwashing film.
- **Hollywood and war: contemporary formations** draws the collection to a close by bringing the reader to the present, and situating war cinema within the media arena where representation fights reality

These essays uncover the ongoing relationship between Hollywood and war, and are essential reading for any student investigating cinema, politics and history.

**Contributors:** Jeanine Basinger; Jean Baudrillard; Gregory D. Black; Lynda Boose; Robert Burgoyne; James Castonguay; John Whiteclay Chambers II; Leslie Midkiff DeBauche; Thomas Doherty; Bernd Hüppauf; Michael Isenberg; David E. James; Douglas Kellner; Geoff King; Geoffrey Klingsporn; Clayton R. Koppes; Lary May; Steve Neale; George H. Roeder, Jr.; Melani McAlister; Michael Rogin; Michael Ryan; Thomas Schatz; Pierre Sorlin; J. David Slocum; Paul Virilio; Charles Young; Marilyn Young; Slavoj Zizek

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# HOLLYWOOD AND WAR,
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# Contents

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2. Geoffrey Klingsporn, "War, film, history: American Images of 'real war,' 1890–1925." © Geoffrey Klingsporn 2006. Used with permission of author.

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# General Introduction: Seeing Through American War Cinema

J. DAVID SLOCUM

This volume explores America's "war cinema" as a discursive formation constituted and sustained through complex relationships among individual motion pictures, filmmaking as a major American industry and cultural institution, and militarization and national security as recurrent, if shifting, aspects of U.S. social life. Contributors here examine how mass cinema has reflected and shaped wide-ranging changes in American life wrought by militarization and a preoccupation with war in the twentieth century. Crucial to those processes of reflection and shaping is the very use of the word "war": especially in the era of continuing "small wars," insurgencies, and regional conflicts, it is necessary to recognize that "war" is a negotiated category, indeed a kind of social institution, that confers status to some organized behavior or collective conflict yet withholds it from other violent situations (Allen 1999). Such a basic problem of classification for political scientists or international relations scholars extends to film and media scholars whose analyses range from narrative forms and genres overtly involving military combat to the processes of psychological, informational, and technological mobilization and control that are arguably ongoing in a modern society defined by violent conflicts.

The claim here is neither that all attitudes, behaviors, and representations in modern life should be subsumed under the term "war," nor, conversely, that all films or film industry operations are intrinsically related to militarization and conflict. It is, however, to assert that important, guiding, and sometimes defining linkages have existed since the late nineteenth century between the development of military technologies and the repeated mobilization of U.S. society *and* the evolution of cinema as a representational technology, commercial enterprise, and cultural institution. Consequently, following historian Michael S. Sherry's use of the term militarization as "the process by which war and national security became consuming anxieties and provided the memories, models, and metaphors that shaped broad areas of national life," the suggestion is that American cinema has played an ongoing and privileged role in that process (Sherry 1995: xi). To shed light on that process entails, moreover, the scrutiny not only of visual symbols or storytelling patterns but a whole range of narrative and discursive practices that resonate with, and correspond to, the approaches adopted by individuals and society to engage the world of social and, especially, political relations and conflicts. Again, this is not meant to imply that a monolithic framework for understanding war has been imposed by and through Hollywood productions. Rather, the goal of this volume is to provide ready access

to classic writings about U.S. war cinema and, through them, to submit that the images, narratives, and myths this cinema provides have been pivotal to the nation's film, social, political, and economic histories since the late nineteenth century.

Images and narratives of war have been consistent staples of U.S. film production since the emergence of motion pictures. As Robert Eberwein has recently written, from the earliest films of the Spanish-American War, productions documented events related to military conflicts and their effects on combatants and others, reenacted decisive or affecting events, created stories about what happens before, during, and after combat, and advanced political and ideological claims about military action (Eberwein 2004). These films also emerged from the complex institutional relations between Hollywood and the U.S. military, government, and American society that have been continually reproduced and recast from the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II, through the Korean War and Vietnam to conflicts in the Gulf and the current war against terrorism. By examining these cinematic, historical, and institutional relations, the contributions here illuminate how the tensions pervading more than a century of war cinema have consistently constructed and contested our predominant cultural "ways of seeing" war on screens and in the actual world. Put differently, the production of, and perceptual processes shaping, military images and narratives on screen are approached as being intrinsically related to U.S. political involvement in actual violent conflict. Since war is the most overt illustration of how violence is deployed by the modern nation-state in the name of order and civilization, the framing of such deployment in motion pictures has far-reaching implications for how we understand military events and the people, societies, and nations participating in them.

A necessary opening question in popular and critical responses has concerned the classification of productions and what constitutes a war film or war cinema, especially during wartime. Generic norms are crucial to the organization and experience of cinema. Film genres "represent an aesthetic and social contract between audiences and filmmakers," and provide, in Matthew Bernstein's pointed formulation, "the most revealing link between film and society" (Bernstein 1999: 3). Yet by nature, genres are subject to revision and subversion. They require ongoing revision to remain culturally relevant; and it is precisely the tension between normative structures and variations that enables genres to exist and evolve. The refiguration of genres, both aesthetically and socially, has been especially pronounced and active in times of national crisis and has consistently relied on dynamic on-screen representations. Genres thus evolve in ways identifiable from changes in the relationships between viewers, Hollywood, and the broader society. In fact, elements more typically associated with other genres, including epic, historical, Western, espionage, foreign correspondent, genocide, and even comedy films, are also often central to the analysis of war cinema and blur or complicate the process of classification. As critical viewers have sought greater clarity of understanding of individual films through comparative reference to generic groupings, such categorizing remains slippery and often politically determined by assumptions about what war is in the first place. Through these critical debates, however, it has been the combat experience of World War II—what Thomas Schatz called "Hollywood's military Ur-narrative"—that has remained at the heart of most models and historical understandings of the Hollywood war film as genre and war cinema as discourse (Schatz 2002: 75). The nature of the enemies of the United States and of battle in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first may have changed and prompted modifications in the cultural understanding of militarization and national security, in other words, but the experience of the Second World War, particularly as imagined in Hollywood cinema, has remained formative.

Steve Neale spells out the basic parameters of the war film genre in his contribution here: "war films are films about the waging of war in the twentieth century; scenes of combat are a requisite ingredient and these scenes are dramatically central" (Neale 2000: 125). Such focus on Hollywood war films typically involves only a narrow range of productions and historical and cultural concerns inordinately focused on the experiences of World War II and Vietnam. Often excluded from direct consideration as "war films" are productions about historical (i.e., pre-cinema-era) battles, including the Civil War, the wartime homefront, the Holocaust, and the Cold War. The contemporary war on terrorism, one without major, conventional battles or state antagonists, presents its own challenges for categorization, as Melani McAlister notes in her contribution here on the idea of "the war without end." One result of these difficulties is that the vision of war fostered by Hollywood dwells on actual combat even as the experience of wartime of most filmgoers in the U.S.—and beyond—during the twentieth-century has been much broader and embraces the homefront, varied industries and institutions, and, ultimately, attitudes and beliefs about war itself.

To proceed with an examination of how films about combat relate to the broader society and wider experiences of military conflict assumes that Hollywood produces more than entertainment for passing consumption. Indeed, the wider assumption here is that the cinema is a social institution that both reflects and shapes the ways we see and understand the world and our role and place within it. Hardly a straightforward process, the cinematic medium has obviously evolved over the last century, prompting enormous changes, for instance, in film industry relations with the government and military. In parallel there has been an extraordinary evolution in storytelling and viewing practices, special effects technologies, ideas about realism and aesthetics, and the politics and economics of production, distribution, and exhibition. While the following pages primarily focus on narrative productions in order to analyze the complex relationship between the U.S. film industry and military, political, and historical events, many of the issues raised are both relevant to and, in turn, illuminated by close attention to other film and media forms, including documentary, photography, and journalism. An aim of this volume is to demonstrate how narrative films made by the U.S. film industry for mass viewing capture and construct broadly relevant ways of seeing wars and shaping experiences of faraway events and military conflicts.

## A brief history of U.S. War combat films

To explore cinematic and cultural understandings of war, the writings collected here focus on battlefield combat, the site of the predominant American visual experience of war, and the tensions and ambivalences around it. Photography was a major precursor to the visual experience afforded by cinema and the understandings of military conflict from the mid-nineteenth century of the Crimean War and the U.S. Civil War were formative for filmmakers and audiences alike. Also inherited from earlier representational forms like literature were longstanding myths and narratives of war like the camaraderie and male-bonding that emerge in battle, the expression of moral and political beliefs through actions on the battlefield, and the values associated with democracy, civilization, home, family, and femininity in whose name fighting is often undertaken.

The Civil War occupies an uneasy yet unavoidable place in the history of U.S. war cinema. Waged from 1861–1865, the conflict itself obviously predated the emergence of cinema. Yet the

war was memorably documented in still photography that contributed technologically to the emergence of the new medium of motion pictures three decades later. As Geoff Klingsporn argues in his contribution here, the continuity between the two media appeared not only in visual iconography but complex social and economic changes related to the consumption of amusements. Compared with productions about other conflicts, relatively few films about Civil War battles have been made. In 1911, D.W. Griffith made *The Battle*, possibly the earliest motion picture featuring combat from the war between the states. His racist epic about the war and the era of Reconstruction, *The Birth of a Nation*, followed four years later and demonstrated the possibility of large-scale battle sequences and their box office potential as the U.S. film industry was consolidating narrative film production practices as well as distribution and exhibition arms (in the midst, recall, of World War I). Thematically, Griffith's film celebrated ideas of heroism, chivalry, and gallantry in combat and on the homefront that would become standard in later productions. Among later major films about the war are the 1939 epic *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming), the 1951 anti-war picture (and box-office flop) made from the Stephen Crane novel, *The Red Badge of Courage* (John Huston), the critically well-received *Glory* (Edward Zwick 1989), *Gettysburg* (1993) and *Gods and Generals* (2003, both Ronald F. Maxwell), and *Cold Mountain* (Anthony Minghella 2003).[1]

Pivotal in the emergence of cinema in the United States, as Jim Castonguay's essay here details, was the Spanish-American War of 1898. Most of the motion pictures about the conflict were exceedingly brief and no films were made of actual combat in Cuba. Many of the images therefore were reenactments of known events like *Roosevelt's Rough Riders* (1898), portraying a charge by the famous horse soldiers (though actually shot by Biograph in Tampa). Other films, like the *Burial of the 'Maine' Victims* (1898), photographed by Edison in Havana harbor, showed the emotional aftermath of well-known events. Another grouping of films presented scenes of general military experience; the appearance of the three-minute *Love and War* (James H. White 1899), a tale of parents worrying about their son at war, his injury in battle, and eventual return home to a girlfriend has been called the "earliest surviving narrative film about the war" (Eberwein 2004: 3). Still other productions were patriotic entertainments, like *Raising Old Glory Over Moro Castle* (Edison 1899), that captured some of the developing power of cinema both as a "visual newspaper and as propaganda" (Musser 1990: 261).

Motion picture technologies and storytelling practices developed rapidly in the years leading up to World War I. U.S. audiences had seen newsreels of the Mexican Revolution and documentaries from the European war. During the war years (1914–1918), films reflected popular sentiments that ranged, early-on, from remaining isolated from the conflict "over there" (*On the Belgian Battlefield* [1914]) to being prepared for American entry (*The Battle Cry of Peace* [J. Stuart Blackton 1915]) to later demonizing German aggression (*The Kaiser, Beast of Berlin* (1918) and supporting American boys (*The Unbeliever* [Alan Crosland 1918]). Whatever their ostensible politics, the eventual features dealing with combat—be they pacifist epics (*Civilization* [Thomas Ince 1916]) or patriotic romances (*Hearts of the World* [D.W. Griffith 1918])—relied on increasingly standardized storytelling forms. In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson created the Committee on Public Information (the "Creel Committee") to coordinate the presentation of information to the public and to shape its opinions and emotions. Such close relations with the government, as well as the lack of competition from European filmmakers during the war, helped U.S. cinema to consolidate industrially and expand its social place and global reach.

Immediately after the armistice, films about the war almost completely disappeared. By the mid-1920s, several major productions, including *The Big Parade* (King Vidor 1925), *What Price*

*Glory?* (Raoul Walsh 1926), and *Wings* (William A. Wellman 1927), revisited the war and, despite showing camaraderie and patriotism, conveyed disenchantment with war's horrors. In 1930, Lewis Milestone directed the antiwar masterwork, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, from Erich Maria Remarque's novel. Around the same time occurred one of the crucial transitions in the history of cinema, to sound movies, enabling filmmakers to enhance their portrayal of battle with the sounds of gunfire, explosions, and anguished voices. Sound amplified the experiences of the aerial dogfights in Howard Hughes' *Hell's Angels* (1930) and the futility of combat in Howard Hawks' drama of trench warfare, *The Road to Glory* (1936). Productions about the Great War continued to appear throughout the 1930s and were used, famously in *The Fighting 69th* (1940) and *Sergeant York* (Howard Hawks 1941), to comment on the U.S. political conversion from isolation from to intervention in World War II. Among the trickle of subsequent productions has been the profound indictment of military leadership in Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (1957).

The December 1941 attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor prompted U.S. entry into the war and intensified engagement by Hollywood filmmakers and exhibitors in the new war effort. As Tom Schatz's contribution here makes plain, Hollywood was already consistently involved in making war-related productions before the formal declaration of war (and depiction of Americans fighting). While the emphasis in this volume is on the layered social and cultural meanings of films about combat, it is difficult not to consider almost any Hollywood production of the following four years, featuring combat or not, in terms of the nation's war effort. Contrary to the popular memory generated in succeeding decades by mostly postwar productions, only relatively few feature-length films made during the war itself directly portrayed the training of servicemen or military combat. Of more than 1,400 features released by major studios between 1941 and 1945, the number of productions dealing significantly with basic training is around 30 while those about armed forces in a "combat environment" released before war's end total between 25 and 30, and several films count in both categories.[2] Many other movies foregrounded conventional Hollywood fare—light romances, comedies, musicals—with war in the background (Schatz 1997). During the same years, other forms of motion pictures, including documentaries, newsreels, shorts, and animation, filled out theatrical programs and often dealt directly with the war effort at home and in combat areas (Doherty 1993).

The experience of battle on land, at or under the sea, or in the air was at the heart of war cinema. During actual hostilities, it was war in the Pacific—based partly on the racist demonization of the Japanese enemy—that was the subject of the majority of combat films. Most of this combat, furthermore, was set on land, featured the courageous efforts of GIs, and appeared in titles like *Wake Island* (John Farrow 1942), *Bataan* (Tay Garnett 1943), *Guadalcanal Diary* (Lewis Seiler 1943), *Cry Havoc* (Richard Thorpe 1943), *Gung Ho!* (Ray Enright 1943), and *Objective, Burma!* (Raoul Walsh 1945). Naval-related battles appeared in the submarine film, *Destination Tokyo* (Delmer Daves 1943), and the John Wayne PT-boat drama, *They Were Expendable* (John Ford 1945). *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (Mervyn LeRoy 1944) was a quintessential picture about the war in the air. Films about the European theater, including the Atlantic and North Africa, included the Humphrey Bogart vehicle *Sahara* (Zoltan Korda 1943); the story of infantry soldiers as told by correspondent Ernie Pyle, *The Story of G.I. Joe* (William A. Wellman 1945); the submarine drama *Crash Dive* (Archie Mayo 1943); and Howard Hawks's tale of a B-17 Flying Fortress crew, *Air Force* (1943). As had happened in World War I, Hollywood worked closely with government agencies, this time notably the Bureau of Motion Pictures and the Office of War Information, to coordinate the political (and patriotic) messages communicated through its films.

After the end of the war, combat experience was briefly coupled with the return home of veterans, as in *The Pride of the Marines* (Delmer Daves 1945). 1949 marked the re-appearance of the combat film with *Battleground* (William A. Wellman), *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (Allan Dwan), and *Twelve O'Clock High* (Henry King). Among many productions of the 1950s were psychological dramas about the war like *Attack!* (Robert Aldrich 1956) and *The Enemy Below* (Dick Powell 1957), and, especially, command, in *Battle Cry* (Raoul Walsh 1955) and *Flying Leathernecks* (Nicholas Ray 1951). If films made during the war celebrated enlisted men, Peter Biskind has observed, "the heroes of fifties war films were officers" (Biskind 1983: 60; see also, Landon 1989). The following decade saw epics (*The Longest Day* [Darryl F. Zanuck 1962] and *The Battle of the Bulge* [Ken Annakin 1965]), antiwar dramas (*Beach Red* [Cornel Wilde 1967]), and offbeat action adventure films about the war (*The Dirty Dozen* [Robert Aldrich 1967]). Later treatments included Franklin J. Schaffner's ambivalent portrait of its eponymous warrior and war itself, *Patton* (1970), the U.S.-Japanese co-production *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Richard Fleischer, Kinji Fukasaku, Toshio Masuda 1970), the all-star *Midway* (Jack Smight 1976), the epic *A Bridge Too Far* (Richard Attenborough 1977), and Samuel Fuller's cautionary tale about infantry, *The Big Red One* (1980). The 1990s saw renewed attention to World War II with the fiftieth anniversary of many of the war's key events. In 1998, the infantry dramas *The Thin Red Line* (Terrence Malick) and *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg) appeared, along with the Academy Award-winning Holocaust film, *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni). More recent productions include the special effects-laden epic romance, *Pearl Harbor* (Michael Bay 2001), and the story of American Indian soldiers—and military multiculturalism—*Windtalkers* (John Woo 2002).

Called by some "the forgotten war," the conflict in Korea from 1950–1953 was the subject of only sporadic interest by Hollywood (Blair 1987). Of the ninety-one films identified by Robert Lentz in his filmography of the war, twenty were made during actual fighting and the majority of the rest produced in the remaining years of the decade (Lentz 2003). Some of these featured conventional narratives about squads on missions facing combat, from *The Steel Helmet* (Samuel Fuller 1951) and *Retreat, Hell* (Joseph H. Lewis 1952) to *Pork Chop Hill* (Lewis Milestone 1959). Besides films featuring small units in battle, at least three other types of Korean War film can be identified (Edwards 1997). The "psychological trauma film," like *Fixed Bayonets* (Samuel Fuller 1951) and *War Hunt* (Denis Sanders 1962), dwelled on the conflicted relationships between U.S. troops that symbolized wider American struggles over race, between liberals and conservatives, and between military "lifers" and those serving temporarily. "The POW/brainwashed film" is exemplified by *Prisoner of War* (Andrew Marton 1954), with Ronald Reagan as a soldier who allows himself to be captured to learn more about the communist menace in POW camps, and *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer 1962), about brainwashing by the Chinese with the ultimate aim of assassinating a U.S. Presidential candidate. A final grouping, films about the homefront and training, such as *Take the High Ground* (Richard Brooks 1953), spoke to domestic concerns more than combat. A notable later film about the Korean War was Robert Altman's black comic vision of war and military life, *M*A*S*H* (1970).

U.S. military involvement in Vietnam emerged from the Cold War policy of "containment" meant to prevent communist expansion. After sending advisors as early as 1954, the United States first deployed infantry units to South Vietnam in 1965 to counter insurgent activity and political instability. During the succeeding ten years, as military operations seemed marked by defeat and miscalculation and the domestic debate about the conflict increased, television became the principal conduit for providing the public with information about what was later called "the living-room war" (Arlen 1982). The U.S. government did not coordinate the production

of war information with Hollywood as it had during previous wars, but enabled print and television journalists access in the field. Filmmakers did nevertheless add their own stories and images of battle, often using documentary forms, to a complicated range of contemporary war-related productions. Looking at the years 1967–1969, for instance, it is common to acknowledge that the depiction of combat was limited to the studio release in 1968 of only one film, John Wayne's *The Green Berets*. Yet dozens of productions that Jeremy Devine has categorized into "four fluidly defined subgenres" "helped reflect and create a consciousness concerning the war." They are "the traditional war story, the combat film"; "stories of returning veterans"; "the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s"; and, films "set in different locales or time periods that are about or highly influenced by the Vietnam War" (Devine 1995). Like the estimation of "war-related" films made during the years of World War II, it is difficult to view many productions from these later years without acknowledging some influence of, or attention to, the Vietnam conflict.

Motion pictures featuring narratives explicitly about the war arrived in numbers only following the final withdrawal of the U.S. from Vietnam in the spring of 1975. At the end of that decade, *The Boys in Company C* (Sidney J. Furie 1978), *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino 1978), and *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola 1979) imagined the horrors of war from the level of individual soldiers to that of the ideologies underlying U.S. involvement. But it was in the mid-1980s that Hollywood participated in a larger cultural re-evaluation of the American experience of war in Southeast Asia. Some of these stories, like *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (George P. Cosmatos 1985) and *Missing in Action* (Joseph Zito 1984), were fantasies about returning to Vietnam to fight again and rescue comrades left behind. Others sought to return to the war years themselves and, in the process, question both political and military decisions *and* previous cultural standards for heroism in and filmic storytelling about combat. These included dramas about the experience of training and battle: *Platoon* (Oliver Stone 1986), *Hamburger Hill* (Jon Irvin 1987), *Full Metal Jacket* (Stanley Kubrick 1987), *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone 1989), and *Casualties of War* (Brian DePalma 1989). A more recent production about the early battle of Ia Drang, *We Were Soldiers* (Randall Wallace 2002), has been called the first "straightforwardly pro-Vietnam war film" since John Wayne's three and a half decades before (Carruthers 2003: 170).

Following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, the United States military has engaged in various battles. Yet the political conflicts during these years, and especially in the post-Cold War era, have changed their scope and become more narrowly targeted. At the same time, the proliferation of twenty-four hour news services via cable and satellite television and the internet has exponentially increased the stories and images immediately available about them. For Hollywood, these conditions have presented new challenges for cinematic re-telling. A few films about the 1991 Gulf War that liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation have addressed the role of women in the military and combat (*Courage Under Fire* [Edward Zwick 1996]), the status of soldiers and civilians alike in contemporary war (*Three Kings* [David O. Russell 1999]), and the futility for individual soldiers of basic training and deployment (*Jarhead* [Sam Mendes 2005]). *Black Hawk Down* (Ridley Scott 2001) focused on battle rather than politics in its re-enactment of a single mission gone wrong during the 1993 U.S. intervention in Somalia. *Behind Enemy Lines* (John Moore 2001) followed a Navy flier downed in the Balkans and caught in the political contradictions of U.S. military involvement in that region. As of early 2006, the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq had produced several documentaries but no Hollywood narrative films. The wider "war on terrorism" of which these operations were officially part—by definition, a

wider campaign without a traditional military enemy or conventional battles—returns us squarely to the problem of classifying political conflicts and media productions about them.

## Surveying analyses of War cinema (I): individuals and nations, morality and myth

There has been an immense body of writing, spanning journalistic reporting and reviews, academic studies, industry guidelines, government laws and policies, and public discourse, which address the vast number of film productions relating to war. This work has fed abiding anxieties about war and national security ever since filmmakers accompanied the "yellow press" to Cuba in 1898. Yet it was the public and journalistic debates about violence and reconsideration of the social role of Hollywood cinema during the Vietnam era that initiated more probing analyses of war in American history and culture. By the late 1970s and 1980s, four importantly related developments occurred. First, the institutionalization of film studies and the turn toward analysis of media in the academy opened critical spaces vital for the sustained and rigorous examination of cinema. Second, Hollywood's long-repressed direct engagement with the Vietnam War erupted on film screens in productions like *Platoon* and *Casualties of War* and compelled public discussion about the meaning of that conflict, and of war generally, in American history and experience. Film scholars responded by investigating the cultural myths and representational codes underlying the Vietnam conflict and cinematic efforts to capture it and to assess their historical significance (Ryan and Kellner 1988; Jeffords 1989; Wood 1986; Dittmar and Michaud 1990; and Anderegg 1991). Third, scholars also began to produce a new and more sophisticated body of work on World War II (Kane 1982; Dick 1985; Basinger 1986; Polan 1986; Koppes and Black 1987). Such critical attention often cast the cinematic and cultural experiences of World War II and Vietnam in a dialectical, or at least generational, opposition. This relationship was reinforced by, and indeed mapped onto, the entrenchment of contrasts between "old" or classical and "new" Hollywood that were affirmed by the publication in 1986 of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson 1986). Fourth, still another cultural turn sparked by the 1960s and 1970s and institutionalized in subsequent academic research was a cluster of related theoretical concerns—gender studies, political economy, trauma studies, and cultural imperialism—that were brought to bear on the historical and cultural specificities of U.S. war cinema.

A central concern about Hollywood war films is the motivations, attitudes, and behavior of individuals preparing for or immersed in combat. To an extent, this concern derives from Hollywood cinema's broader emphases on individual characters (and the stars often portraying them), and their decisions, relationships, behavior, and conflicts as the bases of dramatic action and narrative coherence. The motivations of protagonists and others range broadly from the personal to the social, from the pursuit of excitement or heroism, duty, faith, and revenge to love, friendship, camaraderie, and belonging. How individuals behave, how they interact in groups from the squad to the nation, and what values or beliefs they stand for in the midst of extreme situations, may shift over time in ways arguably reflecting the changing social relations and anxieties. Oftentimes, military experiences, particularly the liminal, transitional experiences of basic training and combat, serve as rites of passage for young soldiers into full manhood.

Whatever their diverse motivations, individuals in war cinema confront objectives greater than their own and either reject them or, more conventionally, adopt them and become part of

a cohesive fighting group. The melting pot platoon has been a narrative device well-suited to the needs of moviemakers to strike a balance between the exigencies of storytelling focusing on individuals and the imperative to represent the values and stake of American society in films about the nation going to war. Writing of the cinematic reconciliation of individual and community interests in productions like *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, *Guadalcanal Diary*, and *Wake Island*, Robert Ray consequently observes that "the wartime mood [of WWII] prompted the American cinema's normally camouflaged ideology to become more overt" and combat films to reaffirm "the myth that proposed the compatibility of individual and communal values" (Ray 1985: 89, 125). Whatever the surface image of selflessness or conspiracy, the insistent focus on the exceptional "great man" or, more often, the initially reluctant "everyman" emerges as individual conflicts are foregrounded while the wider political issues are simplified and relegated to the background. This tendency, too, derives from Hollywood norms for seeking emotional or psychological explanations for social and economic problems. Put differently, the individual soldier or commander might be presented as heroic and noble or flawed and ineffective, but the study in character itself, however seemingly representative of historical experience, often averts attention from the ideological or structural aspects of the war in which he is fighting.

If war films and cinema turn most significantly on narratives and representations of individuals, another crucial, defining element of these individuals' ineractions is romance. War cinema frequently amplifies the stylized American masculinity of its characters through romance and the life-and-death decisions and actions of its heroes. On one level, romance here means the heterosexual love interest of the soldiers that typically coincides with (and serves as the private analogue for) the interest in public order sought through military training and battle. The presence of women in films about war, like the girl back home who is the subject of friendly rivalry in *What Price Glory?*, symbolizes for some critics the feminine or domestic sphere for which battles among men are fought. Women can also be viewed as feminizing influences, figures of vulnerability, who soften the resolve of soldiers or, worse, emasculate them; this latter threat can occur during wartime, as in *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, or returning to domestic life, as in *The Pride of the Marines* or *Coming Home*. Whatever their symbolic meaning, the presence of women in war cinema foregrounds both the masculine nature of the institution of war and the parallels, emotional and physical, between attempts at heterosexual conquest and military triumph (Renov 1988). On another level, as presented in the sexualized narrative of *Full Metal Jacket*, the romance of war refers to the bonding that occurs between male soldiers through their training and, especially, shared experience of combat. Sometimes the emphasis is the camaraderie among a "band of brothers" loyal to each other; in other cases, relationships are framed as rivalries ingrained in military customs, hierarchies, and generational relations. On still another level, these relationships are homo-erotic and feature intense and even intimate emotional exchanges and physical proximity between men otherwise prohibited in Hollywood cinema or other normative social spaces (Eberwein 2001; DeBona 2003; Donald 1992). A final level of romance and perhaps the most troubling that appears in war cinema (and the actual experience of war) is an irrational attachment to what has been called the "destructive sublime." While we will return to this later, it is worth noting here the intense and even perverse fascination with sensation and death that can mark viewers' relationships with war cinema that also appears in narratives as war lovers; early on, these were enemy characters like the evil Hun or diabolical Jap, but more recently, psychotic or bloodthirsty GIs, like Tom Berenger's Sergeant Barnes in *Platoon*, have also appeared. Fundamental to all of these relationships is their occurrence amid intense experiences transcending those of everyday life. War cinema arguably relies on a

consistent linkage between these dual aspects of individual development in extraordinary conditions through which norms for social behavior, interaction, and belonging are clarified.

The relationship between the individual and the group showcases the actions of the former but inevitably casts light on the values and beliefs of the latter. In war cinema, the group on-screen may range from a squad or platoon to the combined military services, but it usually somehow stands in for the American nation. How the group is constituted and behaves can consequently be seen to express something of how society makes sense of its place in the world and in history. Myths can be understood as adaptable narratives that, over time, distill this process of cultural sense-making and symbolize collective values, beliefs, and moral principles; in the process, myths function as the basis for identity claims by individuals and communities. Essential to the myths and rhetoric of Hollywood war cinema is the assumption that the United States, as a free and democratic society, has a unique mission in the world and in history to advance human progress and the promise of spiritual salvation. "One of the most significant and obvious forms of national mythology [are] the war stories of the nation-state. In the twentieth-century United States, the narrative forms that have molded national identity most profoundly are arguably the western and the war film, genres that articulate an image of nation that, in the words of Anthony D. Smith, has been 'beaten into national shape by the hammer of incessant wars' " (Burgoyne 1997: 7–8; see also Anderson 1991; and Smith 1981). Various films based on "the lost patrol," from *The Lost Patrol* (John Ford 1934) to *Bataan* (1943) to *Steel Helmet* (1951), epitomize this American mythology of individuals converted into a cohesive unit who, by seeking to fight against unforgiving odds in a savage land, fulfill the nation's founding mission of bringing civilization to a wilderness.

Nation-based myths have long been contested, of course, in narratives and images critical of war or nationalism. More thoroughgoing are questions raised about how cinema has functioned to make and perpetuate myths. In a famous review, Renata Adler wrote, "*The Green Berets* is a film so unspeakable, so stupid, so rotten and false that it passes through being funny, through being camp, through everything and becomes an invitation to grieve not so much for our soldiers in Vietnam . . . but for what has happened to the fantasy-making apparatus of this country" (Adler 1969: 199–200). Later scholars have developed this concern more systematically, arguing that films have become largely self-referential commodities. In the process, national myths or cultural codes of representation are eroded and left as little more than surface markers to orient viewers in their consumption of a steady stream of otherwise largely undifferentiated images.

Especially in the post-Cold War era, related questions have been posed by scholars about the emergence (or re-emergence or re-figuration) of American empire inscribed in, and possibly extended by, war cinema. Some responses to war cinema have engaged both imperial issues abroad and social and cultural concerns at home. In his discussion of the Spanish-American War, Jim Castonguay thus attends to concerns ranging from the savage, racialized foreign enemy and typically white masculine American heroes on-screen to the complexity of media production about war and the variety of filmgoers responding to those media images and narratives. Such articulations of social difference substantiate and drive the "war stories of the nation-state" at the heart of American mythology. These articulations often proceed from the overt imaging of sameness and belonging or otherness and separation that mythologize antagonisms with distant enemies. Yet recent criticism has also sought to *de*-mythologize the wartime unity of American fighting forces and, more, the coherent national society they are presumably fighting for. The melting pot ideal that celebrates the nobility of individual heroes

has therefore also revealed the inequity of the multiethnic and, later, multiracial group (and the multicultural nation for which it stands). Even more, the hypermasculinity of soldiers, illustrated in characters from John Wayne's Sergeant Stryker in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) to Sylvester Stallone's John Rambo in the trilogy of the 1980s, has been questioned. Women, too, have occasionally entered combat and the consideration of their gender has been the basis for similar critical treatment. Mary Pickford was an inadvertent heroine on the battlefields of France in *The Little American* (Cecil B. DeMille 1917), nurses like Margaret Sullavan and Claudette Colbert proved their mettle under fire on the Pacific front in *Cry Havoc* (Richard Thorpe 1943) and *So Proudly We Hail* (Mark Sandrich 1943), Margi Gerard's Marine doctor fought the VietCong in *The Siege of Firebase Gloria* (Brian Trenchard-Smith 1989), and Meg Ryan's helicopter commander in *Courage Under Fire* (1996) was ultimately shown to be heroic in the first Gulf War. Racial, gender, class and other forms of social difference may be foregrounded and even critiqued, in other words, but traditional assumptions about difference tend to remain powerful background standards for narrative filmmaking (Eberwein 2004). It is also necessary to recognize that these forms of difference are sometimes significant for their absence or invisibility. The race of African-Americans (and, ultimately, their status as slaves) has, for example, been called by Thomas Cripps the "absent presence" motivating the military conflict of Civil War movies but often excluded, as in *Gettysburg* and *Gods and Generals*, by filmmakers dwelling on individual gallantry or romance (Cripps 1994). Put briefly, while often grounded in forms of difference like race, gender, and class, the layered "politics of representation" in play in war cinema ultimately reveal the inequitable power relations and boundaries of difference that mark and maintain American narrative cinema and social institutions—including the military and Hollywood itself (Koppes 1995; see also, Bates 1996).

War cinema is not only produced through characterization, storytelling patterns, production values, special effects, or association with national, imperial, or mythical frameworks. The repetition of these elements breeds crucial familiarity with audiences and guides the marketing and exhibition campaigns of the film industry as a social, economic, and cultural institution. The analysis of the production of war movies has consequently included attention to individual filmmakers from Howard Hawks, Lewis Milestone, and John Ford to Stanley Kubrick and Oliver Stone, as well as actors like John Wayne or Robert Mitchum, who have shaped the generic representations with their individual styles and values. Generic repetition emerges from (and also evidences) industrial practices and institutional contexts that have led scholars to dwell on the operation of the film industry, its place in society, and its relations with the U.S. government and armed forces or through a given conflict. Relevant here is the evolution of censorship by both government and industry of war-related images and stories (see, for example, Koppes 1997; and Jeffords and Rabinowitz 1994). More generally, scholars have examined the linked questions of government participation in individual film productions and of the possible industry complicity in the growth of militarization and national security (Suid 2002; Shull and Wilt 1996). Perhaps most broadly, Hollywood's national and global ascendance has, from its beginnings, been linked by film historians to war, particularly the years of World War I in which the U.S. film industry, as David Bordwell has written, effectively "defined commercial filmmaking" (Bordwell and Thompson 1994: 76; see also, Kelly and Lawrenson 1998).

The social role of the film industry assumes special significance when the question is posed about how a motion picture positions itself vis-à-vis a specific conflict, the government or nation waging it, or the institution of war generally. Part of the difficulty stems from the ambiguity of being for or against war and from the fact that both tendencies can exist in the same film. As

two critics wrote about Steven Spielberg's 1998 production, *Saving Private Ryan*, particularly its juxtaposition of the horrors of combat in its famous opening sequence of the D-Day invasion with the laudable story of personal commitment to duty, the film offers "the best of both worlds" by being "an antiwar film that celebrates those who fought the war" (Wetta and Novelli 2003: 875). Similarly problematic is the category of Hollywood itself: over time, the nature of the film industry has changed radically, such that feature films that at one time were developed and made in-house by a studio came later to be produced by multinational teams (*Tora! Tora! Tora!*) or financed independently (*The Boys in Company C* and *The Deer Hunter*). Related to the debates about how film functions for or against war and the nation is the educational function attributed to cinema. Particularly during the first half of the twentieth century, Hollywood positioned itself as a social institution with an important and patriotic dual role, both providing entertainment to distract civilians and soldiers from the grave realities of conflict *and* disseminating information about how and why the war was being fought. The narratives of *Gung Ho!* (Ray Enright 1943) and (anachronistically) *The Green Berets* (1968) illustrate this didacticism, showing and telling why U.S. involvement, and the fictional spectacles that the films feature, are justified.

Beginning with Harold Lasswell's groundbreaking study, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, propaganda emerged as the subject of substantial critical attention related to war cinema (Lasswell 1927; see also, Culbert 1990; Winkler 1978; Fyne 1994; and Nornes and Yukio 1994). More frequently, the very norms of narrative storytelling extended the reach of Hollywood's messages and, in John Belton's words, "filtered its polemical arguments" about war "rather than presenting them directly" (Belton 2005: 213). Since the Vietnam era and the proliferation of television and later the internet as sources of news about distant wars, cinema has played a lesser role in supplying image-based accounts of war. Politically, too, the orientation of filmmakers has become more mixed, as the emergence of New Hollywood in the 1960s raised heretofore unprecedentedly critical visions of U.S. militarization and war-making.

While propaganda and the filtering or regulation of information about war poses questions about the ethics of filmmakers and governments, critics have used war cinema to raise more basic concerns about the morality of a given conflict or of combat itself. The battlefield thus becomes a setting in which morality is either absent or in abeyance (leaving combatants to behave according to primal motivations like self-preservation or the death drive) or crystallized into profound tests (unlike any available in the everyday world) (McMahon 1994). In films of World Wars I and II, the enemy, like Erich von Stroheim throwing a baby to its death in *The Heart of Humanity* (Allen Holubar 1918) or the Japanese raping of women in occupied China in *Behind the Rising Sun* (Edward Dmytryk 1943), perform the most heinous acts—and, in doing so, justify American retaliation. Later films feature a suspension of morality for Americans as well, as in the kidnap, rape, and killing of the Vietnamese girl in *Casualties of War*. Running through war cinema is a presumption that the extreme situations involving life and death, duty and responsibility, which are common to the pitched narrative conflicts of combat, often constitute morality tales. Yet the superficiality and contrivance of many of the moral frameworks in which these choices appear fail to correspond to the complexity of either the collective moral cases made by a nation for war or the individual decisions faced by actual combatants. The moral calculus of Hollywood's fighting man is, as with Gary Cooper's decision to set aside his religious scruples in the name of duty to country and fight the Germans in *Sergeant York*, often inseparable from an elaboration of the justness of the nation's military campaigns that rests on moral and political tenets. Beyond examining decisions made about specific wartime events, films often explore the legitimacy of combat and even war as a social institution (see, for example,

Wood 1986; Ryan and Kellner 1988; Dittmar and Michaud 1990; and Kelly 1997). In the wake of the Gulf War, and especially resonant for the discussion here, sociological and media analysts have approached more critically the longer history of popular cinema's legitimation—and occasional condemnation—of militarization and warfare (Combs 1993). Where films fit in the larger process of legitimating or de-legitimating prevailing ways of waging or experiencing war remains a pressing question.

## Surveying analyses of War cinema (II): realism and repression, history and memory

Besides the standards of morality or justness of the individual or collective actions portrayed in film narratives (or the act of producing the films themselves), the most common basis of claims of the legitimacy of war cinema may be the standard of "realism" being employed. Putative authenticity of, and fidelity to, the lived experience of men in training or combat have long been standards employed in making and studying war films. A difficulty of these debates is the variety of levels of experience—physical, psychological, political, aesthetic—one can claim defines war authentically. The psychic and emotional violence of war, for example, marks representations of the battlefront and homefront alike as unstable, anxiety-fraught, and disruptive of ordered, often pre-war social relations. As Jeanine Basinger has written, "the complaint of 'unreality' in Hollywood war films can be connected best to its narrative content: the sentimentalizing of relationships (both on the home front and in combat), the propagandizing of motives (which was part of the war on all fronts), and the presentation of battle violence that could not logically re-create the true battle experience" (Basinger 1998). Consider, too, the controversy that erupted over *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino 1978). Critics of the film, including veterans, assailed the dramatically central use of Russian roulette as utterly fictional; no documentary evidence existed that the Vietcong played, and forced Americans to play, the deadly game. Yet others countered that Russian roulette was an accurate metaphor for U.S. involvement, especially that of many individual soldiers, in the long war; some claimed that the scenes of futile and self-destructive behavior enacted a "larger truth" about the U.S. experience of the war. Even if we allow both positions, the debate underscores the importance not only of the content or complexity of particular historical representations but of their *representativeness* and how, through them, cinema shapes viewers' understanding of war. At the same time, it is through the cinematic and critical privileging of specific standards of realism—that is, of image-based authenticity grounded, finally, in the visceral, personal experience of battle and not the overarching power relations organizing war and militarization—that war cinema also reinforces the representational practices aligned with the prevailing social order (Slotkin 1992; Shohat and Stam 1994).

Standards of realism or authenticity, that is, of the putative reality of different levels of experience of the same war, themselves change over time. Thus the important issue of the *simultaneity* in war cinema arises when considering how films made during times of actual conflict differ from those made afterward. Major productions about World War I such as *The Big Parade*, *The Crowd*, and *The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse* appeared years after the 1918 armistice—and the jingoistic productions of the war years—and were critical of the psychological and emotional tolls suffered by soldiers during the war and by society afterwards; likewise, the waves of pictures about the conflict in Vietnam that first appeared in the late 1970s, like *Apocalypse*

*Now* and *Go Tell the Spartans*, and then the mid-1980s, with *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*, condemned the human costs, bureaucratic incompetence, and even absurdity of war that had surfaced in Southeast Asia. While common to observe that attitudes toward war often change and grow more sober after hostilities end, it is also necessary to add that both simultaneous and retrospective viewpoints have integrity. The authenticity of military activity, and of its representation, evolves even as the experiences of war—training and build-up, battle itself, coming home, looking back—do.[3]

A related concern that has grown especially prominent over recent decades is the role of cinema in the production of history and memory. Updating his standard cultural history of American movies in 1994, Robert Sklar wrote, "the question of historical memory has become the touchstone of movies' cultural power, as myths and dreams had been in the Great Depression and World War II" (Sklar 1994: 358). Sklar's observation came following a series of war films, including *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, and *Schindler's List* (as well as other historical productions like *Salvador* [Oliver Stone 1986], *JFK* [Oliver Stone 1991], and *Malcolm X* [Spike Lee 1992]) that showcased the efforts of Hollywood and individual filmmakers to shape popular historical discourse. The greater role of movies in influencing understandings of historical events raises profound questions about the roles both of technological media and of more traditional, especially archive- and written text-based modes of approaching the past. Beyond recognizing the historical claims made by, and familiar representational forms used in, contemporary films in their depiction of certain events, the challenge is to explore how the representation of historical experience affects viewers' relationship to cinema and cinema's relationship to the society the history pertains to.

Positing the significance of mediated understandings of past wars to contemporary attitudes is hardly a new phenomenon. In fact, one can track a generational process of literary and cinematic influence across the major conflicts engaged in by the United States. Joanna Bourke has written about how the recounting of nineteenth century wars, especially on the Western frontier, fashioned soldiers' attitudes toward World War I; Paul Fussell has argued for Hollywood productions as a basis for understanding the behaviors of GIs in World War II; Tom Engelhardt and others have probed the dissolution of belief in so-called "victory culture" engendered in World War II films for Vietnam era soldiers; and, most recently, Anthony Swofford wrote about the significance of screen images of Vietnam and action heroes like Sylvester Stallone to the imaginings of combat of soldiers in the first Gulf War (Bourke 1999; Fussell 1989; Engelhardt 1998; Swofford 1993). Cinema has been pivotal to these processes both on and off-screen. In Alan Crosland's 1918 film about World War I, *The Unbeliever*, the father fondly recalls his own service in the Civil War as his son departs for Europe, for example, and a much-discussed scene early in Sam Mendes's *Jarhead* (2005) shows Marine recruits rallying for battle by watching Francis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*.[4]

The cumulative impact of motion pictures appeared especially pronounced in the differing representations of World War II and Vietnam. As suggested earlier, the contrasting cinematic renderings of the two wars have come to constitute a dominant framework for cultural and narrative understanding of all war films and, in the process, reinforced their own priority while marginalizing other experiences. Lloyd Lewis quoted Vietnam soldiers as suffering from the "John Wayne Wet Dream Syndrome" in which their expectations of battle were found in Wayne's World War II films (Lewis 1985). Yet the cinematic linkages between the two wars are much more profound and far-reaching. World War II arguably occasioned the apotheosis of Hollywood as a cultural institution operating in tandem with the state, other social institutions, and

the public realm. The complex industrial, stylistic, and ideological transition from classical, or old, to New Hollywood during the 1960s was defined, in part, precisely by a willingness to reflect upon and rework longstanding cinematic conventions.[5] Even more, the proliferation of television, and its expanded role in juxtaposing recycled images of previous wars while providing and framing images of contemporary conflict, altered the social role of cinema in shaping viewers' understandings of war.

Vietnam also coincided with the beginnings of a critical turn toward confronting the idea of history itself. For some, including film scholar Timothy Corrigan, film narratives from the late 1960s and 1970s came to betray a more thoroughgoing breakdown in the way a past, especially a coherent, mythic past, could be understood. Thus *The Deer Hunter* "accurately reflects the contemporary trouble with representing *any collective history* for an audience that, at least since Vietnam, has only the most temporary sense of itself as a singular historical image among an unprecedented plethora of cultural and historical images" (Corrigan 1991: 15). Approached from a different conceptual vantage, Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud cast light on this narrative ambiguity by suggesting that "the Vietnam War is presented as something that happened, not as something that was done." Instead of narrative closure that enables "healing" to take place, "repression is often made to stand in for it" (Dittmar and Michaud 1990: 12; see also, Wood 1986). Whether by challenges to a coherent past or to a past actively determined by American policies and will, film scholars posited in their analyses of Vietnam-era cinema a heretofore unprecedented instability of historical discourse and traditional strategies for making meaning and generating understandings of the past (Ankersmit 1994).

By the late 1980s, historians were addressing the status of film history in the context of more far-reaching reassessments of how to understand the past. Robert Rosenstone argued that since pure historical truths, "History—with a capital H," could no longer be trusted, multiple approaches to past events and social changes, including Hollywood films, ought to be more fully considered (Rosenstone 2004: 202; see also, *American Historical Review* Roundtable 1988; Ferro 1988; Kaes 1989). Rosenstone and others claimed that historical discourse is larger than empirically-based norms of traditional historians' written scholarship; his call to expand the understanding of past experience accordingly embraces the condensations, symbolizations, invented characters and dialogue, and creation of dramatic situations and coherent narratives essential to filmmaking. Starting in 1989, a series of fiftieth anniversaries of many of the key events of World War II coincided with a reconsideration of the relations not only between the war film and society but between Hollywood cinema, traditional written history, and popular memory (Rosenstone 1995; Toplin 1996; Burgoyne 1997; Sobchack 1996). The box-office and critical success of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* in 1993 galvanized public attention around the questions of memory of the Holocaust while raising more general questions about the role of cinema in shaping public understanding of the past (Loshitzky 1997). Many considerations of "film and history," needless to say, have turned on representations of war, political violence, and military conflict.

Mark Carnes spells out an exemplary contrast between actual experiences of past behavior and events and the "reel" history presented through cinema by emphasizing the inherent visuality of cinema so important to the cinematic depiction of war. He observes that, "filmmakers chiefly justify their assertions of truthfulness by claiming that their movies replicate the costumes and settings of the past. Directors think mostly in visual terms; hence a movie that *looks* like the past *is* like the past. . . . Hollywood films, consequently, offer remarkably accurate . . . evocations of how the past *looked*" (Carnes 2004: 47). To this, we might add the centrality of

claims of emotional and linguistic and aural truth, which, as the stuff of dramatic conflict, also define filmic visions of the past. Finally, a focus on war cinema, which turns on depictions of the risk and often enactment of violent injury and death, underscores the significance of bodily behavior and practices of incorporation to social memory (Connerton 1989). Close attention to familiar dramatic conventions and the primacy of the visual raise questions about who has authority over history or memory and which standards we employ to engage and understand the past as individuals and societies.

Such far-reaching questions redound upon filmmakers and traditional historians alike and touch on matters like the selectivity of treatments of the past, mythmaking, and historical revisionism. Writing about the 1993 production, *Gettysburg*, Trevor McCrisken and Andrew Pepper conclude that the film's "desire to make every soldier on the battlefield sympathetic by emphasizing their manly courage and moral reserve ends up obscuring the complex reasons and motivations that underpin the conflict in the first place" (McCrisken and Pepper 2005: 65). Likewise, in later productions like *Black Hawk Down* and *We Were Soldiers*, more is at stake than recasting either the general memory of the wars or the history of specific battles. The implication is not only that these events "were actually victories, misconceived as defeats," but, as Susan Carruthers argues, that ultimately it is pointless to question military ventures: "All that matters is obeying orders; fighting courageously to save one's life and, more heroically, those of other men. War is reduced to a primal struggle to stay alive, to get back home, to 'leave no man behind.' And while specific wars may not amount to sacred duties, nevertheless, by definition doing one's duty is *good*" (Carruthers 2003: 182, emphasis in orig.). War, in these terms, transcends politics and military action is held outside ideological debates about policies in the present or the lessons of the past. The heroism of men, and the glory (or horror) of battle become timeless and apolitical. Rather than merely emphasizing individual action over political, economic, or structural context as earlier productions may have, these films evacuate meaningful attention to culturally or historically-specific causes or motivations for the conflicts being depicted; they participate, through their replication of spectacle, in what Michael Rogin describes here as a process resulting in "cultural amnesia." War cinema in these recent years emerges as self-referential, concerned not just with a nostalgia for, or appropriation of, previous combat films but a consistent set of values and behaviors transposable to any number of visually distinct but otherwise historically undifferentiated conflicts.

## Mediating war

The importance of nostalgia and amnesia, like that of broader questions of film, history, and memory, is how they have shaped—and themselves been shaped by—the shifting viewing practices, cultural production, social relations, ideologies, and visual regimes constituting war cinema. To speak of visual regimes here points to more than the repetitive patterns of film narratives and images. The emergence of cinema in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with the cultural developments and historical transformations that constituted modern life. Ways of seeing and experiencing the world arguably shifted during this period of increasing mechanical reproduction, urban culture, and mass consumption. Commercial motion pictures can be seen to epitomize many of these far-reaching changes, not least in their use of machines to represent distant experience, their stimulation of visceral reactions among viewers, and their creation of publics from these viewers. One needs only

return to the early films of air war, *Wings* or *Hell's Angels*, to witness the exuberance and energy of mechanical flight as well as the images that such flying made possible. Film historian Ben Singer's advocacy of a "neurological conception of modernity" in these terms implies "a fundamentally different register of subjective experience, characterized by the physical and perceptual shocks of the modern urban environment" (Singer 1995: 72).

Characterized by ceaseless mechanical shocks and sensation, the modern military environment was every bit as revealing of these different modes of perception and experience (Coker 1993; Joas 2002). Order, be it psychological, social, national, or global, accordingly arrives through the deployment of technology. That quest for order, moreover, has legitimized combat and rationalized the destructiveness of war. On a more individual level, the violence of war was seen as a singular experience in which one could feel most completely alive through the simultaneous empowerment and susceptibility wrought by modern military equipment (Huyssen 1993). This trope of transcendent experience was enhanced by individual action and recast by the sophistication and reach of military technology and weaponry. In fact, the suggestion of battle as an ineffable experience points to another basic concern of modernity that has special resonance in considerations of war cinema: namely, the claim that, increasingly, the "real" can be apprehended only through its representation even as representations rely on their semblance to reality (King 2005: 54). Especially since Vietnam, this dialectical relationship has highlighted the inscrutability of battle; as Michael Hammond has recognized, recent films such as *Rules of Engagement* (William Friedkin 1999) or *Courage under Fire* are investigations into the often traumatic, for some unrepresentable, experience of combat (Hammond 2002).

If questions of history and memory emphasize the meaning of war across and even beyond time, questions of mediation also foreground issues of space and the relation of viewers to distant conflict. Among those pressing issues are how films and related visual technologies re-cast the distant experience of war for viewers and how those viewers re-make themselves, their own subjectivities, and their societies in the process. As we have discussed, the cultural function of war cinema has involved, from its beginnings, "making sense of war and its organized, if often random violence" (Chambers and Culbert 1996: 148; see also, Winter 1989). At the same time, a less rational, more emotional and compelling aesthetic and political operation is underway: watching battle, its pain and carnage, from a distance sufficient to maintain one's own physical safety produces a "terrible beauty" and the basis of intense and seductively enjoyable sensations that have been called the "destructive sublime."[6] Yet both the sense-making and visual pleasures have always been complexly related to the ideological preoccupations imparted through specific representational, institutional, and commercial practices and strategies. Cinematic representation provides neither a neutral lens through which to observe war nor a straightforward reflection of the political or economic predispositions of the historical period of production.

Hollywood has long sought to make invisible its formal conventions and, especially, the political, cultural, and ideological preoccupations they reinforce. Through repetition, the presumption of viewers is that the visual representation of events on screen—whatever the superficial politics of narrative conflict being presented—is a transparent process. For war cinema, these tendencies toward invisibility strongly inscribe and code representations of violence as well as deeper political and moral rationales for military action. As a result, Hollywood filmmaking creates and sustains formal and ideological frameworks for cinematic spectacles of destruction and death that through repetition have become naturalized for viewers. Even as war cinema ostensibly depends on simplistic political and moral justifications to

explain its narrative conflicts, character motivations, and spectacular violence, films employ consistent techniques to order images of destruction and map the world in terms of violence and civilization. Less conspicuously, but upon close analysis no less definitively, these techniques frame and orient perceptions of a world of socially, economically and morally unequal civilizations.

As suggested above, critics have devoted special attention to how technologies of war and representation conduced with other social and commercial changes in modern life during World War I and II to alter the nature of human perception and experience. Over the last three decades, scholars have asserted further shifts in prevailing modes of perception and experience linked to advances in military and media technologies. Bruce Franklin, writing after the first Gulf War, observed that the conflict had been projected "from the point of view of the weapons," building on Hollywood's tradition of "warplane romances," like *Strategic Air Command* (1955), starring Jimmy Stewart, and creating "the impression of a 'clean' techno-war, almost devoid of human suffering and death, conducted with surgical precision by wondrous mechanisms" (Franklin 1994: 25–43). Essential here for film and media analysts old and new is the idea that technological developments have not merely upgraded military and media hardware or even furthered the strategic purposes of diplomats and military planners but transformed how individuals and societies experience distant combat as an economic and perceptual event. Manuel De Landa thus talks about a "war-game mentality" that blurs differences between simulation or make-believe and reality, corrupts actual data to fit the games, and neglects such human-level concerns as soldiers' morale and motivation or the enemy's mindset (De Landa 1991: 100–01). Also addressing war games, James Der Derian contends that late twentieth- and early twentieth-first century "infowar" is "more a weapon of mass persuasion and distraction than destruction . . . [in that it] targets civilian as well as military populations and its exchange-value as a deterrent outweighs its use-value as an actual weapon" (Der Derian 2003: 47).

This line of thinking has to do with more than propaganda or media distraction from actual events. Pushing it to an extreme, Jean Baudrillard made his provocative claim that "the Gulf War Did Not Take Place." At issue in his piece with that title is not whether military attacks physically took place or material damage was done by the United States in the Gulf but what comprehension of these events can exist for the West outside of mediated experience of twenty-four hour news television news coverage. If, for soldiers and civilians alike, military operations are executed using media technologies that enhance vision and rely on simulations, what other approach to these events is possible? The measure of the authenticity of experience in these terms thus shifts, for some, fundamentally. For Jordan Crandall, "the reality of representation is substituted for the representation of reality. That is, authenticity arises less from the authenticity of reality, per se, than the authenticity of the means by which reality is portrayed" (Crandall 2003). Technologies of weaponry and media, and their attendant practices of visual representation, are complicit in this substitution and the re-making of viewers' experiences of war which they enable. Returning to the opening query of this Introduction, the very definition of war becomes destabilized as one's ability to recognize and apprehend violence and conflict is refigured by mediation.[7]

In closing, it might be useful to urge approaching war cinema's ongoing enterprise as one of wide-scale, semi-participatory, techno-perceptual socialization. To be sure, concerns persist about the repetitive and circumscribed meanings of Hollywood narratives of combat, the ideological preoccupations they perpetuate, and the commercial and perceptual practices they

reinforce. While the understanding and even history or memory of experiences of battle are put in question by cinema, in other words, the very attitudes and behaviors animated by viewers are influenced by war cinema and contribute to the socializing or civilizing process that sociologists see molding and constraining attitudes and behaviors alike (Slocum 2005). Attitudes toward, and understandings of, social relations and violent interactions are the most obvious. The larger implication of a convergent military and media ordering of information and mobilizing of attention, though, is that the same drill and distraction characteristic of military regimentation works to re-shape and mobilize other social processes of mediation and viewing practices (Kittler 1999; 1986). At issue here is how practices of viewing, consumption, and subject-positioning are regulated and constrained by war cinema—and then the extent to which viewers are (or can be) active participants. Yet as Mark Lacy cautions, it is also a matter of understanding *on what terms* that activity might operate: "cinema has been concerned with normalizing the idea of war as the natural order of things," he has remarked, and, in the process, with developing "distancing techniques [that] are deployed to create moral indifference to suffering" (Lacy 2003). As the essays in this volume make clear, the engagement or detachment attendant to given instances of war cinema have varied over time and for individual viewers.

Invoking the moral underscores an urgency about comprehending the representational and viewing practices constituted through processes of mediation. In fact, for individual viewers especially, war cinema demands positioning oneself as morally engaged with, or morally indifferent to, distant political violence and spectacle-based media. Many of the analysts who see military and media technologies as pacifying viewers and normalizing the idea of war claim that corporate or institutional processes of production or consumption allow only for moral indifference to, or detachment from, combat and carnage. Like the process of dismantling meaningful history amidst the suggestion of timeless and apolitical military attitudes and behaviors of concern, the distancing and amoralizing processes of war cinema can potentially bracket meanings attributed to war by viewers. These processes can readily deflect any meaningful attention to the social and power relations at the root of political violence and the production, even definition, of war.

Threading through the essays here, whether they ostensibly address matters of narrative politics or industrial practices or visual form, are a fuller range of questions of how individual viewers can engage the frequently distant violence and suffering of war. What are the perceptual processes, representational patterns, and moral dimensions involved in war cinema? And how are they relevant to individual viewers, their acts of engagement, and the mediations of war in which they participate? The goal of this volume is to survey essential scholarly writings about Hollywood's war cinema and, in doing so, to suggest that cinema constructs war as a way of seeing the world built upon distance, the interaction of commercial media practices and militarization, and, finally, the circumscription of moral and political meanings of violence. The hope, in turn, is that through these readings viewers might reflect on their own positions and become more fully engaged with the power relations that have for more than a century shaped—and been shaped by—war and cinema alike.

## Notes

1 See Cullen 1995, and Chadwick 2001. Probably the most important media production of the second half of the twentieth century about the war was Ken Burns' *The Civil War*,

an eleven-hour documentary shaped by still photographs, dramatic narration, and contemporary filming of historical sites, which first appeared on U.S. television in the fall of 1990.

2 This is the total offered by both Basinger 1986: 281–93; and Shull and Wilt 1996: 162. In another, more nearly contemporary estimate, Dorothy B. Jones claims that 374 films, or roughly 30 percent of the industry output, "were directly concerned with some aspect of the war"; her subsequent categorization of these productions does not include "combat films" but motion pictures about "why we fought," "the enemy," "our allies," "American production," "the home front," and "our fighting forces" (Jones 1945).

3 Technological advancements in television and internet presentation of distant conflict have fundamentally altered the question of simultaneity since the 1980s. Journalistic coverage has been most directly re-shaped, yet fictional treatments also been affected. *Over There*, a weekly television drama series debuting on the FX cable channel in August 2005, followed a fictional U.S. Army unit, and their friends and families at home, through their arrival in Iraq and subsequent operations in Iraq. Despite positive critical responses, the show was cancelled in November 2005 after its initial 13-episode run.

4 The complex interplay between the representation in 2005 (in the midst of the Iraq War) of Marines in training in 1990 (for the first Gulf War) watching the 1979 film (about the Vietnam War) merits thoughtful unpacking. While against or, at least, ambivalent about war, *Apocalypse Now* features several rousing battle sequences, most famously the attack of a Vietnamese village by the U.S. air cavalry, accompanied by the playing of Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries." That the later generation of soldiers could appropriate such a sequence at cross purposes with the intention of their original maker raised for several critics the quandary of whether any cinematic depiction of combat, with its intense, stimulating, even eroticized images of death and destruction, could be viewed as anti-war. (See, especially, Weschler 2005).

5 For Gilles Deleuze, the key transition in film history is between the wartime cinema that culminated in the 1940s ("linked to the organization of war, state propaganda, ordinary fascism") and the postwar cinema that conspicuously reveals itself first in the Italian neo-realism of Rossellini, De Sica, and others that immediately followed hostilities. The "extremes" or "everyday banality" of this latter cinema called attention to "the unities of situation and action that [could] no longer be maintained in the disjointed post-war world." The resulting "pure optical and sound situations" were also evident to Deleuze in many productions of the 1960s, like Godard's *Les carabiniers* (1963), a film critical of war reportedly made in response to the Hollywood D-Day epic, *The Longest Day* (Ken Annakin, et al. 1963). (Deleuze 1989: 165; Tomlinson and Galeta 1989: xv).

6 "Terrible beauty" is William Butler Yeats' description from his poem, "Easter 1916" (Yeats 1997: 182). The notion of the "destructive sublime" goes back at least to Edmund Burke, who held pain to be a more severe and intense sensation than pleasure. Burke's conception of the sublime is linked to a source, often visual and realistic, able to produce feelings of pain, terror, or dread. Subsequent writings on politics of visual pleasure have subsumed what Burke distinguished as pain and pleasure (Burke [1757] 1968). In terms of war, specifically, the notion was cited more recently by Chris Hedges, who writes of carnage and destruction in the "rush of battle" as a seductive, "potent and lethal addiction" (Hedges 2002: 3). J. Glenn Gray goes further, connecting destruction with the visual as arguably two of the three "secret attractions" he cites compelling men to go to war: "the

delight in seeing, the delight in comradeship, and the delight in destruction" (Gray 1970: 28–29; see also, Turgovnick 2005: 30).

7 This refiguration is arguably an aspect of a larger re-structuring of advanced industrial society. Ulrich Beck, the German sociologist renowned for his formulations about the "risk society," thus writes how, in contemporary life, "relations of definition are to be conceived analogous to Marx's relations of production" (Beck 2000: 224).

# War Films

1

STEVE NEALE

## War films

For the most part, the category 'war film' is uncontentious: war films are films about the waging of war in the twentieth century; scenes of combat are a requisite ingredient and these scenes are dramatically central. The category thus includes films set in the First World War, the Second World War, Korea and Vietnam. And it excludes home front dramas and comedies and other films lacking scenes of military combat. However, as with most generic categories, there are a number of ambiguities, some stemming from the generically untidy nature of some of the films, others from changes in their dominant conventions, still others from changes in the way films have been labelled or defined.

For example, the term 'war film' was first used in the industry's relay to describe films set in the Civil War or in the Indian Wars of the nineteenth century. These films included *The Empty Sleeve* (1909), described as a 'war picture' by the *Moving Picture World* (5 June 1909: 754), and *Clarke's Capture of Kaskaskia* (1911), advertised in the *Moving Picture World* as 'A new kind of War picture, taking us back to the pioneer days on the Frontier' (29 April 1911: 9). Films about the Indian Wars soon came to be treated as westerns. Some Civil War films did too, though films with a Civil War setting tended to form distinct and different generic alliances, and later Civil War films like *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951) and *Advance to the Rear* (1964) are in fact closer in look, tone and structure to contemporary war films than they are to contemporary westerns. (On early Civil War films, see Bowser 1990: 177–9 and Koszarski 1990: 186. On Civil War films in general, see Kinnard 1998. The term 'alliances' derives from Leutrat 1985.)

The criterion of combat, meanwhile, has exercised a number of theorists, critics and historians. Taking his cue from the inclusive nature of the surveys of war-related films conducted on behalf of the Office of War Information (OWI) by Jones in the 1940s (1945), Shain has argued for a broad definition of the war film. 'A war film', he writes, deals 'with the roles of civilians, espionage agents, and soldiers in any of the aspects of war (i.e. preparation, cause, prevention, conduct, daily life, and consequences or aftermath).' War films therefore 'do not have to be situated in combat zones' (1976: 20). Service comedies can be included, but 'not all films with military characters are on the list' (ibid.). On the other hand, Basinger, like Kagan (1974) and Kane (1982, 1988), argues that broad definitions are too

vague. Proposing that 'The war film does not exist in a coherent generic form' (1982: 10), she restricts herself to films with a Second World War setting and substitutes the term 'combat film' for war film in order to mark combat itself as a central defining criterion: '"War" is a setting, and it is also an issue. If you fight it, you have a combat film; if you sit home and worry about it, you have a family or domestic film; if you sit in board rooms and plan it, you have a historical biography or a political film of some sort' (ibid.).

Issues of terminology have also been raised by those wishing to distinguish between films in terms of their attitudes to war. Chambers (1994), for example, suggests that 'antiwar film' might be a more appropriate term than 'war film' for films like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). Thus there seems to be an assumption in some of the writing on war films that generic terms and definitions should be governed by logic: that the category 'war film' should logically include all films with a wartime background, that 'combat film' is the logical term for war films which focus on combat, and that 'antiwar film' is the logical term for films with an antiwar attitude. However, as Basinger in particular is otherwise the first to acknowledge, Hollywood's genres and terms are governed by custom, convention and history rather than logic. And custom, convention and history dictate that 'war film' implies a degree of focus on combat whatever attitude to war is adopted (Belton 1994: 164; McArthur 1982: 881; Springer 1988a. Belton compares the role of combat scenes in war films with the role of musical numbers in musicals; Springer discusses them in terms of their formal characteristics and of the ideological ambivalence their 'excess' can often generate). They also dictate that service comedies, spy films and home front dramas possess their own separate conventions and terms.

Some of the confusion here may stem from an awareness of the extent to which generic overlap can occur, of the extent to which a service comedy like *The Wackiest Ship in the Army* (1960) can culminate in scenes of serious combat or to which a 'combat film' like *Battle Cry* (1955) can include scenes of personal drama. Some may stem from the fact that scenes of combat can occur in other genres and films, that their dramatic functions can therefore differ, and that war films themselves can vary the number of combat scenes they include, as well as their duration, location and scale. In war films, combat with the enemy, however infrequent, usually determines the fates of the principal characters. That is why films like *Pride of the Marines* (1945) and *Coming Home* (1978), in which combat determines the physical condition of the central male characters but not their ultimate fates, are not normally considered as war films. That is why combat scenes nearly always occur towards the end of war films, at the point of dramatic climax. (Films like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Paths of Glory* (1957) vary convention by having the fates of major characters determined by the actions of a single sniper, by the actions of a covertly commissioned assassin, and by the actions of a military court respectively. However, the ironies involved are in each case dependent on an awareness of generic convention, and this awareness is cued by the presence of extensive scenes of combat earlier on.) And finally, given the life or death outcome of combat in particular and of wartime conditions in general, that is why writers like Kaminsky (1974: 229) and Belton (1994: 164–5) argue that war films are as much about the fragilities and conditions of physical survival as they are about war – or wars – as such.

Confusion may also stem from the tendency to focus on films with a Second World War setting. Basinger suggests that 'Different wars inspire different genres' (1986: 10). Like Kane (1976, 1988), she is concerned with the distinctive conventions of the 'World War II combat

film'. Thus although she herself maintains that 'At bottom, both WWI and WWII films are about death' (1986: 87), she argues that their differences outweigh their similarities and that they should be treated as separate genres. However, aside from noting Koszarski's argument that *The Big Parade* (1925), a First World War film, helped establish the convention of 'the variegated platoon' (1990: 186), and aside from noting Isenberg's argument (1981: 89–90) that this particular convention, which Basinger and others associate specifically with Second World War films, was established even earlier, during the course of the First World War itself,[1] it is possible to mount an alternative argument. It is possible to maintain that the Second World War film, however specific its conventions, is and was a variant on the same basic genre, and that the foundations of this genre were laid during the course of the First World War, when the criterion of combat inherent in earlier uses of terms like 'war picture' first came to be focused on films about modern war.

Two books have been written on the First World War and Hollywood's films, by Isenberg (1981) and by DeBauche (1997). Neither is straightforwardly focused on fictional war films, and both have specific agendas. Isenberg is interested in the relationship between film and public opinion. He therefore spends some time detailing the history of government involvement in film production during the war itself, the activities of the Committee on Public Information (the CPI or 'Creel Committee') as the government's principal propaganda agency, collaboration with the military (especially in terms of the provision of advisers, extras and equipment, a key aspect since then of nearly all Hollywood's war films as Shain (1976), Suid (1978, 1979) and others have noted), and the nature and production of documentaries and training films as well as of fictional features. Like most commentators, he argues that there was a transition from pacifist antiwar films like *In the Name of the Prince of Peace* (1915) and *Civilization* (1916) to bellicose anti-German propaganda films like *Daughter of France* (1918) and *The Kaiser, The Beast of Berlin* (1918). He also notes, though, that the apparently straightforward nature of this transition was complicated by the early production of martial adventure and 'war preparedness' films like *The Battle Cry of Peace* (1915) and *The Hero of Submarine* D-2 (1916). (A number of war-preparedness serials were made in 1916, most of them featuring action heroines and serial-queens. Examples include *The Secret of the Submarine* and *Pearl of the Army*. See Dall'Asta (1995). Isenberg (1981) suggests that all three of these strands were governed by Victorian codes of gentility, manifest in the general avoidance of bloodshed and carnage, in the emphasis on honour, duty and valour in the second and third of these strands, and in the influence of contemporary liberal values in the first. He also argues that democracy and democratization were common themes and points of reference in films made both during and after the war, at their strongest in films about the army and at their weakest in films about the air force.[2]

Isenberg goes on to discuss the influence of changing attitudes to the First World War in the 1920s and 1930s, the extent to which the revisionist accounts produced by novelists, poets and playwrights affected Hollywood's films, the extent to which Victorian codes were challenged or had broken down, and the extent to which the war itself featured as background in romances like *The Enchanted Cottage* (1924) as well as foreground in war films as such. He argues that Victorian codes were by no means totally rejected, its codes of valour, honour and duty often co-existing with a revisionist verisimilitude in the treatment of battle scenes and in the use of 'hardboiled' language, and that 'Not until 1930, and then in only a very few films, did moviemakers come to a realistic grip with modern war in a mood of disillusionment which approached that of literature' (1981: 114–15). Until then, routine

'war-inspired regeneration' films like *Dangerous Business* (1921) and *Dugan of the Dugouts* (1928) were produced in great numbers alongside road-shown specials like *The Big Parade* and *Wings*, films in which the contradictory effects of the interaction between Victorian codes and revisionist devices are, he argues, especially apparent.

Both here and elsewhere (1975), Isenberg suggests that revisionism remained only partly and intermittently visible in Hollywood's films. Even amidst the pacifism and isolationism of the 1930s, films like *Journey's End* (1930), *The Road to Glory* (1936) and both versions of *The Dawn Patrol* (1930 and 1938) continued to manifest contradictions like these, while a cycle of heroic aviation films that included *Hell's Angels* (1930) and *Hell in the Heavens* (1934) served to perpetuate the tradition of war as adventure. By the end of the decade, as the adventure tradition continued with films like *Submarine Patrol* (1938), a series of preparedness films for a new war began to appear (Basinger 1986: 110–13; Dick [1985] 1996: 65–100; Leab 1995).

DeBauche covers similar chronological ground, though she focuses in more detail on the 1910s. This is in keeping with her parallel aims: to deal not only with films with a First World War setting, but also with the impact of the war on the US film industry and with the history of the industry itself. As a result, she pays as much attention to the activities of the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry (NAMPI) as she does to those of the Creel Committee. She is keen to stress the commercial advantages of 'practical patriotism' (1997: 29). And she is much more precise than Isenberg about the nature of the industry's output and its relationship to the industry's practices. She notes that 'War-related feature films' did not become 'a significant factor in "List of Current Film Release Dates," until September 1918, two months before the signing of the Armistice' (ibid.: 38). (It was in March 1918 that *Daughter of France* and *The Kaiser, The Beast of Berlin* were released, to be followed in subsequent months by *To Hell with the Kaiser* and others. The most extreme anti-German propaganda films were therefore seen by the American public at, near or even after the end of the war.) However, while 'a minority of all films in distribution in 1917 and 1918 were war-related' (ibid.: 48), about half of these were specials and road shows and would thus in publicity and public-relations terms have been disproportionately visible.

The nature and duration of production schedules meant that over fifty war-related feature films were released in 1919. Numbers dropped severely in 1920 and 1921, increased slowly between 1922 and 1924, then increased rapidly in 1925 and 1926. For DeBauche, the war films of the 1920s 'displayed striking innovations. They were told from the soldier's point of view and foregrounded battle over any other wartime experience' (1997: 171). In addition, they 'eliminated or significantly reduced the role of women as causal agents in their narratives' as 'a clear divide was created between the "love story" and the war scenes' and as 'war was defined as combat' (ibid.: 172). Thus they came increasingly to resemble war films made later, in the 1930s and 1940s, though it should be noted that Isenberg argues that in films like *The Mad Parade* (1931) and *She Goes to War* (1929) 'women were almost indistinguishable from men as warriors' (1981: 198).

Basinger provides the most detailed account of the war film and its history from the 1940s through to the late 1970s. However, although she discusses films about the First World War, the Korean war and Vietnam, and although she also discusses musicals, dramas and comedies, her account is centred on the Second World War, not just as subject matter but also as the period during which the conventions she identifies as basic to her principal concern, the 'World War II combat film', were forged. Moreover, despite her willingness to discuss marginal examples, exceptions, and hybrids, to recognize variations, and to

acknowledge the generic untidiness of Hollywood's output, she is wedded to a very particular notion of the combat film. 'I had a prior conception of what the genre would be', she writes,

> What I knew in advance was what presumably every member of our culture would know about World War II combat films – that they contained a hero, a group of mixed types, and a military objective of some sort. They take place in the actual combat zones of World War II, against the established enemies, on the ground, the sea, or in the air. They contain many repeated events, such as mail call, all presented visually with appropriate uniforms, equipment, and iconography of battle.
>
> (Basinger 1986: 23)

As a result, she treats the combat film not as a particular generic paradigm but as the only true genre of war; hence, for all its apparent comprehensiveness, her account is very specific in its focus; and so the films she sees as central are often outweighed by those she sees as marginal, especially (and ironically) when she comes to consider those made during the Second World War itself.

Basinger begins here by noting 'how few actual combat films were released': 'From December 7, 1941 to January 1, 1944, the primary list of pure combat films . . . contains only five films, and none of these appears before 1943' (1986: 24). Because they lack an exclusive setting in combat zones, an appropriate iconography and/or a hero, group and military objective, films like *Wake Island* (1942) and *Desperate Journey* (1942) are not considered 'pure combat'. Pure combat only begins to emerge, and is in fact only truly represented prior to 1945, by just two films, *Air Force* (1943) and *Bataan* (1943), the former serving as the template for films marked by journeying, movement and victory, the latter for those marked by stasis, last stands and defeat. Thus *Action in the North Atlantic* (1943), *Destination Tokyo* (1944) and others serve principally as further examples of generic impurity until *Air Force* and *Bataan* are joined in 1945 by *Objective, Burma!*, *They Were Expendable* and *The Story of* G.I. *Joe* and in 1946 by *A Walk in the Sun*. These films are canonic. For Basinger they are important because they are the first to display and exploit generic awareness, an awareness 'that they are all one type' (ibid.: 123). They also provide the focus of Kane's book, which uses them along with *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943) and *Air Force* to construct a structural model of the combat film in which narratives can result in victory or defeat and in the integration or disintegration of the combat group, and in which dualities such as war and peace, savagery and civilization, democracy and totalitarianism, humanity and inhumanity and duty and self-interest are played out within and across a basic conflict between Americans and their allies and their enemies. (Usually Japan and Germany rather than Italy, as Fyne 1992: 311, among others, points out.)

With the coming of peace, the production of war films of all kinds promptly ceases until the appearance of *Fighter Squadron* in 1948 and of *Command Decision*, *Battleground* and others in 1949. These films inaugurate a 'third wave' of combat films which persists in large numbers until 1959. This third wave is marked by the purity of its conventions and by various forms of generic awareness. It is also complicated and augmented by the Korean War and the Cold War. In the Korean films, iconography is adjusted to accommodate Korean terrain and the use of new weapons like jet planes, the mixture of the group is adjusted to accommodate