"DUCLE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI": THE IDEA OF THE "SWEET AND FITTING DEATH FOR THE FATHERLAND" AND ITS CRITICS IN SELECTED WAR FILMS

I. OUTLINE OF THE PAPER

The focus will be on the confrontation between "official" state-supported ideal of the "sweet and fitting" death for the Fatherland (or "la patrie" or "King and Country"), as advocated in nationalistic histories taught in the public schools, the indoctrination of conscripts, war propaganda, and popular literature and film, and the more critical, sometimes subversive, opposing views of a handful of novelists and filmmakers some of whom were war veterans or saw combat first hand (such as Jean Renoir, Erich Maria Remarque, John Ford, Oliver Stone) and some of who were not (Abel Gance, Joseph Losey, Stanley Kubrick). The clash between the myth of the heroic and meaningful death for the Fatherland and the reality of modern total war resulted, not in the overturning of the official perspective, but in its surprising persistence and adaptability. For some patriots, the reality of modern war's destructiveness was incorporated into a new formulation of Horace's maxim, namely that it was one's "hard duty" to die for the Fatherland (exemplified in the idealism of many Germans who fought on the Eastern Front in WW2 - "Cross of Iron"). For others, the denial continued as Hollywood (Errol Flynn and John Wayne) maintained that death in combat remained relatively bloodless (Sgt. Stryker in "The Sands of Iwo Jima") and would inspire others to do their duty to the nation state. The explanation for the weakness of the anti-war or "realist" view of the "sweet and fitting death" for the Fatherland (what Wilfred Owen called the "Old Lie") lies in a number of factors: the overwhelming power of state-supported media to perpetuate the myth (Goebbels and the

Nazi film industry), the adaptability of the Christian idea of sacrifice to the needs of the modern state, the need of audiences for exciting stories of individual heroism and chivalry, the relatively small number of soldiers who actually witnessed combat first hand (compared to those in support or reserve or at the home front) who might offer an alternative perspective; and the powerful need for citizens in the modern nation state to belong to a larger community ("the nation") which legitimizes and gives meaning to the sacrifices made in wartime. Nevertheless, Milestone's and Remarque's critique of the ideal of the "sweet and fitting" death for the Fatherland in "All Quiet on the Western Front" (1930) remains the classic critical formulation in film and its power still serves as a grim warning of the murderous potential of the nation state in the century of total war.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Conference Theme: "National Cinemas - Sites of Resistance?"

In my paper I want to explore an idea which has been used by the state and its supporters to justify or legitimize the activities of men in wartime, namely that it is "proper", even "beautiful" (sweet), to die for the fatherland (nation state) in battle.

The connection I see with the theme of this Conference - **"National Cinemas - Sites of Resistance?"**- is that the new nation states which had emerged in the late 19thC quickly saw the possibilities of cinema to reach a huge popular audience with messages of patriotism, sacrifice, and martial glory. Nation states in the 20thC had two paths they could follow in using the cinema for propaganda purposes. Firstly they could "nationalise" the cinema as happened in Nazi Germany after 1933 and Stalinist Russia after 1924. National cinema in these countries were literally the "creatures" of state policy in order to guarantee that the needs of the nation state would be served by the new medium and that possible "sites of resistance" or countervailing voices did not appear or were not given an audience.

Or secondly, they could encourage and assist private filmmakers to serve both the need of the state for willing and obedient soldiers in time of war and the need of the film producers and studios to make a profit in a highly competitive industry. In this case the cinema industry is privately owned but "voluntarily organised" by the state (e.g. the voluntarily given support of much of Hollywood to

the US war effort after 1941), substantially subsidised or otherwise "protected" by the state in order to achieve the same purpose (the "national cinemas" of France and Australia at various times). In the latter case, the state may provide monetary or materiel support to favoured filmmakers (it is hard to make a realistic war film if the military refuses to lend you large numbers of tanks or warships), make it difficult for critics of state policy to get films made or distributed, or outright censorship of critics. I would argue that the purpose of "national cinemas" is to maintain existing elites in power, to mobilise citizens in support of state policy (especially war) and create or manufacture "consent."

A third type of "national cinema" is the product of a large number of independently acting filmmakers, writers, producers, etc who happen to share a common or related culture/language/history. The cinema these people produce is "national" in the sense that common traits or a particular "flavour" of films emerge as a result of shared ethnic, linguistic or regional ties. It is not an "official national cinema", produced by deliberate state policy, but an "unofficial national cinema".

Turning to the second part of the conference title, where are the "sites of resistance" and who inhabits these sites?[1] Both "official" and "unofficial" national cinemas can be "resisted" (opposed, challenged, questioned, undermined) by disaffected individuals and groups. In the case of "official national cinemas" those groups or individuals who are oppressed or marginalised by the state may seek to express an alternate view to the official line but are driven underground or out of business (e.g. Marxists like Bertolt Brecht who thrived in the late Weimar Republic are driven underground or expelled by the new Nazi cinema after 1933; the vigorous artistic experimentalism which appeared in the early 1920s in the Soviet Union was suppressed as the Stalinist regime sought to monopolise all avenues of cultural expression and to stifle any dissent from "party lines"). There are also those who are excluded from access to state subsidies, those who oppose official ideology, films of non-nationals (i.e. the Jewish producers in Hollywood in the 1930s were outsiders who

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[1]] Perhaps the creator/s of the Conference theme had in mind the title of Jay Winter's book, *Sites of Memory. Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995) (Cambridge University Press, 1996) which omits the important locality of "site of resistance" to the "Great War". I wonder about the significance of the question mark at the end - is there some doubt in the organisers' minds about whether any sites of resistance exist and if so where they might be located (within or outside the putative national cinema)? and resistance to what? resistance to the very idea of a "national cinema" or resistance to aspects of "national cinema? None of this is clear in the title. In my case I felt I had to invent my own notion of a "site of resistance" to what I regarded to be a lynch pin of the nation state (and the "national cinema" which evolved in or from it), viz. the patriotism which extols the death of the individual in its defence.

opposed the isolationism of American policy and sought to make American more aware of the threat posed by fascism in Europe, e.g. Curtiz, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)). The inability of Oliver Stone to get "Platoon" produced during the patriotic early 1980s under Pres. Reagan, the refusal of the US military to assist in providing equipment for the filming drove Stone and his English backers to shoot in the Philippines and use American-supplied Philippino military equipment.

In the case of war films, it is not surprising that even liberal democracies do not allow anti-war films to be made while the war is taking place. The demands of war fighting produce a uniformity of "consent" which makes it very difficult for opposing or "resisting" voices to be heard. Typically, it is not until 10 years or so have passed before critics of official state policy are able to make films criticizing the official state position ("Hart's Ten Year Rule"). The clearest example of this is the spate of anti-war novels and films which appeared in the late 1920s up to the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933 (*AQWF*, *Westfront 1918*). Followed by the mildly anti-war or confused films about Vietnam which appeared in the late 1970s (*Apocalypse Now*, *The Deer Hunter*) and the "second wave" of more explicitly anti-war films which appeared in the late 1980s (*Platoon*, *FMJ*).

An important sub-category of films which "resist" the official state line are those war films made by filmmakers who themselves were war veterans or who based their films on the accounts of those who had been veterans. Occasionally, filmmakers who usually had conformed to the official state line sometimes departed from the simplistic depiction of war/battle to produce a more complex, thoughtful, and hence more ambivalent perspective which also undermined the official state line (e.g. John Ford, *They Were Expendable* (1945) and Mizoguchi, *The Loyal 47 Ronin* (1941-2)). Their often opposing accounts of war are particularly interesting and important because of the "bearing witness" factor[2].

David Hart's List of (Anti)-Patriotic Films

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[2] Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin, 1998).

Patriotic films	Ambivalent patriotism	Critics of patriotism
WW1 • Pressberger, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) • Peter Weir, *Gallipoli* (1981)	WW1 • Abel Gance *J'Accuse* (1937)	WW1 • Milestone, *AQWF* (1930) • Renoir, *The Great Illusion* (1937) • Kubrick, *Paths of Glory* (1957) • Losey, *King and Country* (1964)
WW2 • Charles Chauvel, *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940) • Raoul Walsh, *They Died With Their Boots On* (1942) Olivier, *Henry V* (1944) • Veit Harlan, *Kolberg* (1945) • Dwan, *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949)	WW2 • Mizoguchi, *The Loyal 47 Ronin* (1941) • John Ford, *They Were Expendable* (1945) • Spielberg, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)	WW2 • Mike Nichols, *Catch-22* (1970) • Sam Fuller, *The Big Red One* (1980)

• Milestone, *The Halls of Montezuma* (1950) • Annakin, Marton, Wicki, *The Longest Day* (1962)		
Korean War	Korean War • Milestone, *Pork Chop Hill* (1959)	Korean War • Sam Fuller, *The Steel Helmet* (1951) • Robert Altman, *M*A*S*H* (1970)
Vietnam War • John Wayne, *The Green Berets* (1968)	Vietnam War • Michael Cimino, *The Deer Hunter* (1978)	Vietnam War • Oliver Stone, *Platoon* (1987) and *Born of the 4th of July* (1989)
Other Wars • Abel Gance, *Napoleon* (1927)	Other Wars	Other Wars • Paul Verhoeven, *Starship Troopers* (1987)

B. Hiding the True "Face of Battle"

There is a very stark contrast which can be drawn between the "face of battle" (to borrow the title of John Keegan's pioneering book [3] which is revealed in popular culture (school textbooks, art, literature, film) and that which emerges from a close study of selected memoirs, works of history and even some films. Soldiers go to war with a preconception of what they might expect to experience in battle and how they should behave under fire, a preconception which is drawn from a range of sources such as school history textbooks, newspapers, adventure stories, photographs, films, and the oral tradition passed down from male relatives who fought in previous wars.[4] Examples include the adventure stories of G.A. Henty and Rudyard Kipling for soldiers entering WW1; Rupert Brooke, "Gone with the Wind" for soldiers going into WW2 (William Manchester); John Wayne for those entering the Vietnam War; and, Holmes speculates, the "military pornography" of the more explicit novels of Guy Sajer and Sven Hassell on the generation of soldiers of the mid-1980s.

What emerges from his account (and others) is that a huge gulf exists between the preconception and the reality of battle. The sense of what war is like and the expectations which are created on the soldier to live up to this "literary", constructed "face of battle" is contradicted oftentimes by the soldier's personal experience of battle. Holmes concludes that this conflict between reality and preconception sets the stage for military failure and the physical and psychological breakdown of soldiers (in the field I presume he means):

> **The risks of such gulfs between preconception and reality are colossal. Battle is a traumatic experience at the best of times. But if it produces not only all the stresses of noise and danger but also the dislocation of expectation, then the risks of failure and breakdown loom large. (S.L.A.) Marshall believed that the average soldier goes to battle, the 'supremely testing experience of his lifetime almost as a total stranger.'[5]**

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[3] John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976).

[4] Holmes, *Firing Line* (1985), pp. 59-73 gives a brief but very useful discussion of the range of sources which have influenced the preconception of battle of some of the soldiers who have fought in the 20thC.

[5] Holmes, *Firing Line* (1985), p. 73.

I would add to this some other non-military consequences which should concern the historian of war and popular culture, namely the bitterness, disillusionment and resentment that men feel when they believe they have been duped and the psychological problems (guilt, sense of failure, grief, and stress) which can sometimes emerge when the veterans have returned to civilian life. This is most notably the case in the problems many Vietnam War veterans have experienced not just as a result of losing the war but also as a result of not being able to live up the ideal of the combat soldier embodied in the person of "John Wayne" created by Hollywood in the 2 decades between the end of WW2 and the escalation of the conflict in Vietnam in 1965.[6] Thus I would argue that it important for societies to have the most realistic understanding possible of the nature of battle/war in order that wars not be undertaken too lightly, and that the men who go into combat have a closer match between expectation and reality of battle.

It is an interesting question to ask oneself when and how, if at all, did ordinary people (non-combatants) get to learn about "the face of battle". Much of the stir caused by Spielberg's WW2 combat movie "Saving Private Ryan" (1998) has been caused by the unflinching depiction of the nature of combat for those American soldiers who landed at Omaha Beach in Normandy on 6 June 1944. For many viewers it is the first time in 54 years that the nature of an amphibious assault under fire by modern weapons has been depicted in such graphic detail on the screen. The history (chronology?) of how viewers came to see a depiction of battle like Spielberg's illustrates the argument I would like to make in this paper, namely that

1. men go into battle with (mis)perceptions of battle either based upon the circumstances of previous wars or highly stylised heroic and patriotic stories which bear little or no resemblance to modern warfare - many soldiers believe that it is both possible and perhaps necessary that it is "sweet and fitting to die for the fatherland"
2. information about the nature of contemporary battle is deliberately withheld by the military authorities during the war for reasons of propaganda and morale (photographs of dead or mutilated soldiers are censored)[7] - the state does not wish its citizens to have

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[6] Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Touchstone, 1995).

[7] George H. Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

information which might lead them to question the ideal that it is sweet and fitting to die for the fatherland.

3. the political and military authorities continue to produce films (and other accounts) during the war which perpetuate the myths about the possibilities of heroic and patriotic sacrifice on the battlefield - the dilemma faced by the authorities is that they must show enough "realism" so as not to make the propaganda laughable but not so much that it discourages people from supporting the war effort; gradual evolution of idea that it is one's "hard duty" to sacrifice one's life for the state (no longer "sweet" or "seemly")
4. after the war there is a "conspiracy of silence" on the part of most veterans who do not divulge the "secret knowledge" they have about the nature of combat partly because they want to forget the war and partly because their immediate families could not comprehend their stories if they were told
5. gradually a trickle of memoirs, histories, novels, films appears after the war which begin to provide some details of the "face of battle" ("Hart's Ten Year Rule" - it often takes 10 years or so for the first critical accounts begin to appear) but which does not undermine the official or popular account of the war
6. the official account/view of the war is reinforced when important anniversaries of the war are celebrated, a "standard account" of the war emerges in popular novels, TV and film, and school history textbooks
7. a few "dissenting voices" (novels, memoirs, films) appear to challenge the standard account but they are few in number and marginalised in effect
8. eventually, some aspects of the more "realistic" or critical perspective are incorporated into the standard account but this does not undermine the standard account but is used to emphasize the patriotic "sacrifice" made by those who took part.

I believe this "chronology" is true for the major wars of the 20thC with only a few minor variations resulting from the peculiarities of time and place.

III. WAR, PATRIOTISM AND MODERN NATION STATE

A. The Origin of the Idea of "Pro patria mori"

The origins of this sentiment lie deep within Western classical culture[8], having perhaps its "classical" formulation in one of the *Odes* of Horace (Book Three, no. 2) where the following phrase appears:

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori

There are various translations which could be given for this phrase. One I like is "How sweet and fitting it is to die for the fatherland" or "the glorious and the decent way of dying is for one's country". The translator of the Penguin edition of Horace's *Odes* translates the stanza as follows:

The glorious and the decent way of dying
Is for one's country. Run, and death will seize
You no less surely. The young coward, flying,
Gets his quietus in the back and knees.[9]

Jonathan Swift translated the same verse in the early 18th century giving it a religious twist and dedicating it "To the Earl of Oxford":

How blest is he, who for his Country dies;
Since Death pursues the Coward as he flies.
The Youth, in vain, would fly from Fate's Attack,
With trembling Knees, and Terror at his Back;
Though Fear should lend him Pinions like the Wind,
Yet swifter Fate will seize him from behind.[10]

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[8] Ernst Kantorowicz has explored the significance of this idea in medieval political thought in a number of works. Its political and cultural impact in the modern period still requires exploration. See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "*Pro patria mori* in Medieval Political Thought," *American Historical Review*, October 1950, vol. LVI, no. 1, pp. 472-92 and *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Thought* (1957) (Princeton University Press, 1981), "Pro patria mori" pp. 232-72; also Gaines Post, "Two Notes on Nationalism in the Middle Ages," *Traditio: Studies in Ancient and Medieval History, Thought and Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1953), pp. 281-320.

[9] See *The Odes of Horace*, trans. James Michie (1964) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 141.

[10] *The Faber Book of War Poetry*, p. 1.

It can't be said that the author, Horace, penned this sentiment of noble patriotic death without having had any personal experience of war. In fact, he had fought for Brutus on the losing side in the Battle of Philippi 42 BC which was one of the Civil Wars which broke out after the assassination of Julius Caesar. A satirist of his calibre might be suspected of writing this "tongue in cheek" but it seems not to be the case. He actually meant what he said and his assertion of the nobility of dying for the "patria" has been in Kenneth Baker's words, "chiselled into innumerable war memorials and paraphrased by leaders throughout history, both to encourage men to make the supreme sacrifice and to console the bereaved."[11] I would add that in the 20th century this same sentiment has been etched into the celluloid of innumerable patriotic films.

It is my contention that the modern nation state adapted this classical notion of military obligation and sacrifice to the needs of "nation building" in the late 19th and early 20 centuries. The Latin-reading educated elites were able to absorb Horatian ideas of patriotic sacrifice directly from the Latin original. In the First World War many educated middle class French, German and British soldiers went to the trenches of the Western Front ready to act on this sentiment of "sweet and fitting" death for the fatherland.

B. Militaristic Patriotism in England before WW1

The centrality of Greece and Rome in secondary and higher education in the 19thC is well known. What is less well known is how Roman ideas of war, empire, manliness and heroism were transmitted to several generations of young men, many of whom were to fight in WW1 attempting to emulate the classical ideal of patriotism which they had learnt at school. Norman Vance notes how readily statesmen and intellectuals seized upon certain lines of Horace:

> **It was inevitable that patriots and politicians and the designers of war memorials would recall that Horace had observed that it was sweet and seemly to die for one's country ('Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori', *Odes* 3.2.13). In the long peace between Waterloo and the Crimean War, Britons had few opportunities to do so, but that did**

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[11] *The Faber Book of War Poetry*, ed. Kenneth Baker (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).

not deter them from recommending patriotic death to people of other nations... Byron set the tone by dying for Greece at Missolonghi.[12]

Julia Haig Gaisser has explored the use of "the Imperial Horace" by public school teachers and translators of and commentators on Horace for cheap schoolbook editions to "beat Horace into the minds and hearts of young Britons" in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.[13] Rudyard Kipling's stories of schoolboys like Chalky, or moral tales like "Regulus" (1908-11), spread the Horatian ideal to a popular audience outside the gates of the elite public schools. One widely used translator and commentator for schoolboys was Arthur Macleane whose edition of Horace first appeared in 1853 and went through 4 editions and many reprintings over the next quarter century.[14] Macleane, for example, summarised the manly sentiments of the Second Ode as:

Contentment is to be learned in arms and danger. To die for our country is glorious, and death pursues the coward. Virtue is superior to popular favour or rejection, and opens the ways to the skies, and rises above the dull atmosphere of this world. Good faith too has its reward, and I would not be the companion of the man who neglects it, lest I share his sure reward.[15]

The assistant master of Charterhouse School from 1876-1910, T.E. Page (whom Gaisser describes as "one of the most important and influential teachers of his day" whose text was "the text of choice in most schools") glossed another Horatian Ode as:

Let the boy, who means to be a man, lead a simple and hardy life as the best training for a soldier's career; in the field let the foeman fear him, and let his courage be inspired by the thought that death is glorious indeed when encountered in his country's cause: the true man is independent of the honours the mob can give or withhold, he treads a path of his own, heaven and immortality are his reward, for rewarded his

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[12] Norman Vance, *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 190.

[13] Julia Haig Gaisser, "The Roman Odes at School: The Rise of the Imperial Horace," *Classical World* (1994), vol. 87, no. 5, pp. 443-56.

[14] Gaisser, p. 445.

[15] Gaisser, p. 453.

uprightness and true reverence shall surely be, as certainly as profanity and guilt shall be punished.[16]

A third example of the militaristic patriotism taught to schoolboys on the eve of WW1 comes from William Medly who strangely enough taught at a Friends School in Leeds from 1870-1908 and whose commentary on Horace was published by Oxford University Press in 1910 with the following selection of lines:

But reverting to Horace, we see next this stripling, now grown to hardy manhood.... He loves to dwell *sub divo* [3.2.5], out in the open beneath the unsheltered skies. Like the bronzed veteran on the south African veldt he scorns the cover of tent or fortress. Out in all weathers, exposed to sun and wind and lashing storm, there let him with a fierce delight live out his life...

In the fourth stanza the crown of gallantry, reserved for this citizen-soldier of Rome, is won... pro patria mori! [3.2.13] this is no death; rather it is the very crown of life - life made perfect... Death awaits us all. This thought is ever on the poet's lips. But here death is a prize; a prize which falls to few...[17]

C. Critics of PPM - Wilfred Owen "The Old Lie" (1917)

Perhaps the most famous example of the angry rejection of what Gaisser calls "the clash of the ideal of exalted patriotism and noble death in battle with the realities of World War I" is Wilfred Owen's poem "The Gas Attack" or "Dulce et Decorum Est" written in October 1917.[18] The first 3 stanzas describe a gas attack and the haunting image of a comrade without a gas mask dying before his very eyes. Then comes the final long stanza with his angry denunciation of "the old Lie":

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon we flung him in,

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[16] Gaisser, p. 453.

[17] Gaisser, p. 454.

[18] Gaisser, p. 455.

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.[19]

Owen translates Horace's patriotic phrase in a letter to Susan Owen, 16 October 1917 as "The famous Latin tag means of course It is sweet and meet to die for one's country. Sweet! And decorous..."[20]

D. Critics of PPM - Bertold Brecht (1916)

Gaisser quotes a passage from an essay by Brecht criticizing the school's use of Horace as propaganda and describing Horace as "the Emperor's fat court jester". The essay was written in 1916 when Brecht was 17 and still at high school and nearly led to his expulsion from the Gymnasium. He wrote:

It is always hard to depart from life...Only the empty-headed can push folly to the point of speaking of an easy leap through the dark door, and this only as long as they believe themselves far from the last hour. But once the Bone Man comes to themselves, then they take their shield on their back and run away, like the Emperor's fat court jester who devised this saying.[21]

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[19] *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (1985) (London: The Hogarth Press, 1988), p. 117.

[20] Wilfred Owen, *Selected Letters*, ed. John Bell (Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 283. See also Jon Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen: A Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 228.

[21] Gaisser, p. 456

E. Sacrificing One's Life for the State - Fatherland/Motherland

The political philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain has concluded from her analysis of "war stories" taken from literature and political thought (Plutarch, Rousseau, Hegel), that "one incessant and insistent theme" emerges, namely the theme of sacrifice, typified by the following sentiment expressed by Nathan Hale who died at the hands of the British during the American Revolution - "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." But, whereas the traditional formulation of sacrificing one's life for the state in time of war was to a "patria" or fatherland, Elshtain notes an 18th and 19thC "femininization" of the state which demands the sacrifice of her sons:

> **The young man goes to war not so much to kill as to die, to forfeit his particular body for that of the larger body, the body politic, a body most often presented and represented as feminine; a mother country bound by citizens speaking the mother tongue.[22]**

She also notes that "the sovereign may bear a masculinized face, but the nation itself is feminized, a mother, a sweetheart, a lover" and that the sacrifice demanded of the nation's "sons" is nothing less than that which one's own "birth mother" might demand if she were threatened by attack.[23]

A key question which this paper wishes to ask is one also posed by Elshtain, namely how the state was able to forge an ethic of sacrifice on the part of its male citizens to give their lives for the state in wartime:

> **... how did it come about that war for the king, then for country, then for more abstract ideals and demands for the 'imagined community', got intermingled and served to frame the horizon within which the will-to-sacrifice was, and is, ongoingly forged? Max Weber writes of the 'consecrated meaning' of death for the warrior, the conviction that his death alone provides the needed support for the 'autonomous dignity of the polity**

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[22] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice," in *Reimagining the Nation*, ed. Marjorie Ringrose and Adam J. Lerner (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 159-75. Quote from p. 160. See also her *Women and War* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987).

[23] Elshtain, "Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice," p. 169.

resting on force'. Only a preparedness to forfeit one's own life rounds out, or instantiates in all its fullness, devotion to the political community, and only such devotion affords any dignity to a politics that would otherwise turn on brute force. Although a state cannot survive if it attempts to embody a universalistic ethic of *caritas* (the expression used by Kantorowicz to describe the Christian "love" which led medieval soldiers to sacrifice their lives defending the patria - DMH), without some such ethic, coercion alone reigns; hence the importance of the 'consecrated meaning' of the warriors death.[24]

But where her "war stories" are limited to literature, memoirs and political thought, my "war stories" also include the stories of war told in the medium of film. Before the 20thC ushered in film as the most important mass media, the "war stories" which cultivated the patriotic will-to-sacrifice were, as Elshtain argues, sourced in print or oral culture. I would argue that these same "war stories" were quickly taken up by film as a potent means of achieving the same end - namely a willingness to die "decorously" for the fatherland.

F. The Myth and Reality of PPM - "the glorious and decent death is for the Fatherland"

Another stream of patriotic thinking which existed alongside the liberal republican tradition in the 19thC was the aristocratic Roman idea of the "glorious and decent" death for the Fatherland - best expressed in the Horatian Ode "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori". Elites in France, the German states, and England who got a classical education based upon reading the histories and speeches of well-bred Roman aristocratic soldiers readily accepted this political and moral view that it was the duty of the true citizen/subject to give his life for the Emperor, King, and even the Republic, in battle. We in the late 20thC, having had our culture de-romanised by the collapse in classics education in the high schools, might find this notion a bit hard to accept. Modern war with its high explosives, flame throwers and machine guns, has made such sentiments about the "sweetness" of death sound too hollow to be accepted. Yet it remained a powerful sentiment in the late 19thC in literature, history, and the new textbooks for the compulsory state schools which were established in

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[24] Elshtain, "Sovereignty, Identity, Sacrifice," p. 166.

the last third of the 19thC. I believe this idea of the "glorious and decent death for the fatherland" was still a potent ideal which attracted many young German men to the Nazis in the 1930s - a kind of literary heroic counterpart to the monumental classicism of the public architecture the Nazis erected in Berlin, Nuremberg and Bayreuth. I would go further and argue that this Roman notion of heroic death has been taken up in the 20thC by the cinema as visual imagery has gradually replaced oral or written imagery of the heroic and patriotic warrior.

What does the classical poetic (and now filmic) ideal patriotic death consist of? First of all, there is the heroic death itself, the noble death "for" the fatherland. It is usually not clear that the word "for" means "in defense of" (in the sense Richard Price meant in 1789) but more likely "when called upon" to do so, unquestioningly, by the political "pater" (for King, Emperor, other Head of State, or in Victorian and Edwardian Britain for the trinity of "God, King and Country"). The sacrifice one is called upon to make lies on a sliding scale from, at the bottom, the sacrifice of time and job and absence from family and friends, to paying taxes and having fewer consumer items to buy as the "war economy" consumes all resources, to facing the risk of physical injury and even death in battle.

In the poetry,[25] stories, histories of heroic sacrifice for the fatherland there is very little mention of the risk of serious physical injury. There is death of course, the clean neat death of a hero falling on the battle field clutching the company flag (like Errol Flynn as Custer in "The Died With Their Boots On" (1942) - 3.5 minute excerpt from film at 2.08), but not maiming (losing arms or legs or eyes or being gassed) and not traumatic violent death (being blown to bloody lumps of flesh, or being run over repeatedly by tanks in a muddy field). The first example of this kind of bloodless heroic death which comes to mind is the death of Sgt Stryker (John Wayne) in "The Sands of Iwo Jima" (1949) whose death shocks the unsuspecting audience but whose manner of dying is in the classical heroic tradition. A Japanese sniper fires at Stryker killing him instantly and leaving only a small slightly blood-soaked hole in his shirt. In the same film we see American soldiers using flame throwers to "flush" Japanese soldiers from their bunkers. We do not see burning bodies writhing in

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[25] See the theme of "Patriotism" in *Poetry Themes: A Bibliographical Index to Subject Anthologies and Related Criticism in the English language, 1875-1975*, compiled by Peter Marcan (London: Clive Bingley, ?), pp. 173-76. There are two anthologies which include Horace's phrase in their titles: one published at the start of the new century, *Pro patria et regina: Being Poems from Nineteenth Century Writers in Great Britain and America, issued in Aid of Her Majesty Queen Alexandra's Fund for Soldiers and Sailors*, ed. William Angus Knight (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1901), and one published during WW1, *Pro patria: A Book of Patriotic Verse*, ed. Wilfrid J. Halliday (London: Dent, 1915).

pain, nor do we see the charred and contorted corpses even of the race enemy. The sequences are in fact taken from US Army documentaries of actual combat and were used repeatedly afterwards to give Hollywood combat films some verisimilitude. (Excerpts from film at 1.34 "Our Hearts were young and Gay"; Japanese sniper at 1.45; flag raising at 1.50)

The medical consequences of modern war have been known for some time and have been usefully summarised by John Laffin.[26] Laffin's purpose is to oppose the real "glory of the bravery of soldiers, sailors and airmen" with the falsely named "glorious dead" and "gallant wounded".[27] The literate doctors who accompanied Napoleon, or Grant, or Haig, or Patton into the field of battle have left personal memoirs or have contributed to official "Medical Histories" which relate the grim truth of what the modern machinery of war can do to a human body. We also have the accounts of many war veterans (beginning with the better educated soldiers who served on both sides of the American Civil War and continuing up to the Vietnam War) who occasionally let slip some incident or fact which contradicts the poetic ideal of the heroic death. We also have the rare account by a civilian eyewitness or researcher who dares show the "medical reality" of war (Zola, Dunant).

Historians too have known since the beginning of the century that technology and the potent political and economic forces unleashed by "total war" have made possible new and more efficient ways of killing and dying. There is, to mention only a few possible examples, the random killing of artillery in WW1 (the major killer and cause of injury to soldiers on all sides), the mass killing and maiming made possible by poison gas, the area bombing and later fire bombing of cities in WW2 (Berlin, Dresden, Tokyo), the industrialised killing of the Holocaust against the Jews and other "enemies of the Reich" in WW2, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

All these new ways of killing and dying for the fatherland contradict the traditional "myth" of "sweet and fitting" death for the fatherland, yet the power of the myth continues only slightly abated in the second half of the 20thC. The question the historian must ask is why does the myth of glorious death survive in spite of all the evidence to the contrary? what is its power over the mind of the reader, the film goer, the TV and video watcher? Laffin introduces his history of military doctors and nurses

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[26] See the historical survey by John Laffin, *Surgeons in the Field* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1970).

[27] Laffin, *Surgeons in the Field,* pp. 2-3.

with a statement of the obvious, that there is nothing "glorious" in death on a battlefield, yet the myth still holds sway in popular imagination and official war commemoration days:

> **Another conveniently glossy phrase, much used by some politicians, poets, preachers and pressmen is 'our glorious dead' followed by 'our gallant wounded'. Two of the great clichaic-platitudes of war literature and war propaganda (and I would add war films - DMH), they have survived thousands of years of battlefield carnage, and in nearly all cases the users have never seen any glorious dead and rarely any gallant wounded. A special mentality is required to *see* the human wreckage of a battlefield and *then* to refer to it as glorious dead. No mentality at all is required to mouth the phrase if one has never been near a military action...**
>
> **Dying on a battlefield - which is often not a field at all but a ditch or a patch of mud - is very unpleasant; being badly wounded but managing to survive for a long time until help arrives can be even more unpleasant; being patched up in hospital can be protracted and painful. And so many servicemen are not even granted the luxury of death of the battlefield at the hands of the enemy - the 'perfect soldier's death' - they die of typhoid or cholera or malaria or scrub typhus or dysentery or scurvy or frostbite or one of the many afflictions which have cursed generations of soldiers. It is rather disconcerting to note how few balladists or poets (or filmmakers - DMH) have sung the praises of heroes who had died of illness far away from home. Perhaps they have seen nothing heroic in such a death. It is, in truth, rather a shabby death and an aesthetically unsatisfying one for a soldier. Yet many more soldiers throughout history have died of illness rather than of wounds and in the cold ignominy of bed and not in the heat of battle.[28]**

Very few of these snippets of gruesome reality have made it onto the silver screen of the cinema. Public taste, government and military censorship and the power of the heroic tradition prevent it from happening. The current flurry of discussion on H-War and H-Film about the "realism" of Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" suggests that the myth persists and is only occasionally

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[28] Laffin, *Surgeons in the Field,* pp. 2-3.

challenged, though never overthrown. For all the special effects Spielberg has at his command I still think the 1930 version of "All Quiet on the Western Front" gets closest to the heart of what modern war is like, what it does to human beings and how wrong the Roman ideal of "sweet and fitting death for the fatherland" is. The specific scenes in Milestone's film are the following:

- the scene in the classroom when the teacher Kantorek extols the virtue of dying for the fatherland - excerpt at 0.05-0.10; Kantorek quotes Horace at 0.07.30
- the scenes scattered throughout the film showing the effects of machine gun fire, artillery fire, hand-to-hand combat
- the shocking scene of the amputated hands clinging to the barbed wire
- the discussion between 2 soldiers in the dug out over the pros and cons of head vs stomach wounds
- the fear of amputation
- and the scene where Bäumer returns to the classroom on leave and explicitly denounces the Horatian ideal - excerpt at 1.54-1.58

I challenge any modern film to come close to equalling Milestone's achievement in contradicting the myth of PPM.

G. The Patriotism of the Ordinary Soldier in Combat

One of the doyens of post-WW2 military history Peter Paret reminds us of the importance of patriotism as a sentiment held "in the minds of ordinary men and women" and the need to put aside sometimes the idea of patriotism as defined "by political theorists and propagandists".[29] This is particularly true when one examines the patriotism of the ordinary foot soldier who fought in the major wars of the 20thC. One of the great contributions of the "New Military History" is the body of published material which explores the behaviour, thoughts and experiences of ordinary soldiers based upon oral history and the examination of soldiers' letters, trench newspapers and memoirs. It

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[29] Peter Paret, "Nationalism and the Sense of Military Obligation" (1970) in *Understanding War: Essays on Clausewitz and the History of Military Power* (Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 39-52.

is instructive to compare these "everyday" attitudes about serving the needs of the state/fatherland and the official view propagated in government newspapers, school textbooks, film, etc. Their studies concern the soldiers of 20thC conflicts, whose general level of literacy made it possible for them to communicate their thoughts to friends and families in letters and to each other in "trench newspapers". Another factor which makes this new type of military history possible is the military and political bureaucracy which collected, censored and delivered the letters written by ordinary soldiers to the families at home. This type of history, however much historians might wish to have it, is impossible to write about wars before the 20thC (with the possible exception of the American Civil War). The literature ranges from general surveys which cover several 20thC conflicts (Hugh McManners,Richard Holmes, and Samuel Hynes),[30] to more detailed histories of particular wars including:

- French soldiers in WW1 - Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Antoine Prost[31]
- British and Australian soldiers in WW1 - Bill Gammage, Denis Winter and J.G. Fuller[32]
- American soldiers in WW2 - John Ellis[33]
- German soldiers on the Eastern Front in WW2 - Omer Bartov and Stephen Fritz[34]
- American soldiers in Vietnam - Mark Baker and Al Santoli[35]

A common conclusion many of these historians have drawn is that soldiers often enlist out of a strong feeling patriotism. They sincerely believe in the classical ideal of the heroic, glorious death

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[30] Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War* (1993) (London: HarperCollins, 1994); Richard Holmes, *Firing Line* (1985) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987); and Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (1997) (New York: Penguin, 1998).

[31] Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914-1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1992); and Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War: 'Les Anciens Combattants' and French Society* (Oxford: Berg, 1992).

[32] Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers and the Great War* (1974) (Penguin); Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (1978) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988); J.G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[33] John Ellis, *World War II: The Sharp End* (1980) (London: Windrow and Greene, 1990).

[34] Stephen G. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York, 1991).

[35] Mark Barker, *Nam: The Vietnam war in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There* (London, Abacus, 1982); Al Santoli, *To Bear Any Burden: The Vietnam War and its Aftermath in the Words of Americans and Southeast Asians* (London: Abacus, 1986).

on the battlefield. However, after experiencing battle at first hand they eventually abandon that view as simplistic at best and wrong in most or all aspects. Yet, they continue to fight and fight bravely. This time they fight out of concern ("love") for their comrades in their unit, not for the much broader and abstract ideals of defense of fatherland, patriotism, search for personal glory. One could say that, in the face of combat, their moral and patriotic compass has collapsed from the national to the very personal level of platoon or squad/unit or company. A brief survey of this literature will demonstrate the point I wish to make. Richard Holmes, for example, surveys about 200 hundred years of British and European combat in his book *Firing Line* and in a section called "The Reason Why" (recall Tennyson's poem of military disaster "The Charge of the Light Brigade" in which the ultimate defense of mindless obedience to incompetent military authority is given: "Their's not to make reply,/Their's not to reason why,/ Their's but to do or die") (a line quoted in "Saving Private Ryan")[36] contrasts the "heady patriotism" of the recruit with the virtual absence of patriotism "on the line".[37] In the words of John Dollard, a veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade of the Spanish Civil War (a more ideological war than most):

> **... the soldier in battle is not forever whispering, "My cause, my cause." He is too busy for that. Ideology functioned *before* battle, to get the man in; and *after* battle by blocking thoughts of escape.[38]**

A number of films and novels show the arrival of the patriotic "new guy" who is naive enough to express the official state line on patriotism only to face humiliation from the hostile reaction of the more experienced soldiers for whom such patriotism is patently false. Jeering at John Wayne films by US soldiers in the field in Vietnam.

H. The "Realist" Challenge to Conventional Heroic Patriotism

Detailed knowledge of the nature of modern combat is hard to come by. Only a minority of men under arms actually get to experience frontline combat (Ellis, Sharp End), of these many are reluctant or unable to write down their experiences for others to read, those who are able to record

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[36] *The Faber Book of War Poetry*, p. 300.

[37] Holmes, *Firing Line* (1985), pp. 274 ff.

[38] Holmes, *Firing Line* (1985), p. 276.

their experiences often take at least a decade and often much longer (40 years in the case of Paul Fussell, *Wartime*) to feel mentally and emotionally able to write their memoirs. Thus, the possibility of challenging the official view of patriotism is considerably limited, at least in the short term.

The forgotten secret of WW2 - Col. S.L.A. Marshall's discovery that only 15% of US soldiers fired their weapon in combat (not that they fired high but they did not fire their weapon at all). Interviewed 400 infantry companies who fought in Europe and Pacific 1943-5. Concluded:

> **The thing is simply this, that out of an average one hundred men along the line of fire during the period of an encounter, only 15 men on average would take any part with the weapons. This was true whether the action was spread over a day, or two days or three... In the most aggressive infantry companies, under the most intense local pressure, the figure rarely rose above 25% of total strength from the opening to the close of an action.[39]**

Suggests that the social taboo against killing another human is so strong that most men even in combat cannot overcome it. Suggests also that war films which show all men aggressively firing their weapons is a myth. The truth is that a vast majority of soldiers at the front line probably huddled in their foxholes or dugouts and never saw the enemy let alone fired their weapon at him. It has been know for some time that the greatest number of deaths and injuries in WW1 and WW2 were a result of explosive devices such as artillery or bombs dropped from planes. These were weapons fired out of visible range of any human enemy (hence impersonal) or fired in a social setting (as part of a "crew" where one person's behaviour was modified by the presence of others). Perhaps if more infantry men had fired their weapons in combat the statistics of death and injury would have been very different.

An interesting questions suggests itself: is this the unique experience of Americans in WW2 (strong anti-military tradition up to WW2, isolationism), or does it also apply to French, German, Russian soldiers as well?

1. Germany

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[39] S.L.A. Marshall, *Men against Fire* (1947), quoted in Gwynne Dyer, *War* (London: Bodley Head, 1986), p. 118.

In the case of Germany, the flood of anti-war novels and trickle of anti-war films came in the last 2-3 years of the 1920s and lasted until the coming to power of the new Nazi regime in 1933, when a more patriotic and "German" national literature and cinema was promoted. Hunger for "realistic" accounts of trench warfare by a younger generation denied access to the experiences of their fathers, uncles and older brothers through reticence. Cut short by Nazi desire to see "heroic patriotism" revived and "communist" and "pacifist" sentiment eliminated from Germany. Concerted effort to create "patriotic ideal" in new German cinema, Hitler Youth, visual and printed propaganda. Veritable "cult of death" created.[40] After war, natural reluctance to return to horrors of Nazi-induced war. Memory of war created in such a way as to separate activities of "ordinary soldiers" from Nazi regime - tales of courage and endurance in largely traditional war novels, notion of having to do their "hard" but unquestioned duty as soldiers. Idea of German soldier as "victim" of Nazi brutality. (Vilsmeier's "Stalingrad" and Moeller article "War Stories")

2. USA

Reasons for the strength of "myth of heroic patriotism" in USA. Deeper awareness of impact of modern war in US compared to Europe due to events of Civil War which were experienced by large proportion of adult males, and reported on and read about by large literate majority. Nevertheless, myth remained strong because of "Victorian" reticence to speak about horror of battlefield, fact devastation limited to one region (the South) and thus could be hidden from Northern cities, lack of major war/invasion on continental USA by foreign enemy (since 1812 Britain), only brief participation in WW1 (1918). During 1930s heroic depiction of war very popular among audiences (Errol Flynn swashbucklers - Captain Blood, Robin Hood, They Died with their Boots On) who had no personal experience of combat with which to compare what they saw on the screen.

IV. PATRIOTISM AND PPM IN WW2

Because WW2 was the most meticulously documented war in human history, the historian knows a great deal about the face of that particular battle or series of battles. Nevertheless, this war also

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[40] Jay W. Baird, *To Die For Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (1990) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

produced the greatest number of patriotic novels and films which served to perpetuate the myth of the "sweet and fitting death for the fatherland". During the war, in the English-speaking democracies the depiction of heroic and patriotic death was maintained in films such as Raoul Walsh's *They Died With Their Boots On* (1942), Olivier's *Henry V* (1944), Charles Chauvel's *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940) and the steady stream of "combat movies" which Jeanine Basinger has so carefully analyzed.[41] Not surprisingly in Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan the theme was also heavily emphasised in the propaganda films of the war years in films like Veit Harlan's *Kolberg* (1945).[42] After the war (1945-65) the American patriotic combat movie continued to evolve into its classic form, with stars such as John Wayne and Audie Murphy providing the most identifiable and easily recognizable heroes, until the Vietnam War began to challenge the patriotic consensus about "The Good War".

A. Ambivalent Patriotism in Ford's *They Were Expendable* (1945) and Mizoguchi's *The Loyal 47 Ronin* (1941-42)

During WW2 only a small handful of films offered a more complex and ambivalent depiction of patriotic sacrifice and the message they gave was often misunderstood or ignored. For example, although John Ford was in the forefront of Hollywood directors who willingly gave their services to the military to promote the war effort he also produced a subtle reflection on the nature of the demands placed by the state on those who were earmarked as "expendable". *They Were Expendable* (1945) is based upon the experiences of Lt. John Bulkeley (1911-1996) who commanded a Motor Torpedo Squadron (the predecessor of the Navy PT boats in which the future President JFK also served and whose exploits were celebrated in the film *PT 109*(1963)) and whom Ford got to know when preparations were being made for the Normandy invasion in which Ford would participate as a documentary filmmaker. The title of the film is a bitter reference to the men who were left behind in the scramble to flee the Philippines after the Japanese invasion. As one of Bulkeley's unit remarked in White's book, after having been presented the DSC by Gen. MacArthur Bulkeley and his crew learned they were to left behind while MacArthur fled to Australia:

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[41] Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[42] David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Peter Paret, "*Kolberg* (1945) as a Historical Film and Historical Document," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 1994, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 433-48.

Of course to us this meant that the China trip - our last hope of seeing America and escaping death or a Japanese prison - was gone forever. Now the MTB's were like the rest here in the islands - the expendables who fight on without hope to the end. So far as we knew, we would now finish up the war in the southern islands, when the Japs got around to mopping up the last American resistance there.

And yet I was curiously glad. Mostly, I think, it was because of Peggy. I wasn't guilty any more. Now we both had our duty to do here in the Philippines. Of course I would never see her again - her job was here in Corregidor, and mine would be down in the southern islands. But our end would be the same. We were both expendable now. I wasn't running out on her and I felt a lot better.[43]

It was a curious film to make in 1945 as it was about an ignominious defeat which had taken place very early in the war but which was made when victory for the Allies seemed assured. This alone makes the film stand out from the run-of-the-mill WW2 combat films with their strong sense of inevitable triumphalism. The heroism Ford depicts is quite different from that of Lewis Seiler's*Guadalcanal Diary* (1943) - the sailor's actions are understated, they quietly carry out their orders and accept without complaint or opposition the decision to leave them behind to face death or imprisonment. Ford draws our attention to the "ordinary heroes" among the enlisted men and junior officers rather than the more traditional warrior heroes which Erroll Flynn had depicted before the war or that John Wayne would depict after the war. However, there are a number of barbs in the tail of Ford's film - there is the unwelcome reminder of early defeats and the struggle of men like Bulkeley to prove the value of the PT boats to an unimpressed Navy hierarchy. There is also some implied criticism that the men left behind were paying for the lack of preparation and professionalism of the US military before the Pearl Harbour attack in December 1941. Some of the darkness of Ford's vision may be attributable to the reservations Ford had about making the film. He was obliged under contract to make the film but it came quite soon after he had been injured at the Battle of Midway while making a documentary for the Navy. He had also lost 13 men in his own unit as a result of his dangerous filmmaking activity and he no doubt felt some guilt at

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[43] William M. White, *They Were Expendable* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1942), pp. 104-5.

"commanding" men who had died in combat. The film thus had a personal dimension which was lacking in other films he was to make about men in combat, most notably his calvalry pictures in the late 1940s which helped launch John Wayne's career as a war hero.[44] The studio did not allow Ford's ambivalent depiction of heroic and patriotic sacrifice go uncensored, even though it was released very late in the war. As Sinclair notes about the ending:

> **But in the final release print Brickley's bitter farewell to his men has been cut. He no longer takes off in a Flying Fortress, making a sad checklist of the men he has had to leave behind him, but roars away over the abandoned crews to the strains of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" on the soundtrack, while MacArthur's famous words of defiance are echoed and superimposed, "*We Shall Return*".[45]**

Thus the quiet message of futile and unreasonable sacrifice of ordinary sailors (who would never return) was hidden by the noisy patriotism the studio felt obliged to tack on in the name of the war effort.

Another director who was to become famous after the war and who contributed his filmmaking talents to the military during the war was the Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi (1898-1956). Although during the war Mizoguchi primarily made historical dramas with apparently no political content his activity does raise the problem of a great artist "appearing" to collaborate with an oppressive regime (compare Leni Riefenstahl in Nazi Germany and Sergei Eisenstein in Stalinist Russia). Certainly after the war Mizoguchi made a number of films attacking key aspects of the feudal and militaristic order which had led Japan to defeat - the oppression of women in *The Life of Oharu* (1952), the corruption of war in *Ugetsu* (1953), and the institution of slavery in *Sansho the Bailiff* (1954). But on closer examination Mizoguchi's war-time films did contribute to the war effort by showing the heroism of samurai warriors and by reinforcing the duty of blind loyalty to one's feudal lord (and by extension to the Emperor himself) in the classic "47 Ronin" story in which 47 loyal samurai ("righteous patriots") seek revenge for their lord and then commit suicide as honour dictated. The ambivalence of Mizoguchi's depiction of sacrifice for one's lord (which has a strong

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[44] Andrew Sinclair, *John Ford* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 197?), Chap. 11 "Theatre of War," pp. 109-22. Obituary of Vice-Admiral John Bulkeley in *The Times* reprinted in *The Australian*, Tuesday, April 23 1996, p. 19.

[45] Sinclair, *John Ford* (197?), p. 121-22.

patriotic connotation in the context of WW2 Japan) comes from how he films the ending not from how he tells the well-known story. According to Joan Mellon, whose view on this matter I share, Mizoguchi subtley questions the heroism and nobility of the Ronins' murder and suicide for their lord. In part one of the long film Mizoguchi goes through the motions of adhering to wartime government policy by celebrating the feudal past, affirming the duty of blind loyalty to one's lord, and showing regret for the weakening of the warrior spirit caused by 70-80 years of peace under the Tokugawas. But in Part 2 Mizoguchi departs from the traditional pattern of story telling by not showing the ritual suicide of the heroic Ronin. Instead, we see a brave young woman who was betrothed to one of the Ronin demanding an explanation of why she cannot see her finance before he kills himself. When she is denied permission to see him on the grounds that it might weaken his resolve to carry out his duty to kill himself, she decides to kill herself as well. By directing his camera to film the young woman's suicide instead of the Ronins' Mizoguchi made a radical departure from the traditional way of telling the story and thus in the context of wartime Japan undercut the heroism and nobility of the Ronins' actions. Instead he shows us the loyalty of a private individual whose life is ruined by the destructive demands of feudal obligation and sacrifice.[46]

B. Patriotism and "Glorious Death" in Olivier's *Henry V* (1944)

The film *Henry V* (1944) (see my film handout for more details - Laurence Olivier, *Henry V* (1944)) was Olivier's first attempt at directing a film and his skill at adapting the stage-play to the screen has been recognized by both film historians and his contemporaries who awarded him an Academy award in 1946. The Second World War interrupted Olivier's acting career and he went to work for the British government to promote the sale of war bonds and bolster public support for the war. When the Allied victory seemed assured Olivier was released from his military duties to make *Henry V* which was filmed in neutral Ireland in 1943-44 when the invasion of Normandy was being planned. Olivier adapted Shakespeare's play for the screen by cutting out about one quarter of the written text, leaving out important scenes about atrocities committed by the English (e.g. execution

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[46] Joan Mellon, *The Waves at Genji's Door: Japan Through its Cinema* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), pp. 32-4. See also Dudley Andrew, "Mizoguchi", in *The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers. Volume 2: Directors*, ed. Christopher Lyon (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 375-377. *Ugestu. Kenji Mizoguchi, Director*, ed. Keiko I. McDonald (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993). *Chushingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers) A Puppet Play* (1748), trans. Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). Mikiso Hane, "Forty-Seven Ronin Incident," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, pp. 327-8.

of French prisoners) in order to leave enough time to stage the battle itself.[47] The film proved very popular with wartime audiences, running for 20 weeks in London and 46 weeks on Broadway. Jack Jorgens observes of Olivier's version of *Henry V* that

> **In the midst of a war (1944), the pressures on Olivier must have been very great to make an entertaining nationalist film uncomplicated by Shakespearean irony. Certainly the patriotism is there to complement the escapist fantasy, the hymn to Britain's past glories, and the "twentieth-century conception of a sixteenth-century conception of a historical fifteenth-century king."...**
>
> **Nevertheless, it is to Olivier's credit that in spite of these pressures he retained a few of the complicating elements of the play and made something more than a brilliant showpiece of propaganda.[48]**

There are a number of reasons why Laurence Olivier's choice of a war propaganda film to bolster the spirits of the British people on the eve of the D-Day landings in Normandy is a curious one.[49] Firstly, there is the problem of who the "enemy" is - a not yet fully formed French nation state in 1415 during the 100 Years War, but the (German) Nazis in 1944 (with the added complication of an occupied French north and collaborationist Vichy south). One could say that in both cases the enemy is a continental one and this might have been sufficient for many British viewers in 1944-45. Secondly, the nature of warfare - longbows and swords in 1415 vs the awesome power of mid-20thC firepower in 1944 made comparisons meaningless. There would be few Britons who had not been touched in some way by the changed nature of modern warfare and its extraordinary lethality (civilian victims of the Blitz, lists published in the papers of "Killed in Action", and general

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[47] The general thrust of the cuts, aside from reducing the size of the play so it would fit into a 2 hour film, was to remove any reference which might either question the legitimacy of the English invasion of France or which might suggest the English committed atrocities. Scenes which were cut include: the summary execution of the pro-French conspirators; Henry's threats to King Charles that war will devastate the civilian population of France; Henry's threats before the gates of Harfleur to rape, pillage and torture the inhabitants; Henry's doubts before the battle about the legitimacy of his father usurping the crown from Richard II and thus the very legitimacy of his undertaking; Henry's decision in the battle to slit the throats of his French prisoners. Compare the screenplays written by both Olivier and Branagh: *Classic Film Scripts: Henry V by William Shakespeare, produced and directed by Laurence Olivier* (London: Lorrimer Publishing, 1984) and *Henry V by William Shakespeare. A Screen Adaptation by Kenneth Branagh* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989).

[48] Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* , p. 126.

[49] Jack J. Jorgens, *Shakespeare on Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977). Chap. 8 "Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*," pp. 122-35.

communication with frontline soldiers either via letters, soldiers on leave, or whatever). The story book depiction of warfare in Olivier's film would have fooled no one - yet it was a popular success with both British and American audiences. Thirdly, those familiar with the play would have realised that Shakespeare's patriotism is not as clear cut as it may seem on the surface. For every patriotic speech by Henry there is a counter-balancing anti-war or critical speech by Williams or the Duke of Burgundy or the Chorus.[50] Yet Olivier's choice of film does make some kind of sense as Shakespeare's "patriotic speeches" had been often used by nationalists to celebrate the military prowess of English monarchs and the heroism of the "yeoman soldier", and fighting in northern France, Belgium and the Netherlands had become an English habit (1415 at Agincourt, the Western Front in 1914-18 (Shakespeare mentions Henry crossing the Somme river in the play), and Dunkirk in 1940 and the D-Day landings in mid-1944).[51]

Henry's most notable patriotic speeches, delivered with such gusto by Olivier, are the extraordinarily bloodthirsty speech given at Harfleur (3.1.1-34 - "Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more") where Henry challenges the manhood and honour of his soldiers and urges them to put on their "war face" and attack in the names of God, Harry, England and St. George; and the Saint Crispin's Day speech (4.3.18-67 - "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers" - video tape ?) where Henry consoles his men for being outnumbered 5-1 by the French with thoughts of how their duty and sacrifice for the King will be fondly remembered in the future. In answer to Warwick's wish that some of England's unemployed could be magically transported to northern France to help them in the coming battle, Henry asserts that the fewer there are on the battlefield the more honour and glory will fall to each man, that fighting for him may in fact ennoble the low-born, and that in

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[50] Williams' speech ("there are few die well who die in battle" - 4.1.129-40); the Duke of Burgundy's speech on the blessings of peace ("the naked, poor, and mangled peace" - 5.2.23-67); the Chorus's blunt statement on the ultimate futility of Henry's invasion of France, his early death, the loss of French territory by his heirs and the subsequent civil wars which wracked England (Epilogue 11-12). On Shakespeare' attitude to war, see Steven Marx, "Shakespeare's Pacifism," *Renaissance Quarterly*, Spring 1992, vol. XLV, no. 1, pp. 49-95; Paul Jorgenson, *Shakespeare's Military World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956); Theodor Meron, *Henry's Wars and Shakespeare's Laws: Perspectives on the Law of War in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[51] On Henry V and the 100 Years War see Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c.1300-c.1450* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. G.L. Harriss (Oxford University Press, 1985); Christopher Allmand, *Henry V* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); *Society at War: The Experience of England and France During the Hundred Years War*, ed. C.T. Allmand (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973); John Keegan, "Agincourt (1415)," *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976).

the future, the survivors will be able to bare their scarred arms to prove that they were there (excerpt from film at 1.28.30-1.30.40):[52]

If we are marked to die, we are enough
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will, I pray thee wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It ernes me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires.
But if it be a sin to covet honour
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England.
God's peace, I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more methinks would share from me
For the best hope I have. O do not wish one more.
Rather proclaim it presently through my host
That he which hath no stomach for this fight,
Let him depart. His passport will be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse.
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.
This day is called the Feast of Crispian.
He that outlives this day and comes safe home
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall see this day and live t'old age

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[52] William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Gary Taylor (The Oxford Shakespeare, 1984), pp. 228-30. This passage was also selected by Kenneth Baker to head his section on "The Patriotic Imperative" in *The Faber Book of War Poetry*, pp. 6-8.

Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours
And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."
Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember, with advantages,
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words -
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester -
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.
This story shall the good man teach his son,
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
From this day to the ending of the world
But we in it shall be remembered,
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition.
And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

This speech is notable for the fact that it concentrates on the prospect of survival, not death, of those who follow Henry into battle at Agincourt, and the glory and honour and nobility which will fall to those who participate. That injury might result from the battle is admitted but the scale of injury is limited to a few scars upon the arm (sword cuts? - but only noblemen would have fought with swords, common-born soldiers would have fought with longbow or bill (a staff weapon with a hook, spike and blade)). An historically more accurate assessment of the types of wounds and causes of death of Henry's men-at-arms comes from John Laffin, who notes that Henry left England in 1415

with 32,000 men, 20 surgeons, one physician and one cart and two horses to carry medical supplies (Laffin also wryly notes that *physician* "in an old Ionian dialect, meant 'extractor of arrows'") - or 1 doctor for every 1500 men.[53] The result of this chronic understaffing of army doctors meant that only the noble injured, like the Duke of Gloucester who received a stab wound to the stomach, were treated, while the "hopelessly wounded" English were killed by their own men as they left the field of battle the following day, and the slightly wounded were generously given some cash to find their own way home to England, if they could. These were of course their own men - injured French soldiers who could not be ransomed were dealt with more harshly. Even before the men had a chance to die in battle for their King at Agincourt, it was more likely that they would have died of dysentery which broke out among the troops at the siege of Harfleur. 2,000 men died and 5,000 had to be invalided home (about 22% of Henry's total forces). As the disease struck nobleman and commoner alike it was a much more levelling affliction than the ennoblement of battle which Henry promises his soldiers at Agincourt.

One injured survivor of Agincourt, a Thomas Hostelle, listed his injuries received in battle and petitioned the king for charity in his impoverished old age (he received a pension Laffin tells us), thus suggesting that Shakespeare's Henry's promise of a glorious post-war old age was a mythical one:[54]

> **To the king our sovereign lord [probably Henry VI - DMH],**
>
> **Beseecheth meekly your povere [poor] liegeman and humble horatour [petititioner], Thomas Hostelle, that, in consideration of his service done to your noble progenitors of blessed memory, king Henry iiijth [4th?] and king Henry vth, (whose souls God assoile!) being at the siege of Harfleur there smitten with a springbolt through the head, losing his one eye and his cheek bone broken; also at the battle of Agincourt, and afore at the taking of the carracks on the sea, there with a gadde of yrene [iron] his plates smitten in to his body and his hand smitten in sunder, and sore hurt, maimed and wounded, by mean whereof he being sore feebled and debrused, now falle to great age**

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[53] Laffin, *Surgeons in the Field,* pp. 20-21; his definition of "physician" comes from p. 6.

[54] Quoted in Laffin, *Surgeons in the Field,* pp. 22-23.

and poverty, greatly endetted, and may not help him self... and being for his said service never yet recompensed ne rewarded...

The injuries the French were likely to receive were quite spectacular given the superiority of the English weaponry, especially the longbow. The 2 metre longbows could propel an iron-barbed shaft with such force that it could penetrate the bodies of three men in file or kill a man standing on the other side of a horse. The French also suffered the fearsome blows of the English bill which could be used by a foot-soldier to bring down a horseman - the hook could be used to drag the man from his horse and the blade or spike could be used to kill through a chink in the armour. Both sides suffered injury and death from the other customary weapons of the period - the pole-axe and mace and morning star (heavy spike ball on a chain - which we see Brian Blessed wield in Branagh's film) could smash skulls and break other bones, swords and axes could amputate a limb or decapitate a man in one blow, foot-soldiers could be run over by a heavily armoured horse, armoured knights could fall from their mounts and drown in the mud, swords or knives or pikes could break off leaving the blade half stuck in the armour and half penetrating the body (thus effectively being unremovable and hence fatal), soldiers besieging a castle like Harfleur could be burnt by boiling oil or water or crushed by falling rocks. The only known medical treatment for these horrific injuries were amputation, cauterization of stumps and deep wounds by boiling oil, or bandaging.[55] As Shakespeare, perhaps recognising the reality of battle, has Williams say to Henry (in disguise on the eve of battle - "under Sir Thomas Irpingham) "there are few die well who die in battle" (excerpt from film at 1.16 and 1.18-1.19.30):[56]

But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads chopped off in a battle shall join together at the latter day, and cry all, 'We died at such a place' - some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left. I am afeard there are few die well who die in a battle, for how can they charitably dispose of anything, when blood is their argument? Now, if these

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[55] Laffin, *Surgeons in the Field,* pp. 19-20.

[56] Shakespeare, *Henry V* (The Oxford Shakespeare), 4.1.129-40, pp. 212-13.

men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the King that led them to it - who to disobey were against all proportion of subjection.

Of course, we get no inkling of the horrors of 15thC warfare from watching Olivier's film. The sunlit, grassy fields of neutral Ireland, the pageantry of the battle, the cuts he made to the text, and the heroism of the speeches help him achieve his propaganda purpose, namely to remind his English audience of a great victory they once had over a continental enemy, the need to overcome internal dissent (the Welsh, Irish, Scottish and English fight for Henry against a common enemy) and to perpetuate the myth of heroic sacrifice for the King in time of war. A number of these propaganda aims are suggested in the clumsily worded dedication at the opening of the film:

To the commandoes and airborne troops of Great Britain, the spirit of whose ancestors it has been humbly attempted to recapture in some ensuing scenes, this film is dedicated.

We have to turn to Kenneth Branagh's 1989 remake of the film (see my film handout for more details - Kenneth Branagh, *Henry V* (1989)) to see an attempt to make a more realistic "post-Somme, post-Vietnam" version of Henry V.[57] Whereas Olivier wanted to show the pageantry and glory of the English victory at Agincourt to support the British war effort on the eve of D-Day, Branagh's expressed aim was (in addition to making a profit in Thatcher's cost-cutting Britain) to stress the ruthlessness of Henry V as a political and military leader as well as the devastation of war. On the battle itself, it was to be, he said to reviewer Alan Roberts:[58]

The greatest tracking shot in the world. That was my theory anyway. It was certainly bloody long. After the close-up carnage of Agincourt, I wanted to reveal as much of the devastation as possible. On our limited location, we had not only built a 500-foot tracking platform, but designer Tim Harvey and his team had constructed a terrifying battlefield, where our 300 extras would mingle, wounded and dead, with horses and large numbers of dummy horses and people. To the accompaniment of a single voice

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[57] Chris Fitter, "A Tale of Two Branaghs: *Henry V*, Ideology, and the Mekong Agincourt," in *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. Ivo Kamps (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 259-75.

[58] Quoted in Alan Roberts review "Henry V: Once More Unto the Screen."

starting the Non Nobis hymn, the exhausted monarch would march the entire length of the battlefield to clear the place of the dead. As they marched, the music would swell to produce a tremendous climax.

Given the overt reference to the Somme River in Shakespeare's text (which Henry has to cross to get to Agincourt), it was not hard for Branagh to make a link between Henry V in 1415 and the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Unlike Olivier's sunny battlefield, Branagh wanted to create another "Somme" which would be muddy and bloody like the water and mud filled trenches in our stock image of the Western Front. Audiences of the late 1980s would probably have expected a bloodier and more violent depiction of battle whatever Branagh's political intentions may have been. In another interview given to promote the film when it was released in USA Branagh says:[59]

All the blood-and-guts was quite deliberate. In fact, if eyewitness accounts of the Battle of Agincourt are to be believed, we were rather modest in our representation of it. It was very unpleasant, undignified, inelegant butchery.

The rain had been on for 10 days and nights prior to the battle. The vastly superior French force got involved in a giant traffic jam and, in fact, many of the French people died through suffocation when they fell on top of each other and in their heavy armour couldn't get up.

In the early scenes Branagh shows the young Henry to be a Machiavellian prince who declares war on France for reason of Realpolitik (rather than behaving like an Erasmian eirenic Christian Prince). Branagh also restores many of the cuts Olivier made in order to sanitize both Henry V as a leader (e.g. his threats to the governor of Harfleur that his troops would bring down "filthy and contagious clouds of murder "by raping the "fair virgins", dashing the brains of the old men against the walls, and impaling children on their pikes - 3.3. 81-123 - after all, these are the acts of "Prussians" in WW1 or "Nazis" not the civilised English) and the bloody nature of (15thC) combat.[60] Much of the

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[59] Review by Sally Ogle Davis, "Under the Lion's Skin: Young Kenneth Branagh continues to Defy Critics of his remarkable Career," *The Weekend Australian*, December 23-24, 1989.

[60] The following scenes were cut by Olivier but reinstated by Branagh: the public cashiering of Henry's 3 erstwhile friends for conspiracy and treason; the violence and extremism of Henry's behaviour before his war cabinet; Henry's savage threat to the governor of Harfleur (threat of rape and infanticide); the argument between Henry and an ordinary soldier(Bates) over the guilt of individual soldiers in an unjust war - which leads to a challenge to fight a duel; Henry's prayer on eve of battle expressing doubt on

battle sequence is closer to the reality of 15thC combat, as described by Laffin and Keegan, in spite of the clumsy attempt to mimic Sam Peckingpah's slow motion "ballet of death". We do see the knights drowning in the mud, the bloody hand-to-hand fighting, the effect of mass flights of arrows, the battle field strewn with the corpses of man and beast. Yet Branagh's attempt to give us an anti-war "Henry V" ultimately fails I think because of the traditional "full-blooded, charismatic" performance of Henry's big patriotic speeches (Peter Greenaway). There is no way Branagh can gives us an attractive and heroic depiction of Henry and at the same time make an anti-war film out of "Henry V". The early Machiavellian portrait of the young king is overwhelmed by the likeable, humorous, and loving Henry who fights in France. The tensions inherent in Branagh attempt are spotted by the critic Chris Fitter who observes that:[61]

> **Branagh's *Henry*, though thrilling entertainment, gives us a work whose center comprises, as in the tradition of United States versions of the Vietnam War, a young male rite-of-passage movie [Oliver Stone's "Platoon" - DMH] rather than a critique of institutional power and class injustice...**
>
> **Kenneth Branagh has done us, as lovers of Shakespeare, a quite wonderful cultural service, in giving us a Shakespeare that is genuinely popular, intelligent and enthralling, unforgettable if also unfaithful... But he has done the ordinary people of the English-speaking world... an irresponsible political disservice, in whitewashing traditional autocracy and the logic of imperialism**.

As we watch Henry, with tears in his eyes, carry the dead body of the boy the full length of the battlefield to the sound of the inspirational "Non nobis" we do not conclude, no matter what Branagh's intentions might have been, that Henry is a Machiavellian prince who led his men to a pointless invasion of France where thousands died of disease and hundreds died painfully on the battlefield in order that he could prove his manhood and maintain/expand the English state across the Channel. Wilfred Owen's "old lie" lives on - the men died nobly for their king and they will be long remembered for their heroic sacrifice.

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the course of action he has taken and legitimacy of his father's claim to France. See Branagh's screenplay *Henry V by William Shakespeare. A Screen Adaptation by Kenneth Branagh* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989).

[61] Fitter, "A Tale of Two Branaghs", pp. 274-5.

C. Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)

Steven Spielberg's film about the D-Day invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), is literally draped in the American flag. The film begins and ends with the stars and stripes fluttering in the breeze in a Normandy military cemetery as an elderly Ryan visits the grave of the man who was responsible for ensuring his removal from combat and his safe return home. But the price of Ryan's safety was the burden of guilt he had to live with for over 50 years. Why was he chosen to survive when other men, as or even more courageous and worthy than he, did not survive? Captain Miller's dying words to Ryan were that he had to "earn" his right to live after so many men had died so that he might live (in an earlier scene he jokes with his men that he hoped Ryan would invent a cure for a disease or invent a better light bulb to justify the sacrifice he and men were making). With tears in his eyes, Ryan asks his wife somewhat pathetically if he had been a good man, to which she answers as one might expect a loving spouse to answer. Yet just having seen the events of the Normandy invasion and its immediate aftermath through Ryan's and Miller's eyes the viewer is forced to conclude that it was an impossible task for Ryan to have lived up to such a high expectation.

Is this Spielberg's way of questioning the traditional patriotic justification of America's war for democracy against Axis fascism? Is there some doubt creeping into American popular culture about the sacrifices which were made in the name of "freedom" over 50 years ago? Or is it yet another chapter in his crusade to prevent the American people forgetting "their" history (the Holocaust in *Schindler's List* (), slavery in *Amistad* ())? I suspect the latter as SPR follows the same pattern as the other two films - focusing on a small group of people (in this case one individual) who are saved from death (the Schindler Jews) or enslavement (Cinque and his Mende compatriots) whilst the majority of people in a similar situation are killed or forced to endure extreme hardship. The honest historian would acknowledge the existence of of the few who were saved but would have to conclude that the more common historical experience of the majority was that they were not saved. Spielberg chooses the better cinematic story of near miraculous salvation over the more depressing historical reality of individual lives governed by chance or fate.

- example of the traditional patriotic war film absorbing more "realistic" depiction of war to heighten the sense of noble sacrifice and courage
- Gen. Marshall's long quote from letter of Lincoln - linking WW2 with Civil War, phrase about "glorious death on the battlefield", real mercy towards mother or public relations exercise?
- conversations between Miller and his men - what is the justification for sending men to their deaths (to save the lives of many other men - not just one man), why does one carry out absurd orders (to earn the right to eventually go home), fatalism of soldiers trapped in intolerable situation (FUBAR - "fucked up beyond all recognition")
- intended patriotic message undermined what one sees in the rest of the film - horrible slaughter, foul ups of landing, exercise of arbitrary power (Marshall, general in glider)
- traditional war film episodes - last stand (The Alamo) at the bridge, saved by the "cavalry" at the last minute (P51 tank buster planes)
- more fitting ending would be random, senseless, accidental death of Miller

V.CONCLUSION

The impact of war on attitudes to Patriotism and PPM

Role of film in maintaining myth of PPM

Role of film in resisting/undermining myth of PPM