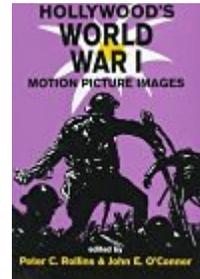


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Peter C. Rollins, John E. O'Connor, eds. *Hollywood's World War I: Motion Picture Images*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997. vii + 304 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87972-756-7; \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87972-755-0.

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Hollywood's World War I is a collection of fourteen essays examining the cinematic record of the Great European War. The film version of the War, according to the editors, bears little resemblance to the version of the War told by either the men who fought it or the historians who have studied it. As several of the contributors point out, the film industry is driven by the need to make money. In the movies the slaughter is justified as a sacrifice for democracy and "Christian" civilization.

Little of the visual record of the Great War is "real." The "official" films were either heavily censored or staged. The warring nations did not allow scenes from the trenches and battlefields in government films. Films from troop training and staged combat were used in place of actual footage. Yet films and television documentaries on the Great War routinely show film clips from government-made propaganda movies and allow the viewer to assume the scenes are real.

Hollywood films of the War are often more accurate representations of the conflict than the "documentaries." Films made during the conflict were intended to sell the War to the American public. To do so, filmmakers had to conform to the biases of the audience.

>From the silent films *The Big Parade* and *What Price Glory* to the present, all war films to succeed at the box office have adhered to the formula developed in these films. The authors show how the times determine the content of films. Whether pro- or anti-war, the formula is rarely modified.

The anti-war film is never anti-militarism. The isola-

tionism of the Thirties is not to be confused with pacifism. Kubrick's 1957 *Paths of Glory* blames the horrors of the War on the madness and ambition of the generals and not on the soldiers condemned to do the fighting. The essay on Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun* relates the failure of transforming a classic anti-war novel into a film. Audiences in the Sixties wanted to see the system ridiculed and found the faceless torso of Trumbo's film less entertaining than the black humor in *Mash* and *Catch-22*.

The air war and the veteran's homecoming are pure Hollywood. The heroic fighter pilot and the air war are studio inventions that have proven to be box office gold. *Wings* established the genre and the coming of sound added the roaring engines and machine guns as staples of the aviation film.

The Hollywood happy ending has the returning veteran making an adjustment to the post-war world often complete with a miraculous cure of his disabilities. He is never angry at the system that profited by sending him and millions like him to die in its defense. His suffering is redeemed by his faith and he finds true love, justice, and healing in the post-war world.

The volume should be read by anyone interested in the development of the war genre and the problem of using film as an instrument for the study of war.

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