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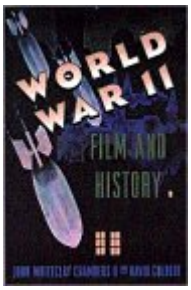

John Whiteclay Chambers, II, David Culbert, eds.. *World War II: Film and History.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. xv + 162 pp. $30.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-509966-9.

eds. John Whiteclay Chambers and David Culbert. *World War II: Film and History.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. xv + 187 pp , , .

Reviewed by Robert Fyne

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Even though the Second World War ended more than fifty years ago on the crowded decks of the U.S.S. Missouri, its memory will not fade. Unlike the Great War or Korean Conflict, World War II is now a highly touted, commercial industry in many countries. While books, essays, panel discussions, games, newspaper editorials--even CD-ROM's--appear regularly about this subject, the motion picture continues as the dominant information source. Documentaries and feature films--both past and present--still attract yet another generation of international viewers with various historical interpretations. But what about these movies? Are they accurate? Distorted? What power do these storylines exert in determining perception, memory or myth? These are some questions discussed in *World War II: Film and History*, an excellent anthology that takes a hard look at the relationship between moving images and the different societies that produced them.

One of the strengths of this book is Chambers' and Culbert's organization. Here, they include both sides. For example, in "China Nights: The Sustaining Romance of Japan at War," Australian historian Freda Freiberg examines the Japanese wartime cinema and analyzes some ways in which China was depicted. Using the popular 1940 photoplay *China Nights*, Professor Freiberg shows that racism and sexism justified Japanese aggression on the Asian mainland. In this interracial and sexual melodrama, the "feminist China" needed the subjugation of virile, "masculine Japan." In other words, China is the child that paternal Japan must discipline. How did Japanese audiences react to this point of view? For many women, it provided an emotional gratification that aggrandized the imperialist ideology of pride, power, and paternalism.

Similar propaganda emerged in Nazi motion pictures. Peter Paret's study "Kolberg: As Historical Film and Historical Document" details Goebbels insistence to glamorize the 1807 siege of a Prussian town as an analogy to Germany's military dilemma in 1945. According to Professor

Paret, Kolberg accurately depicted German public opinion during the closing months of the European war, while another essay, "The Goebbels Diaries," written by David Culbert, discusses the propaganda minister's involvement with this picture.

Over on the Eastern Front the Soviet Union kept the memory of their Great Patriotic War alive by producing socialist realist storylines but--as Denise Youngblood points out in "Post-Stalinist Cinema and the Myth of World War II"--after Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalinism, everything changed. A new type of drama emerged--the "quiet" war film--pictures that stressed the conflict's impact on the individual. Citing two titles as examples, ***Ivan's Childhood*** (1962) and ***Come and See*** (1985), Professor Youngblood explains how the Soviet directors slowly subverted the myth of glory and heroics, eventually becoming a counteranalysis of official history.

As for the United States, the nation that produced the most wartime films, Hollywood's titles were as divergent as they were numerous. In "Blockbuster History," D-Day historian Stephen Ambrose lists the inaccuracies found in Darryl Zanuck's 180 minute epic, ***The Longest Day*** (1962). Action, not history, was the theme of this invasion picture. When John Howard cautioned that the Pegasus Bridge assault team found no explosives under the bridge, Zanuck pooh-poohed this information. Why did he do this? According to the flamboyant producer, the public wanted to see tough British commandoes climb hand-over-hand beneath this structure, stealthily removing any obstacle that might impede the June 6th landing.

Lastly, the documentary film--often dubbed the stepchild of the industry--is well represented. Alice Kessler-Harris discusses ***The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*** (1980), a picture that details the contributions of the female production worker during the War. Here the problem of gender discrimination loomed. As for racial problems, that was a ongoing matter. As Clement Alexander Price reiterates in "Black American Soldiers in Two World Wars," the poignancy of the African-American past was frequently ignored by filmmakers. Two titles, however, ***Men of Bronze*** (1980), and ***Liberators*** (1992), heralded the Black soldier's achievements. Not without controversy, these documentaries--long overdue--depicted another side of America's global war involvement.

In all, Chambers and Culbert have put together an important book about the Second World War and their introduction and conclusion essays offer strong statements about a thorny question: does the war film really shape the public's image of the conflict? What, then, is the relationship between motion pictures and culture? ***World War II: Film and History*** provides many answers.

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