



LT/FS 340 BRITAIN IN THE 1940S: FILM AND LITERATURE

IES Abroad London

DESCRIPTION: “The Second World War had more influence on British national identity than any other event in history” (Richard Weight, *Patriots*, p. 116). The 1940s are also often reckoned to be the golden decade of British cinema. This course explores the contribution of film (fiction and documentary) to the reconstruction of national identity, and compares it with the roles played by other media. For example, activity in cinema was paralleled in literature by fiction and essay-writing. Indeed, literature and film sometimes enjoyed very close relationships, as, for example, in Graham Greene’s film criticism and screenplays, and in Dylan Thomas’s poetic screenplays for wartime documentaries.

The course will involve a mixed programme of full length feature films and documentaries from the period. There will be a particular focus on the work of Lean, Powell and Pressburger and Jennings. Among the writers to be studied will be George Orwell, Graham Greene, and Keith Douglas. Reportage will also be studied, as will extracts from records of the Mass Observation project, and examination of the wartime role of radio broadcasting. In visual culture, there will be a particular focus on photography – especially work published in national magazines such as *Picture Post*.

This course offers an interdisciplinary approach to the study of cultural history – as well as offering an opportunity to engage to in critical analysis of a variety of works of cinema, literature and the visual arts.

The course therefore aims:

- to explore cinematic, literary and other forms of creative response to the Second World War and its immediate aftermath;
- to pursue this study contextually in order to establish interdisciplinary links between films, literature and other works;
- to consider the relation of art and propaganda, as well as other questions of representation and ideological construction;
- critically to examine images and myths of Britain in the 1940s by reference to films, literature and other media.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None, though students are advised that some prior study of literature or film is likely to be advantageous.

ADDITIONAL COST: The principal additional costs will be incurred in optional visits. See under ‘Course related trips’ below.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Most teaching will be by lecture and seminar. Some parts of the seminars will be student-led.
- Students will be expected to do preparatory reading and to watch films as required, and to prepare for seminar discussion by working through some preparation questions for each session based on set reading and viewing (samples of such preparation questions are appended to this syllabus).

•

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Participation – 10%
- Close analysis and annotated bibliography – 20%
- Midterm essay – 30%
- Final essay – 40%

Students will be required to do reading and viewing to prepare for the taught sessions. Critical and other materials will be issued in a course reader. At least once in the course each student will be required to lead a part of a seminar.

The module is assessed by coursework, and has four components.



LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will possess knowledge of:

- Cultural and ideological context for film and other forms of artistic production in the 1940s in Britain;
- Special tensions in artistic production at a time of war, particularly those around the use of art for propaganda purposes;
- Particular films and other kinds of texts, literary and visual, as specific and complex responses to the times in which they were made and circulated.

Students taking this module will develop their skills in

- Interdisciplinary study, including the productive critical dialogue between film and literary studies and its effective articulation;
- Historical study, including critical historiographical considerations and its effective articulation;
- Research and presentation.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular class attendance is mandatory. Irregular attendance may result in a lower grade in the course, and/or disciplinary action. The IES Abroad London class attendance policy does not allow for unexcused absences, and grades will be docked one-half letter grade for each such absence. Rare exceptions will be made for the following reasons:

- The student is too sick to attend class. In this instance, the student must call the IES Abroad Centre before class to notify any of the IES Abroad staff. It is not sufficient either to email, send a message with a friend or call the Centre after the class has started.
- A serious illness or death in the immediate family requiring a student to travel home. This requires written approval from the Centre Director before departure.

Arriving more than 10 minutes late to class may count as an unexcused absence. Immigration laws in the UK are extremely strict, and we jeopardize our legal status in hosting students who do not regularly attend class. Students who do not attend class regularly will be reported to the appropriate officials and risk dismissal from the program and deportation from the UK. If a student incurs absences representing 25% of the total class hours, they will be contacted by the Academic Programme Manager (APM) and Centre Director (CD). If these absences are made up exclusively of unexcused non-attendance, this will trigger a disciplinary review. If these absences are made up of excused non-attendance, a meeting will be held to discuss the underlying reasons for lack of attendance, and to discuss ways it can be maintained for the duration of the term. If the 25% threshold is reached due to a mixture of excused and unexcused absences, students will also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments
<p>Session 1</p>	<p>Introduction: <i>In Which We Serve</i> (1942)</p> <p>The introductory session will outline the nature of the course, give you a sketch of events during the 1940s, and identify some of the course’s themes. We will then turn to examine <i>In Which We Serve</i>. The film was scripted by Noel Coward, who also played the leading role, as the Captain of H.M.S. Torrin, and co-directed it. It also marked David Lean’s debut as director. It was widely praised at the time, and in many ways set a standard for film-making about the war. It is also notable for the way it shows solidarity between different classes in the crew of H.M.S. Torrin, and for the kind of Britishness it projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing: David Lean and Noel Coward, dir., <i>In Which We Serve</i>, 1942. (film)

<p>Session 2</p>	<p><i>Millions Like Us (1943)</i> Millions Like Us is unusual among the propaganda features of the 1940s (though not unique) in its concentration on female characters. It starts, like several other films of the war, by looking at a family. But Celia Crewson is taken out of her family setting when she is required to move away to work in a munitions factory. The film is notable for its use of footage of actual factories, and has sometimes been linked to a notable tradition of British documentaries associated with John Grierson (see Higson for an appraisal of this claim). But it is also seeking to give people terms in which to relate their individual setbacks and sufferings to the war's larger struggle. It can be construed as propaganda if one wishes. But it is an unusual kind of propaganda that has one of its main characters' dreams of romantic happiness destroyed by the war. The community of the factory assembles people from different classes, so there is something of the concern for unity across class divisions that we saw in <i>In Which We Serve</i>. But it is indicative of social and political upheaval of the time that on this score too the film is capable of posing tricky problems, such as the problem of whether the love between Jennifer, a socialite drafted to the factory, and Charlie, the factory manager, can survive as a marriage after the war. Among other things, we will be examining the representation of women and class in the film, and using it to develop our understanding of the complex relation between propaganda and feature films during the war.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewing: <i>Millions Like Us</i>, dir. Sidney Giliat and Frank Launder, GB, 1943. • Readings: Sue Harper, 'The Representation of Women in British feature films 1939-1945' in Philip M. Taylor (ed). <i>Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War</i>. • Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 168-202. [excerpt]
<p>Session 3</p>	<p><i>Heart of Britain (1941), Listen to Britain (1942), Fires Were Started (1943)</i> George Orwell, <i>The Lion and the Unicorn</i> (1941)</p> <p>These films are nominally documentaries. They were directed by Humphrey Jennings, who is often described (for example, by Lindsay Anderson) as the great poet of British filmmaking. On the face of it, the poetic and the realistic look like an uneasy pairing. The main British documentary tradition that derived from John Grierson (socially realist and usually socialist) often looked askance at Jennings' work.</p> <p>These are carefully crafted films. As the title of <i>Listen to Britain</i> implies, the soundtrack is as important as the images, and the two are interwoven to evocative effect. Unusually for a film that was in some sense a work of propaganda, there is very little to tell you what to think. There no narrator. Images and sounds interweave according to a logic of their own as Jennings surveys the country.</p> <p><i>Fires Were Started</i> was meant to be a more straightforward project: an account of the work of the volunteer auxiliary fire service during the Blitz. There are features of its approach that might make us a little uneasy: the people on screen are real firemen, but they are also playing roles. Most of them are appearing under names other than their own, as if they were actors. It is true that according to the documentary</p>	<p>Viewings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humphrey Jennings, dir. <i>Heart of Britain</i>, 1941. (film) • Humphrey Jennings & Stewart McAllister, dir. <i>Listen to Britain</i>, 1942. (film) • Humphrey Jennings, dir. <i>Fires Were Started</i>, 1943. (film) <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Orwell, 'The Lion and the Unicorn' (1941) [http://www.k-1.com/Orwell/site/work/essays/lionunicorn.html] • , • <p>FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE AT THE END OF THIS WEEK</p>

conventions of the time it would have been normal to ask people to re-enact what they do, and thus to stage it. But the extent to which these people are being asked to function as actors points to ways in which the film is a cross between documentary and fiction.

It has been highly praised, and was reckoned at the time to be a successful portrait of a typically English, understated capacity for teamwork, endurance, and heroism. It has been argued that it is one of the very few British films from the war to present working class characters more or less on their own terms, without patronising them or trying to keep them in their place. That is a claim we will want to assess. Among the issues we will consider is the question of the film's authenticity, and in particular whether it genuinely captures working class experience. However, we will start by comparing Jennings's vision of Britain with Orwell's in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, for these two figures are often compared, and in many ways Orwell's explicitly spelled out position concerning Britain and the terms on which he supports the war sheds light on Jennings.

Session 4

Images of War: War artists, Photojournalism, Newsreels, Radio reports, Poems

During the war people sought various ways of representing it. We have been looking at some of them in film, fiction and propaganda. This week we are drawing together images of the war across a range of media: photojournalism, political cartoons and works produced by war artists and by poets.

This range of material poses a couple of underlying questions. First, what do we mean by an 'image'?

We will review some different ways of interpreting the term, but broadly we are talking about something that crystallises a moment of experience rather than, for example, telling a story: usually a still image, though capable of being an image in words, for the concept of imagery has a pedigree in literature.

Second, we will examine the concepts of culture and cultural value implicit in these different kinds of images of the war. The *Picture Post*'s kind of photojournalism was a populist medium for the news, and one that possibly appealed to the kind of audience the television news reach after the war when television broadcasting resumed. Political cartoons were more obviously an interpretation of or commentary on events, but they were equally accessible and popular. At the same time, many artists felt drawn to the war as a subject, and some were enlisted in the official war artists scheme to record the conflict. There has been a tradition of official war art in Britain ever since, as if merely reporting events was not enough. The idea of official war art points to a concern to memorialize and to locate a violent present in relation to historical traditions and values and to relay that understanding to posterity. In other words, there is an obvious distinction to be drawn between 'high' and 'low' culture in looking at the range of images we are considering. But we will also wish to ask ourselves whether this distinction is supported by what we find in particular images.

Images of photojournalism, posters etc. and radio broadcasts to be presented in the taught session.

Readings: A selection of poems to be circulated in photocopy [available on request].

Critical readings on the concept of imagery, as follows:

- Raymond Williams, 'Image' in *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1976), pp. 130-1.
- Terry Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 138-42.
- E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 5th edn. (London: Phaidon, 1977), pp. 93-8.

Session 5

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943)

This is the film Churchill wanted to ban. Colonel Blimp was a cartoon character created by David Low in 1934 as a satire on muddled and contradictory thinking, and old fashioned, stuffy attitudes. Blimp was always represented wrapped in a towel in a Turkish bath sounding off about the great issues of the day. With his bald head, drooping walrus moustaches and paunch he looked pompous and silly. Once the war started, the Blimp cartoons mostly stopped. They risked appearing unpatriotic.

This is the character that Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger decided to bring to the screen in the midst of the war. Like Churchill himself, their version of Colonel Blimp had made his name in the Boer War. But 'Colonel Blimp' has mutated into

Major-General Clive Wynne-Candy – though the figure he cuts in the Turkish bath when we first see him would have been instantly recognisable to the film's first audiences as Blimp.

Churchill feared that Powell and Pressburger were seeking to satirize military incompetence, and to dismiss British generals as silly and out of date. There certainly had been much support for such views early in the war. But though Wynne-Candy looks like Blimp, in some ways he is the least 'Blimpish' character in the film. Instead of giving us a satire on the stuffy and the old fashioned and the absurd (which is sometimes what Powell said he was doing), the film arguably turns 'Blimp' into the embodiment of a romanticised vision of England – in some ways the kind of vision Churchill himself invoked in his speeches as he appealed to the tradition of 'our island race'. In playing modernity off against Wynne-Candy's patriotic romanticism, the film may concede that certain kinds of modern hard-headedness will be necessary in order to survive the war; but it arguably also implies that if Britain wins the war only by sacrificing the things for which Wynne-Candy stands, it will have lost itself. If Churchill privately feared that the figure of Wynne-Candy was meant to stand for him (they share more than their initials), it was by no means as unflattering a reflection as he supposed. In other words, the film is concerned with Britishness, tradition and progress, and it ends up being intriguingly, and possibly awkwardly, poised between realism and myth.

Viewing:

- Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, dir. *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, 1943. (film)

Reading:

- James Chapman, 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943) reconsidered', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 15/1 (1995): 19-54.

Session 6

Henry V 1944)

Commentary on *Henry V* now often emphasises its propagandist role, but it is possible to make too much of that. Of course, it is hard to miss the plangent note of celebratory patriotism that Olivier strikes in a film that is both metaphorically as well as literally highly coloured, and is all about England's great warrior king. But look a little more closely, and one finds one of the most complex films ever made – a film as complex and as self-consciously fascinated by cinema as *Citizen Kane*. War and patriotism may be its pretexts, but one could argue that its real subjects are visions and time. It is symptomatic of a strange coming together of highly intellectual and sophisticated work with popular culture – a collision of seemingly different elements that we noted earlier in Jennings' work.

In many ways Olivier takes Shakespeare's play and makes it into something almost more complex, even though he cuts most of it, and removed many of the more questionable aspects of Henry's character (such as his order to his soldiers to kill their French prisoners). He had found the play off-putting in the 1930s when he played Henry onstage under Tyrone Guthrie's direction. Patriotism was not then fashionable, and Olivier evinced distaste for a character he saw as an overgrown boy scout. In the film, of course, his Henry is an heroic figure; but he is also difficult to pin down. That is partly because of an element of self-conscious performance that runs through Olivier's handling of the king from the moment he steps into the frame backstage at the Globe. He is not yet 'in character': he is merely the actor nervously clearing his throat before going onstage to play King Henry. Or, rather, he is Olivier pretending to be an actor about to pretend to be Henry. The film as a whole plays with different levels of reality and illusion.

The film clearly offers us ideas of tradition and of Englishness. But it also plays with one's sense of the conventions on which film depends. It starts with a seemingly realistic portrayal of a performance of the play at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, and then, as the film proceeds, it acquires at moments an air of self-conscious fantasy, with many scenes conceived pictorially, and based on mediaeval illuminated manuscripts. In other words, though this is clearly a patriotic film, it is also a film about the processes of representation and enactment themselves.

Viewings: Laurence Olivier, dir. *The Chronicle History of King Henry the Fifth with His Battell Fought at Agincourt in France*, 1944. (film)

Readings:

- Michael Anderegg, *Cinematic Shakespeare* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 34-41.
- Anthony Davies, from 'The Shakespeare Films of Laurence Olivier', in Russell Jackson (ed). *Shakespeare on Film*. Cambridge: CUP, 2000. pp. 164-70.
- André Bazin, from 'Theater and Cinema – part 1' in *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. vol. 1, pp. 87- 88.

Session 7

Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (1951)

The End of the Affair is written at the end of the period covered by the module, and looks back to a wartime love affair between Bendrix, a writer, and Sarah, the wife of Henry Miles, a senior civil servant. It revisits the war with concerns that are significantly different from those we have seen being expressed during it.

Greene is often spoken of as a Catholic novelist – for the obvious reason that he was not only a Catholic and a novelist, but he also broached in some of his novels (including this one) specifically religious themes. As you will see, the book turns on a series of what may be miracles, and tempts us to identify Sarah’s secret baptism as an infant as having had a defining influence on her subsequent life. But Greene was hardly a conventional Catholic – not least in his desire to sin to test the patience of God. This novel was partly based on an affair he conducted during the war and after it. Nor was he conventionally Catholic in the starkness with which he liked to oppose good and evil to right and wrong. Christianity has several stories of sinners, such as Mary Magdalene (in some traditions), who repent and then become saints. Greene, however, seems drawn to the idea of someone who can somehow be a saint and a sinner at the same time – or, more precisely, who can be saintly despite doing what would conventionally be considered wrong.

In this respect, *The End of the Affair* forms a marked contrast with *Brief Encounter*. In *Brief Encounter* various kinds of authority, human and possibly divine, are presented as forming a united front to uphold conventional sexual morality. Greene seeks, in effect, to establish distinctions between human and divine standards. Though the book’s narrator seems in many ways to ignore the war, the book as a whole could be seen as raising fundamental questions about the nature of goodness and of evil. It could also be seen as symptomatic of a post-war interest in the supernatural which we will return to in the next two weeks.

MID-TERM ESSAY DUE AT THE END OF MID-TERM WEEK

Readings:

- Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (1951), intr. Monica Ali. London: Vintage Classics, 2004.
- Paul O’Prey, *A Reader’s Guide to Graham Greene* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp. 89-94.

Session 8

Brief Encounter (1945)

This is the first post-war film we are going to study

– although it is somewhat ambiguously post-war, since it is based on a short play by Coward called *Still Life* which was first performed in 1936, and is arguably therefore set in the late 1930s.

However, the film expands upon the play. If in some of their other joint projects Lean was content to serve Coward's work (*This Happy Breed*, for example), it is notable that here his cinematography, especially in the crucial scenes in the railway station, in effect introduces a scale and intensity to what was originally a slight work.

In several respects the film is arguably specifically of its period. Stylistically one could argue that it shows the influence of film noir, and thematically it might be that the need for women to accept their domestic lot chimed with a situation in which, as men returned from the war, women were expected to abandon many of the jobs they had been called upon to do.

It is a film that is intensely preoccupied with authority, and perhaps sexist in the way in which it shows various kinds of male authority bearing down on its central female character. Curiously enough, the overriding preoccupation with fidelity which the film evinces (at one point even implying the threat of divine judgement being visited on Laura in the sickness of her son should she stray), is nowhere in evidence in Coward and Lean's other film of 1945, *Blithe Spirit*, which might make us wonder whether we should take this tale of unconsummated love entirely seriously. Yet the film has a power to surprise and to move which its endless use as source material for parodies and jokes seems unable to affect.

Viewing: David Lean, dir. *Brief Encounter*, 1945. (film)

Readings:

- Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s*, rev. edn. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007. pp. 55-63.
- Richard Dyer, *Brief Encounter*. London: BFI, 1993. pp. 24-31.

Session 9

***Dead of Night* (1945)**

Dead of Night sits oddly in British film history. It is a kind of horror film, and as such it is isolated. Horror films had scarcely figured in the early 1940s for reasons that are probably obvious. And *Dead of Night* had no immediate successors. Only with the advent of Hammer horror in the mid-1950s did British horror re-emerge.

Dead of Night is a portmanteau film: it comprises five distinct stories within a frame narration which supplies a sixth. Initially the five stories were assigned to different directors, though, in the event, Cavalcanti directed two of them ('Christmas Party' and 'The Ventriloquist's Dummy'). Robert Hamer directed the 'The Haunted Mirror', Charles Crichton directed the incongruously comic 'Golfing Story' (in which Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne, whom we saw as Charters and Caldicott in *Millions Like Us*, reprise their double act), and Basil Dearden directed 'Hearse Driver' and the framing story. The film could almost be seen as an implicit commentary on the kind of teamwork that had been urged on everyone as part of the war effort. But it is also capable of being construed as an indirect response to the ending of the war. There is a kind of relief in at last being able to address horrors (instead of living through them), and in turning away from dutiful treatments of public duty to the private if often unsettling world of the individual psyche. In some sense, the film as a whole could possibly be seen as being about the impossibility of ever getting back home – back to where one had started from before the war. If so, then it might be construed in terms of the uncanny in the literal sense of the German word *unheimlich*: unhomely. We will start our discussion by reviewing ideas of the uncanny and how they might apply to the film.

Viewings:

- Alberto Cavalcanti, Robert Hamer, Basil Dearden and Charles Crichton (dir.) *Dead of Night*, 1945 (film)

Readings:

- Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 2nd edn. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 1999, ch. 5.
- If you would like to read more about the uncanny, Sigmund Freud's essay on 'The "Uncanny"' may be read at: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~amto wer/uncanny.html>

Session 10

J.B. Priestley, *An Inspector Calls* (1945)

J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*, takes us into the postwar period: written in 1945, it was first performed in 1946. Though it is set in 1912, it can be seen as seeking to keep alive certain lessons that the war had taught. The message of *In Which We Serve* could be summarised as "We are all in the same boat" (i.e. Britons of all classes have a common tradition and a common cause and should pull together). *An Inspector Calls*, in a sense, seeks to teach the lesson again by showing us the Birlings, a well-to-do family of 1912 (significantly just before both World Wars), who have never learned it.

The arrival of Inspector Goole puts paid to their self-deception and self-satisfaction. He enquires into the suicide of Eva Smith, a young girl from such a different class from the Birlings that she might have come from a different world. By degrees, it becomes clear that they have all contributed to her death.

One might argue that the play was specific to the moment at which coalition government ceased, and normal electoral and largely class-based politics resumed. But it has proved resilient, and was filmed in 1954 (with Alastair Sim as Goole), and has often been revived in the theatre, notably in the National Theatre's 1992 expressionist production by Stephen Daldry, in which the Birlings' seemingly secure home literally came apart to reveal the larger world they wanted to ignore.

Goole is a mysterious, possibly supernatural figure, as the Birlings realise when they find there is no such person in the police. The way Priestley uses him links this play to his other 'time plays' in which he juggles time for dramatic effect. Here the effect is to give the Birlings a chance to learn from their mistakes. When they fail to take it (by dismissing the social and moral truths Goole has led them to as soon as they find he's not 'real'), all that they want to dismiss as an illusion, suddenly becomes real. The element of the supernatural links this play with a post-war preoccupation, which we started to explore in *The End of the Affair*.

Readings:

- J.B. Priestley, *An Inspector Calls in An Inspector Calls and other plays* (1969). London: Penguin, 2000.
- John Baxendale, *Priestley's England: J.B. Priestley and English Culture*. Manchester: MUP, 2007, pp. 166-76.
- J.B. Priestley, 'The Secret Dream', rptd. in *The Priestley Companion*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951.

Session 11

***The Third Man* (1949)**

Among other things, *The Third Man* is about changing places. Martins wants to take Lime's place with Anna. In the novella (though not the film) he is mistaken for another writer. Lime changes places with a corpse, and flits back and forth between the Russian and the other zones of occupied Vienna. Besides these elements in the plot, it is about changing places in a larger sense, some of which we thought about in considering the way Greene's imagination swaps saints and sinners. This is a post-war film in which the villain turns out to be the victor: it is an American (Lime) who is callously indifferent to the suffering of children, not some Mengele from the camps. And it is a film in which the British partnership at its creative heart, Greene as writer and Carol Reed as director, explores a theme which the war pressed upon almost everyone's consciousness, but which could not be examined while the war continued: the experience of defeat.

Stylistically the film might be seen as drawing together the two main strands in British film that we have examined so far: realism of a kind that is partly traceable to the British documentary movement, and a feeling for the poetic of kind which, oddly enough, also emerges from Griersonian documentary (see, e.g., *Song of Ceylon*), but which was ultimately disowned by Grierson himself (think back to his criticisms of Jennings, who, of the filmmakers we have looked at, is the clearest exemplar of this kind of poetic cinema). The poetic side of the film is developed with many noir traits, which makes it apt that Welles, whose *Citizen Kane* in many respects crystallizes the elements that comprise Hollywood noir, is playing Harry Lime. The result is a world that is formally and morally disconcerting: in which doing the right thing feels like a betrayal, in which the villain looks at times like a kind of martyr, in which one seldom knows exactly where one is, and in which the mysterious world of the city's streets

is ghosted by the even more mysterious other city of the sewers.

Viewings:

- Carol Reed, dir. *The Third Man*, 1949. (film)

Readings:

- Quentin Falk, *Travels in Greenland: the complete guide to the cinema of Graham Greene*. London: Reynolds and Hearn Ltd., 2000. pp. 57-69.

Session 12

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949)

With the ending of the war, it became possible for something like normal political debate to resume, freed from the imperative of victory. The scene was not a pleasant one. Images of Nazi horrors emerged from the camps. The moral landscape seemed permanently blighted. What stood revealed was a capacity for such systematic depravity that in a strange way anyone who came into contact with it, no matter how innocent, might be tainted. It became clear that if one totalitarianism had been defeated, Soviet totalitarianism had been left victorious. In this period the word totalitarian enters common usage in the west to signify systematically oppressive regimes, irrespective of whether they are communist or fascist.

Nineteen Eighty-four is written against this background. As we saw when we thought about *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Orwell could be just as critical of the left as of the right. Indeed, in some ways his idiosyncratic kind of patriotism gave him more in common with conservatives than with some socialists. He espoused democratic socialism, and had a lively awareness of the evil that could be wrought by any other kind, and had no sense of those evils being things to which Britain was immune.

Orwell's novel arguably seeks to accomplish two main things, which are related to each other. The first is to warn against the continuing threat posed by totalitarianism. For this message in the early days of the Cold War it found a ready audience, even if some on the left were dismayed by Orwell's explicit association of totalitarianism with the left. The second and closely related concern is to show that the forces that produce totalitarianism are not just an external threat: they can arise within even the Britain that has recently played its part in defeating the Nazis. This is one of the most unsettling aspects of the book. It is manifest in uncannily distorted echoes of a lost Britain, a Britain its earliest readers knew at first hand. It is manifest also in the two central figures of Julia and Winston. It is easy to read the book as a story of individualism expressed through romantic love, set against a soulless system, and to side with romance and individualism. The book invites this. The problem is, it also shows romance and individualism losing – and not just losing, while somehow remaining essentially themselves, but losing and betraying themselves. Here, perhaps, one can see that other response to the horrors of the 1940s: a feeling not of victory at having vanquished them, but of being tainted and incapacitated by association with them

Readings:

- George Orwell, *1984* (1949). London: Penguin, 2003

FINAL ESSAY DUE ONE WEEK AFTER THE END OF TEACHING.



COURSE-RELATED TRIPS

A visit to at least one of the places on the following list, depending on how your interests develop and on what you decide to write about, is recommended:

- Bletchley Park
- British Film Institute
- Cabinet War Rooms
- H.M.S. Belfast
- Imperial War Museum, London
- Imperial War Museum, Duxford
- Museum of London
- R.A.F. Museum, Hendon
- Tate Modern

Funds are available from IES to support your visit, though it must be undertaken in your own time.

REQUIRED READINGS

- Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (1951), intr. Monica Ali. London: Vintage Classics, 2004.
 - George Orwell, *1984* (1949). London: Penguin, 2003.
 - J.B. Priestley, *An Inspector Calls* in *An Inspector Calls and other plays* (1969). London: Penguin, 2000.
- Any good edition of these works is acceptable.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Clive Coultass, *Images for Battle*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989.

Charles Drazin, *The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s*. London: André Deutsch, 1998.

Richard Farmer, *Cinemas and Cinemagoing in Wartime Britain, 1939-45: The Utility Dream Palace*. Manchester: MUP, 2016.

Jo Fox, *Film propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany: World War II cinema*. Oxford: Berg, 2007.

Nick Hayes and Jeff Hill (eds). *'Millions like us'?: British culture in the Second World War*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999.

Jeremy Hvardi, *Projecting Britain at War: The National Character in British World War II Films*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2014.

Tony Judt, *Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945*. London: William Heinemann, 2005.

David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain: 1945-51*. London: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Antonia Lant, *Blackout: Reinventing Women for Wartime British Cinema*. Princeton: PUP, 1991.

S.P. MacKenzie, *British War Films, 1939-45*. London: Hambledon, 2001.

Robert Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*. London: Continuum, 2000.

Juliette Pattinson, Arthur McIvor, Linsey Robb, *Men in reserve: British civilian masculinities in the Second World War*. Manchester: MUP, 2017.

Gill Plain, *Literature of the 1940s: War, Postwar and 'Peace'*. Edinburgh: EUP, 2013.

Neil Rattigan, *This is England: British Film and the People's War, 1939-1945*. London: Associated University Presses, 2001.

Barbara Roisman-Cooper, 'Real to reel: World War II and British film', *British Heritage*, 24 / 6 (Nov 2003), pp. 38-45.

Philip M. Taylor (ed). *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War*. Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988.

Richard Weight, *Patriots: national identity in Britain, 1940-2000*. London: Macmillan, 2002.