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**BRITISH CINEMA, POLITICS, AND AUDIENCE FROM  
THE THIRTIES TO THE FIFTIES:  
EVOLUTION OF IDEOLOGICAL MANIPULATION**

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**British Cinema, Politics, and Audience from  
the Thirties to the Fifties:  
Evolution of Ideological Manipulation**

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In memory of my father who dedicated his career to professional filming.

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**Abstract:**

With the growing influencing power of media in general, and cinema in particular, in everyday life, this thesis examines the way the audience could be ideologically manipulated by films. This research is significant because not enough attention has been paid to the way British cinema disseminated right-winged ideology for political purposes during a relatively longer period of time, especially those which are marked by pivotal historical events.

Through a textual and contextual study, that is to say, an analysis based on both content and concomitant circumstances, this work has tackled the issue via a synchronic and diachronic level by examining six films purposefully sampled. This study is based on the Historicist and Cultural Studies' approaches, the theoretical framework that has been applied here is composed of two critical theories that both belong to the Marxian tradition: Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. The period covers to a thirty year stretch of time comprising the thirties, the forties, and the fifties.

Results were consistent with the aforementioned hypothesis. Findings show that those films confirmed that the seemingly ideological shift through time was only superficial and sustained a strong right-wing tendency in the background, leading us to think that the ideological manipulation of the audience was consistently top-down, that is, from the Ruling Class to the Working Class with the aim of sustaining the *status quo*. In this sense, the theoretical assumptions are, in turn, confirmed as well.

# INTRODUCTION



Art, it seems, is a form representation, and representation is a relative, partial depiction of reality conveyed through codes which in turn comprise written, verbal, and visual forms (Stuart Hall, 1997). Cultural Studies revolves around the representation of the cultural manifestation, particularly that of the various strata of society. Hence, it stresses the critical study of three fundamental elements: race, class, and gender. The word ‘representation’ is quite problematic in itself. It is a ‘relative’ depiction precisely because its content depends on those who construe this representation; their beliefs, political stances, culture and so on, and most importantly the way they perceive the other members of a given society (Hall quoted in Hammer and Kellner, 2009). ‘other members of a given society’ means the ‘Other’, or all that does not fit in with what one thinks to be the set of ‘taken for granted’ values; to put it differently, the Other is the one that is ideologically deviant from one’s own (Van Dijk, 2000). Starting from this point, subjective representation is then ineluctable in the sense that it is told from the personal lens and the mindset of the artist, writer, journalist and so forth...

Cinema is indeed an artistic manifestation of culture and is for that reason not an exception of the above considerations. It is almost impossible to dissociate cinema from popular culture nowadays since it has become part and parcel of the entertainment industry and is much appreciated by many. Gore Vidal concedes the fact that it has become a powerful means of manipulation: “We are both defined and manipulated by [cinematic] fictions of such potency that they are able to replace our own experience after becoming our sole experience of ... reality” (Vidal, 1994, P.32). Furthermore, billions of dollars are spent in the film industry and, in turn, millions are generated from it as well. Thus, it is hard to argue that cinema is not an important component of mass media.

Curiously enough, cinema is still a new and young invention compared to the history of the human existence. In mid April 2015, Paris organised the celebration of cinema’s one hundred twentieth anniversary. In only this relatively short lapse of time, cinema could establish an outstanding position in people’s lives and habits. Yet,

little do they know cinema could have had a critical fate were it not for an ambitious French illusionist and artist, Georges Méliès, who foresighted its potential as a powerful lucrative entertaining activity. Cinema was in fact born in Paris 1895, precisely in Boulevard des Capucines, in a café underground that hosted the laboratory of the Lumière brothers, its inventors (Jeanne & Ford, 1966).

The invention was called “*le cinématographe*”, from the Latinized greek work “kinema”, meaning movement, hence literally meaning movement recorder. Though it attracted many interested eyes, the Lumière Brothers did not perceive it as a means of entertainment whatsoever. They consistently declined Méliès insisting requests to sell their licence saying that it was just a scientific curiosity, nothing more. Méliès was not put off at all and opted to buy a similar invention from the Algerian born creators, the Isola brothers, called “the isolatograph”. As early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Méliès erected the first film studio ever; that was in Montreuil, Paris. He was also a precursor in developing special effects, zooming in/out etc... adding thus an aesthetic dimension to it (Jeanne & Ford, 1966).

This event was the turning point that gave birth to cinema industry as we know it today. Nowadays, cinema is undeniably a far-reaching, popular, accessible recreational activity; people are massively exposed to expressive filmic productions and are living in a media-saturated world as well. It is then high time one paid particular attention to its purposes and effects on the audience. It is precisely because cinema is a recent yet successful phenomenon that we have decided to dedicate this thesis to British culture through a cinematic lens.

Choosing cinematographic studies may sound rather unanticipated bearing in mind its embryonic development in our department of Anglophone studies. Still, it can prove to be a vital subject in the sense that its method systematically encompasses interdisciplinary studies which precisely fit in with the essence of Cultural Studies mentioned earlier. So, this research is hoped to contribute in developing the body of knowledge in this field. Eventually, it is hoped that this modest study will in turn trigger further, deeper research.

One of the main concerns of this research is to look at some aspects of 20<sup>th</sup> century British culture from a different perspective; in other words, it endeavours to dissipate the clouds over British civilisation by bringing about different considerations regarding its still underrated cinematic productions and its audience.

Interestingly enough, Cinema-going rate soared starting from the early thirties until mid fifties despite the fact that economy was still ailing from the Great Depression initially and from the Second World War subsequently: “Between 1934 and 1938, annual admissions rose from 903 to 987 million, which meant that on average every Briton visited a cinema twenty times a year.” (Fielding, 2013, P.25). In this sense, statistics show that, ideally, British people would go to a projection almost once a fortnight.

However, the distribution of the audience was uneven: typical cinema-goers consisted of working class women, under-skilled men, and youngsters (Abrams, 1947-8), which entails that cinema going rate is much higher in that particular social group than in any other one. What is particular about this category, this must be added, is that because of its modest economic situation, they usually have lesser chances to engage in higher education or in intellectual activities. That entails that their cultural background tend to be therefore limited.

Furthermore, studios were at the hands of well-educated middle class males like Powell, Pressburger or Sir Balcon (Shail, 2007). The point is that this sharp contrast, a sort of a dichotomous distribution ‘working class’ VS. ‘Upper/Middle’ Class” logically leads one to think that concentration of media ownership and of the market can have a non-negligible meaning; especially if one knows that belonging to the middle class often means endorsing right-wing tendencies; not to mention that this period coincided with important internal and external political troubles.

Most importantly, Fielding (2008) argues in his article, “A Mirror for England? Cinematic Representations of Politicians and Party Politics, circa 1944-1964”, that British film of that period depicted society as Manichean, that is to say, conflicts were

often divided into the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ groups. He quoted Hoggart, a prominent Cultural Studies figure, to explain the concept:

*‘Them’ and ‘Us’ was generated by a specifically proletarian experience of a class divided society. Yet, it was also how others defined the relationship the people as a whole endured with their elected representatives. Certainly, the films analyzed here depicted politicians as an antagonistic “Them” juxtaposed against an “Us” of “little people”. (Hoggart quoted in Fielding, 2008, P.116)*

The “them” circle according to Hoggart “comprised those civil servants, local authority officials, teachers, police officers, magistrates, and others who exerted power over ‘Us.’ ” (Hoggart quoted in Fielding, 2008, P.116).

It seems then fairly paradoxical and intriguing that upper or middle classes film producers would release films that would picture them as members of the “them” circle or the “Other” since they too detain power via money. Thus, it is likely that the combination of these three variables; social class, concentration of media ownership, and Manichaeism, may affect cinematic production’s content in a way that could be biased towards a certain political affiliation in order to promote, potentially, a hidden agenda.

Thus, our research will attempt to shed light on a possible ideological manipulation of British cinema over its audience in both synchronic and diachronic ways. However, this dissertation should not be thought of as a thirty year anthology of film history; indeed, Cultural Studies owes its nature to interdisciplinarity, involving considerations of history and film content analysis and critical theories. Consequently, it seeks to provide evidence *in vivo* that cinema as any other form of media is used as an instrument of ideological manipulation.

Before embarking in research *per se*, it is crucial to review the existing literature. Because there are many ‘kinds’ of review of the literature, they will be each tackled separately. Below is a substantive review of the literature, meaning, it revisits earlier documentations related to this research topic. As for the perspective and the

methodological review on the one hand, and theoretical review on the other, they will be outlined later in this introduction for the former and in the first chapter for the latter.

Much of the existing literature offers a wide vista of previous works in this domain, each of which tackles the issue from different angles. In a selective fashion, below is succinctly outlined four prominent works.

Lant's book, *Blackout: Reinventing women for War Time Cinema* (1991) put special emphasis on women's representation as 'mobile women' during the Second World War. Using a feminist point of view, findings show that women's role was granted a brand new function, or as it came to be known as 'Guardian of the Home Front', i.e. a very different role from that of the established, conservative one during the inter-war period. The contradictory messages Lant her to think that cinema was strictly used as a propaganda means to reinforce the notion of 'modern Britain'; especially when one bears in mind that that recurrent theme dramatically plummeted just after the end of the Second World War. It is regrettable, however, that Lant did not consider comparing with Britain's Russian or American counterpart. Results could have been much more exhaustive.

Alternatively, other literature did focus on war time cinema but in a different way. In his research, *British War Films 1939 – 1945, the Cinema and the Service* (2006), S. Paul Mackenzie demonstrated how British cinema industry at the time was intimately linked to the Ministry of Information and to the military corps. Indeed, the readers are invited to explore a range of skilfully analysed famous war time films and how government worked hand in hand with some studios in order to achieve technical, historical, and aesthetic authenticity.

Richards and Aldgate's book, *British Cinema and Society 1930-1970* (2002), can be seen as a forty-year survey whose vision of films' role is encapsulated within three major lines. First, films are means of social control. Second, they project the image of the British Society. Third, they are made in a way that reflects and appeals to the

audience's beliefs. While it is true that the book provides its reader with a wide range of genres, ten prominent films presentation (e.g. *The Ladykillers*, *Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* etc...), and covers a fairly long span of time (1930- 1970), it contains, however, an important number of flaws.

It first does not follow any theoretical framework on which research can be based. Thus, it looks more like an anthology or a sandwich of films rather than a critical survey. Besides, the study structure is sketchy, linear, and chapters do not show any logical link between one another. Content is quite disappointing with its lengthy plot descriptions and insufficient analysis, making it look like the writers are "telling the story". In addition, sources are quite doubtful; most of the data comes from the British Board for Film Censors (the BBFC for short) which is famous for its right-wing tendency according to the British Film Institute. Finally, Just as Lant's work, Richards and Aldgate's book failed to bring to light the audience's response.

If Cold War cinematic propaganda was prominently linked to the U.S.A or the U.S.S.R, Britain has its own share in this matter, too. This is what Shaw (2006) has shown us in his *British Cinema & the Cold War: The State, Propaganda & Consensus*. Through a thorough textual and contextual analysis and by browsing a large palette of films, he came up with a threefold thesis: British films were stylistically speaking divergent from that of the American and Soviet counterparts; those films focused on Cold War effect on the British rather than demonizing the enemy; and finally, they are relatively less homogeneous, crude, and hyperbolic. However, his work could have been optimal had he only dealt with, say, *A Hill in Korea* (1956). Indeed, it is perhaps the only British film that directly targeted the Korean conflict at that sensitive stretch of time.

The abovementioned review of the literature enabled us to have not only a better view on the current data, but it also helped us delineate some gaps to fill. As a matter of fact, the review revealed that, apart from Richards and Aldgate's work, research focused on specific short periods of times and did not expand to a larger time span in order to show the thematic evolution and inconsistencies. Second, little was said

about how cinema backed the Establishment, the status quo, and conservative stances; nor were there any indication about other common themes such as common people's war or heroism. Most importantly, none of them went about film studies using, say, Marxist conceptual frameworks that are fit for studying ideological manipulation and hegemony such as Gramsci's or Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model. It is against this background that our thesis tries to tackle those inextricable angles of the topic. Further considerations concerning the chosen theoretical framework will be discussed in chapter one.

Hence, it is against this timely background that the major concerns of this thesis have been set down. The following are the central research questions the dissertation seeks to address:

- 1 Do British directors' political standpoints influence cinematographic productions and who else can affect the latter?
- 2 If yes, what are their purposes?
- 3 What are their persuasive techniques? Are they rigid or do they change through time?

To these questions, we have elaborated the following hypotheses. The expected answers would likely be that British directors and film studios do in fact shape the content of their film in the sense that they seek to maintain the status quo and promote conservative thoughts. With the help of figures of influence, and perhaps indirect governmental assistance, the goal, apart from entertaining, is to reassure the masses and seek consensus. The themes tackled in films would likely reinforce these purposes via classic propagandist techniques such as stereotypes, Otherness, appeal to union, appeal to chauvinism and so forth and their use to be flexible according to the concomitant historical events.

To fulfil this task abovementioned, we have below outlined the methodology applied for our research.

The paradigm the research will be based on is the critical one. It indeed fits in with our goal because it is focused on *power* and *politics*: “critical researchers are interested in such conceptions as the distribution of power in society and political ideology” (Roger, Wimmer, & Dominick, 2013, P. 117). The essence of which has been demonstrated in the background information provided above. The critical paradigm’s ontology follows historical realism, that is to say, truth exists outside the human mind and is historically constructed. Besides, many parameters come into action within this mindset: the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender divergences do shape reality. It is suitable for our research because its methodology encompasses the use of both historical and political context, as well as ideology critique. In other words, its implementation seeks to raise awareness about the dominant ideological beliefs such as the taken for granted ideas.

The approach chosen to carry out this work is mainly the historicist one backed with Cultural Studies. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, historicism can be defined as “criticism in the light of historical evidence or based on the context in which a work was written, including facts about the author’s life and the historical and social circumstances of the time.” It stresses the importance of a historically contextualised interpretation of cultural phenomena. It advocates that social, political, and economic events would strongly influence future events as Karl Popper (1957) put it “history has a pattern and a meaning that, if grasped, can be used in the present to predict and fashion the future” (Popper quoted in Patnaik, 2004). It goes without saying that cinema, like any other artistic production, is part and parcel of cultural phenomena.

The historical period this thesis tries to focus on stretches over thirty year time span, from the thirties to the fifties. The choice of this particular period is worthwhile for many reasons. First of all, the historicist approach seeks to explain how historical context can affect representation. The period which has been selected can best exemplify this approach as is it full of major historical events such as the Great Depression in 1929, the rise of totalitarianism in the thirties, the Second World War,



the Labour Party landslide victory, the Cold War, the new concept of affluent society mindset and so on... As a result, it constitutes a good opportunity to try and test the approach accordingly. Secondly, this period witnessed both the expansion of British Cinema in late thirties *and* its relative decline by the fifties with the popularisation of television and The Hollywood Empire. Hence, the artistic dimension of cinema will also be looked into when appropriate. The time span ends at 1959 since we view that British cinema entered a new era with Kitchen Sink<sup>1</sup> cinema or the New Wave Movement<sup>2</sup> as well as the plummeting decline of cinema going rate by then.

This research's data rely on purposive sampling, that is to say, the chosen films were selected carefully in order of relevance to our topic. Because this research covers a thirty year time span, it is consequently both synchronic and diachronic. Synchronic because the selected films will be analysed separately and according to their context of production, hence, it will help us establish insights as to whether prominent historical events can shape and affect film content. Diachronically because the synthesis that would be drawn from the synchronic analyses would help up answer the issue of ideological manipulation evolution *through* time.

Three decades are then the historical times laps the thesis will cover. For each decade, two films, more often than not from different genres, are chosen as samples. All in all, there are six films divided between the thirties, the forties, and the fifties. Occasionally, other films would be referred to; however, they are not granted central attention as they will be just of help to conjuncture the trend when necessary. The detailed list of films can be found in the filmography, at the end of this work. It also

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<sup>1</sup> Kitchen Sink Realism (or films) is a cultural movement akin to Britain that appeared in late fifties and early sixties and influenced British literature, theatre, cinema, and art altogether. Kitchen Sink films are typically set at poor urban cities and usually depict the harsh conditions in which the Working Class live. Kitchen Sink films are very different from earlier cinematic productions or genres in the sense that they openly revolve around controversial themes such as adultery, homosexuality, inter-racial relations etc...

<sup>2</sup> A variation of Kitchen Sink Cinema, and which name is derived from the French phrase *La Nouvelle Vague*, where protagonists are usually disillusioned young males from the Working Class (mainly influenced by the Angry Young Men novelists) .

should be noted that the purposive sampling was carried out in a way that even the genres are different: comedy, biopics<sup>3</sup>, war films, realist films, satires etc...

In this respect, the present work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will be the theoretical background part that would pave the way for a better understanding of this work. First, it will go through the framework upon which this research rests. It will try to give a succinct account of the two critical theories to be applied: Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda model. Then, it will move to an historical journey and will cover the three relevant decades as well as the significance of each landmark that forged the contemporary British history. The third section of the first chapter will be dedicated to general facts about the development of Cinema in Britain. It first addresses the industrial evolution of cinema and its interplay with government intervention, protection and legislation. After that, it provides its readers some key pieces of information regarding the prominent cinematic genres and movements with some illustrations. Ultimately, it will introduce some British cinema pillars, mainly canonical film directors and film studios, most of whom are émigrés. It will also point the issue of Quota Quickies that damaged somehow the reputation of British cinema quality as well as the debatable censorship of the BBFC.

As for the second chapter, it will constitute the core of this work along with the remaining chapters for it will properly engage with film analyses. This chapter pays particular attention to British cinema in the thirties; more specifically (1) direct state filmic propaganda, (2) the escapist<sup>4</sup> movement, and (3) the social-realist<sup>5</sup> movement and the left-wing ideology. We have selected three cases: cinema vans and two films: *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and *Love on the Dole* (1936-41). This chapter seeks to demonstrate how the dominant ideology helped in maintaining the *status quo* and keeping the people away from serious matters such as the deteriorating living

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<sup>3</sup> A porte-meanteau term for biographical films.

<sup>4</sup> Escapism is a genre that avoids dealing with political topics and reinforces pleasure and entertainment.

<sup>5</sup> Ideologically committed oeuvres that strive to put across the hardships of the Working Class living conditions.

conditions which were exacerbated because of the Great Depression. It above all raises the issue of right-wing censorship.

The third chapter brings in new insights with the turbulent forties. Here, the chapter attempts to show how British films considerably improved aesthetically, and in the same time, thematically shifted from overly conservative to relatively 'egalitarian' in nature. Three main themes will be explored: common people's war, the image of the enemy, and the new social roles of women at war by focusing on two war films: *In Which We Serve* (1943), and *Went the Day Well?* (1942).

Finally, the fourth chapter comes to seal our research journey. The principal concerns of this part will be how films of the fifties substantively differed from those of the forties through looking at themes that focus on government relations with citizens as well as industrial relations and how historical events helped in shaping British cinema of this period. Two films are analysed: a comedy, *The Happy Family* (1952) and the most acclaimed satire, *I'm Alright Jack* (1959).

# Chapter One: Setting Up the Luggage

## **1. Setting Up the Luggage:**

It is commonly established that twentieth century Britain's political, economic, and social major changes occurred during the period comprised between the end of the twenties and the end of the fifties. Indeed, the Great Depression that occurred in 1929 combined with the rise of totalitarianism in Europe firstly, the devastating Second World War (1939) and the Cold War subsequently, along with other events such as the landslide victory of the Labour Party, all contributed to forging new social and political patterns. Those changes may have affected in turn British cinematic productions in many ways. The aim of this chapter is then to provide readers with the necessary background information that would help them understand the relation between British cinema and politics. To fulfil this task, we have decided to divide this chapter into three sections.

We will first consider the theoretical framework from which we decided to focus our lens on our research topic. The section will introduce two theories that have been chosen for the purpose of our study: Gramsci's Marxist perspective beside Chomsky's Propaganda Model. Because understanding Britain's multi-faceted historical context naturally entails understanding her artistic works (and vice versa), and because the chosen approach, historicism, prescribes its use, we have opted for devoting the second section to examining some historical milestones, particularly three prominent decades, the thirties, the forties, and the fifties. This time span is precisely chosen because of it marked turmoil.

The third and last section's aim is to go through the state of cinema in Great Britain from its emergence to the late fifties. It is in turn divided into three subsections. First, a closer attention will be paid to the relation between the state vis-à-vis cinema and the legislated laws for that matter. Afterwards, it will describe and illustrate some prevailing cinematic genres and movements. It will finally deal with some important British studios and filmmakers.

## 1.1 The Theoretical Framework:

As Robert W. Cox, a famous International Relations figure once put it in his aphoristic yet humorous statement, “Theory is always for someone and for some purpose” (Cox, 1981, P.10). This section presents the theories upon which our analysis will rely. Over time and with the spread of film studies in academia, there have been many critical theories which were developed or readapted by scholars as a tool for analysing films. The Auteur theory, for instance, argues that film directors’ stances may directly influence the way films are made, they are in this way generators, creators of films, or *auteurs*, rather than film-makers. The Aesthetic theory particularly focuses on deconstructing the cinematic techniques to account for interpretations. The feminist one tries to bring under scrutiny gender inequalities and the perpetuation of patriarchal norms in society (Hayward, 2001; Bell, 2010). There are obviously other theories which concepts tackle different aspects of films for various purposes, but which we cannot go through at risk of oversimplification.

Throughout our research journey, we have decided to opt for a combination of two critical theories that differ from the abovementioned ones. The Auteur theory is to be applied for a single film director, which is undoable with our topic. Since the latter dwells through different studios and film makers, it will not be possible to cover it in a single thesis. The same thing can be said about the Aesthetic theory in terms of length. It requires a detailed cinematographic analysis of the whole film, whereas our study will tackle some films in a thematic fashion as well. Lastly, the feminist theory is too specific and concerned with Gender Studies to be selected to deal with politics and class altogether, for instance. Despite the fact that these theories are prominent and can prove to be very useful, they do not really match our research goals adequately.

To fulfil the research task then, we have selected two major critical theories that we consider as the cornerstone of the topic being studied. The choice of Gramsci and Chomsky came naturally, for they are intimately linked to our subject matter, i.e. cinema and politics. Since one sole theory is never self-contained, using two theories

instead of one will help the study to come up with relatively consistent, likely results. The following is a down scaled version of, first, Gramsci's perspective of hegemony and, then, of Chomsky's Propaganda Model. The elements of which will contribute in enlightening our research questions as both of them deal with ideology, capitalism, manipulation and so forth in different ways as we shall attempt to demonstrate.

### **1.1.1 Gramsci's perspective:**

Derived from the Marxist tradition, the main concepts which stem from the Italian Marxist activist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) book's *Prison Notes*<sup>6</sup> basically rely on raising awareness amongst the masses against cultural hegemony and the maintained *status quo*, or consensus. If the Gramscian perspective enjoyed a lot of popularities, it is mainly because it is part and parcel of what came to be known as "Action theory". That is to say, it is a theory that seeks to stimulate people's common sense in order to make them act, or as Marx insists "revolt" (Marx, 1859) against social injustices. The following are some of its major premises.

Let us first deal with Marxist ideas before discussing any further in Gramsci's. As already mentioned, Gramsci relied mainly on Marx ideas. He, in fact, embraced them, but modified some with which he disagreed or up-dated some others so they could fit in with the context of Fascist Italy at the time. Marxism is usually known for its criticism of ideology. But what is ideology in the first place?

In everyday life, the word "ideology" is often marked with a negative connotation. A common misconception of this word would be that it is only the politically committed or the extremists who hold ideologies. But actually, it simply denotes all that we, individuals, take certain sets of values, beliefs, and behaviours for granted and normal (Van Dijk, 2000). French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu maintains that "Ideologies serve particular interests which tend to present as universal, shared, by groups as a whole" (Bourdieu, 1991, P.167). In this sense, he reminds us that

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<sup>6</sup> Posthumously published under the title *Selections from Political Writing (1921-1926)* by Lawrence and Wishart, London 1978.

ideology always serves a specific stake which is often thought of as common-sensical. Ideology is thus common to everyone in society; let us now get back at Marxism.

First and foremost, there is what Karl Marx calls ‘economic determinism’. It basically advocates that human action, be it economic, political or cultural, is necessarily directly or indirectly linked to money, *das Kapital*. Any social or intellectual behaviours, productions or traditions for instance are bound to money in the sense that it is money which shapes reality and imposes lifestyle’s standards as well as circulating ideas. Humankind undergoes the manipulation of economy and is unavoidably subject to capital. Such an extremist idea of determinism blatantly challenges the notion of free-will to which Gramsci opposed. Indeed, if human beings’ existence were totally bound to money, then the ability to push people to revolt and reverse the situation would not be possible in the first place.

Secondly and most importantly, there is the ‘class struggle’ concept. Karl Marx states that “The bourgeoisie [...] produces its own grave-diggers” (Marx and Engels 2008, P. 51). What he actually means by this metaphor is that capitalism leads to the end of the bourgeoisie, because bourgeoisie who detains means of production seeks to accumulate more and more money at the expense of its workforce’s wellbeing. Capitalism leads the bourgeoisie to destitute workers from basic working conditions, making it sound like slavery. The aware working class individuals should react against the degrading inhumane conditions by initiating a radical change in society. Revolution is to Marx the ultimate outcome of class struggle against capitalist exploitation in order to achieve social justice in a classless society. Although Marx marks a point in that Capitalists seek to accumulate wealth at the expense of the proletariat, his ‘class struggle’ argument proved to be a failure as revolutions did not happen eventually as he predicted.

Last but not least, Base/Superstructure is according to Marx a structure that represents two levels or strata and is related to the first concept which is economic determinism. In his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx



describes Base as “real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness” (Marx, 1859, P.61) Basically then, base represents material and ready for consumption goods like money while the superstructure essentially represents the ideological and political mindsets, cultures, interpersonal relations which base generates. To put it differently, this statement argues that every human activity, were it beliefs, traditions, or habits just to name a few, are only the reflexion of the ones which detain means of production. This comes to explain what Marx meant by economic determinism, i.e. a mutual control between the material world and the non-material one.

As far as Gramsci is concerned, he came up with the key concept of hegemony. Before proceeding, it is important to point out what the word hegemony means. According to Encyclopædia Britannica:

*Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. Hegemony is often used to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas [...] to become commonsensical, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas.*

In some ways, this definition offers a fairly similar understanding of Marx’s ideas. Indeed, the words “norms and ideas” can be interpreted as the superstructure. The only difference is that, perhaps, these norms are purposefully imposed by the economically dominant class.

Strinati, a sociologist, also pointed out in his book, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (1995) that hegemony is a state where:

*Dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the ‘spontaneous consent’ of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus (Strinati, 1995, P.165)*

Hegemony is in that case a set of cultural, political and moral thoughts usually established by the powerful class in order to subordinate and keep the *status quo* over the dominated or the less powerful class. By definition, hegemony is not necessarily imposed by the ruling class, which, according to the Gramscian perspective, can also manifest itself amongst the working class. It is argued that hegemony that comes from below could be achieved if common interests of these people are combined so as to develop internal networks that would in turn give birth to movements led by Elites to reverse the situation. Thus, a working class revolution can pave the way to hegemony from below, which is the very purpose of this approach.

It should be mentioned that the working class should be led by the élites who have intellectual awareness. The word “Elites” refers to the intellectuals that possess linguistic and cultural power to speak for the masses that lack these skills. In this way, the Elites should not be aliens, Gramsci underlines the fact that they should obviously belong to the same social class so as to invert the hegemonic situation.

As said before, Antonio Gramsci did not fully agree with Marx’s economic determinism, however. Instead, he denounced it as *economic* hegemony. He recognised the power of capital as a manipulative tool, but did not adhere to the idea of being permanently trapped and determined.

This is, all in all, that the Gramscian perspective revolves around. It can be said it is a modified version of Marxist. It is modified, because there are some Marxist elements which Gramsci rejected such as economic determinism. Still, he advanced a considerably important contribution with the introduction of the hegemony concept. Revolution is equally important to Gramsci and is strongly encouraged.

### **1.1.2 The Propaganda Model:**

The previous subsection explored the problem of class and hegemony in relations to economy. The second selected framework is particularly linked to media, and to a certain extent, cinema as it is a subfield of media. Twenty seven years ago, Linguist Chomsky and Herman put forward a pivotal theory which they named “propaganda

model” that is still valid to analyse mainstream media. In their seminal book, *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988), they thoroughly explored the media industry as a non-violent means of control which “mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity” (Chomsky, 1988, P. xi) came up with interesting results. The theory stipulates media industry undergoes a strict control by several means, these means are what they called “filters of media”. Chomsky and Herman identified five filters: Ownership, sourcing, advertisements, FLAK, and Anti-communism (later fear).

Media agenda depends on their owner’s ideology. What media relates goes with what the owners believe to be commonsensical or to be part of their interests and profits; it reflects their own political or cultural norms. Because the upper class detains wealth, and because most media is owned by wealthy capitalists, media are therefore biased in favour of capitalists. This is what Chomsky named “concentrated ownership” (Chomsky, 1988, P. 02). The news provided in the press for instance would avoid criticising the capitalists or the Conservatives. Thus, Media ownership partakes in filtering or rather self-censoring news.

However, to echo Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Sur la Télévision*, he argues that:

*One cannot account for what happens in TF1 by the sole fact that it is owned by Bouygues. Any explanation that would not take this fact into consideration would not be exhaustive. Nevertheless, any other explanation that would only stick to this fact would not be exhaustive either.*<sup>7</sup> (Pierre Bourdieu, 1996, P. 44).

In other words, it would be too limiting to try and account for bias by looking at ownership solely and overlooking other dimensions.

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<sup>7</sup> The quotation is our proposed translation from French: ‘*On ne peut pas expliquer ce qui se fait à TF1 par le seul fait que cette chaîne est possédée par Bouygues. Une explication qui ne prendrait en compte ce fait serait insuffisante. Mais celle qui ne prendrait en compte que ce fait ne serait pas moins insuffisante*’.

Media ownership is not enough to account for media's agenda. In fact, Herman and Chomsky were not too reductionist to overlook this fact; therefore, the second filter of the Propaganda Model is advertising. Advertising is in fact one vital and sustainable income source for media corporate. In the case of the press, it is actually thanks to that, the price of the newspapers is reasonable, for example. When prices are low, most people would be able to afford it, so media can cover a range wider readership from different walks of life. Similarly, funds are very important in film making, and their source is just as important. Thereupon, media owners would avoid criticising the industries they advertise as well, for as it would harm their income source lest the industries retrieve their products promotions procedures from them. It can be seen as a kind of self-censorship indeed.

As far as the third filter is concerned, it revolves around where data is collected. Herman and Chomsky explain that it is the process of collecting data from areas where possible newsworthy events are most likely to happen. This filter is called sourcing. Thus, government and official institutions are usually the main source of information, and reporters for instance are more concentrated on those areas than anywhere else. This would of course affect the content because, first, it limits the scope of sourcing, and second, the sources coming from government are not necessarily objective anyway. In their book<sup>8</sup> on media coverage in war times, *"L'opinion, ça se travaille..." Les Média et les "Guerres Justes": Kosovo, Afganistan, Irak*, journalists Serge Halimi and Dominique Vidal would go further and argue that the lack of journalists and reporters in areas where events are taking place would promote 'ignorance' (Halimi and Vidal, 2006, P. 12). Reporters, according to them, are not connoisseurs enough; accordingly, they would tend to be too general in reporting news and may omit/overlook important details. The generalities, in turn, would mislead the audience into making amalgams, hence ignorance (idem, 2006).

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<sup>8</sup> With the cooperation of Henri Maler.

The fourth filter concerns itself with the nature of information being communicated. According to Herman and Chomsky (1989), the *FLAK*<sup>9</sup> filter is the strategy of not to report news that would give rise to widespread uproar or violent reactions amongst the audience and possibly damage the corporate image accordingly. Moreover, the intervention of government is necessary in maintaining flak, as Chomsky put it ‘the ability to produce flak, that is costly and threatening, is related to power’ (Chomsky, 1988, P. 26). He expands his statement more explicitly two pages later ‘the government is the major producer of flak, regularly assailing, threatening and “correcting” the media, trying to contain any deviations from the established line’ (Chomsky, 1988, P.28).

Finally, anti-communism filter, or “the national religion” (Chomsky, 1988, P. 2) as Chomsky coined it, constitutes the fifth filter. It initially discussed the Communist threat coverage since the book was first published during the Cold War, but it was updated later into ‘fear’ or ‘war on terrorism’ filter after that the Cold War was over. The idea is that media constantly seeks to create a common enemy to combat and stimulate fear among people by framing those enemies so that they would represent a serious, global threat to humanity. The case of Saddam Hussein’s supposedly weapons of massive destructions’ war argument and his relations with Al Qaida and terrorism best exemplify the filter<sup>10</sup>. It must be stressed that framing can be exaggerated or even invented. As a matter of fact, to the time of writing, no WMD have been found in Iraq; a fact that raised a lot of doubts as for the truthfulness of this war argument.

As one can deduce it at this stage, the five filters serve then to reduce significantly what would come to be news. Media relate news that serve the interests of both

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<sup>9</sup> Etymology: from the German acronym *Fliegerabwehrkanone*, literally “aeroplane defence cannon”, that is “antiaircraft gun”. The figurative meaning could be understood as “adverse criticism”.

<sup>10</sup> A *Washington Post National Weekly* survey carried out by Harold Meyerson and published on 20 October, 2003, reveals that six months after the fall of Bagdad, 48% of Americans still believed that the White House found a close link between Iraq and Al-Qaida, whereas 22% of them were convinced that the U.N had found WMD.

government and media conglomerates in an attempt to drag people into embracing the news as self-evident and commonsensical. Furthermore, the traditional agenda setting of media create a dichotomization of what is newsworthy and what is *not* (Chomsky, 1988). In this sense, mass media becomes a true tool of power (Klaehn, 2002).

These are then the tools we intend to make use of in the coming chapters. They seek to raise awareness about the power of politics over people and to give birth to reactions from the audience it appeals to. Indeed, one should bear in mind that the “super-ordinate” of critical theory is the Critical Paradigm which is in essence in favour of what is known as *action* theories.

Overall, this is the lens from which we intend to look at British cinema. Cinema pertains to culture in the sense that reflects ways of thinking, behaving, or working of a given society, and culture is the product of human beings. Starting from this point, Gramsci’s concern with cultural hegemony through means of production seems to fit in with the topic of cinema.

The two frameworks have the same eventual goal as what Chomsky calls “*the intellectual’s responsibility*” which is not only to tell the truth or to demystify the misrepresented conditions of life, but to tell it to the right audience, that is, to common people that are subject to the hegemony of the conglomerate industries. In other words, intellectuals should not denounce what happens to the authorities since it would obviously not yield any change, they should address and exchange ideas with the masses instead (Chomsky, 2002). Nevertheless, both of them are different in the way they approach cultural issues. While Gramsci focuses on cultural hegemony and capital, Chomsky on the other hand, stresses the importance of the role media and propaganda techniques. We conclude that the key concepts of the frameworks, Gramsci’s and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model will cross-fertilize one another so as to achieve the scope of our study.

## **1.2 Historical Context:**

If the Formalist school has chosen not to take context into consideration when analysing and interpreting arts as a way to ensure certain objectivity, the Historicist school, on the other hand, prefers to take an opposite position. Overlooking history according under a historicist's point of view means misunderstanding<sup>11</sup> and misinterpreting artistic manifestations. Because understanding historical context of Britain naturally entails understanding her artistic works and vice versa, and because the chosen approach in this study, historicism, prescribes its use, we have devoted this part to examining historical context. The following is a succinct historical landmark account of Britain, and when appropriate of the world. The time span of the research covers three decades: the thirties, forties, and forties. Each subpart will tackle the topic in terms of three thematic axes: economy, politics and society.

### **1.2.1 The Thirties:**

Globally, the thirties, or the 'evil decade' as it was called, were marked by many events such as the bitter consequences of the Great Depression, the rise of totalitarianism, and the spread of entertainment. Soon after the Great Slum that occurred in the USA, Britain and the rest of Europe and the world were dragged into one of the harshest economic crisis ever. The Crisis was caused by a combination of several reasons; the most critical one was the Wall Street Crash that took place in October 1929. Other reasons may be that, prior to the Crisis, the US primary and secondary sectors were on the boom phase. Accordingly, America was producing more goods than it needed. These goods were usually bought with credits because of wages disparities. Obviously, it directly contributed in drying up markets; with stock market speculation, banks failure was inevitable.

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<sup>11</sup> While it is to be acknowledged that there may be many "understandings" of works, what I mean by "misunderstanding" here is that ignoring some, say, common motifs or rationale of recurrent themes could mislead readers into making them considering the surface structure (structural/linguistic) only and not the deep, hidden one.

In Britain, the crisis meant that government had to implement some measures to cope with the failing economy. Unlike their American counterpart, the British government was more pragmatic and adopted classic solutions: protectionism, credits, strict wages control, restriction or cuts of doles, and Pound's devaluation of 40% in comparison to the Dollar (Mougel, 2000). As a consequence, industries slowed down or shut down, leaving thousands of uninsured workers without a job. In addition, the balance of payment was at its worst between 1932 and 1938, especially that importation constituted 44% of the operations (idem, 2000).

In 1936, John Menard Keynes, an influential economist, introduced a new economic approach: *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. He argues that during economic recessions, to keep people employed, Government should increase spending, cut taxes, and invest in employment even if it is in deficit (Peden, 1980). The measures are meant to help cope with temporary crises. Still, the Conservatives did not embrace his ideas then and opted for the 'wait and see' approach: they waited for the crisis to pass. Keynesianism was eventually accepted and adopted only after the Second World War, under the Labour Government. Generally, the crisis was devastating economically; nevertheless, some positive points can be drawn from that situation. The price of raw materials was at its lowest which somehow helped the ailing industries to carry on their productions. The Conservative government's intervention through some planning and rationing also played a role in providing factories with new machines.

One of the social consequences of these measures was the widespread of unemployment. In the period comprised between 1929 to 1932, figures showed that joblessness soared from 1, 4 million to 3,5 but steadily decreased till the Second Wold War. The social fabric too continued to change; population rose from 46 to 48 million between 1930 and 1939 which can be explained by the growing life expectancy and positive immigration. Gradually, there was a sharp contrast in the generation gap. During the thirties, social conditions were intimately linked with social class and education. Though there had been a relative wealth decline, the



Upper and Middle Class did not really suffer as much as the Working Class. The Unions lost their popularity slightly because of the economic conditions. Within ten years, membership dropped from 5, 5 million to 4,4 between 1924 and 1934 (Mougel, 2000).

In spite of the deterioration of living conditions, British society developed a special taste for entertainment. One paradoxical situation that marked the thirties is that, on the one hand, unemployment and poverty were prevailing among the Working Class; on the other, people found a way to keep a sustained level of spending time and money in some leisure activities. In fact, the austere economic situation led Britons to escapist activities in order to flee everyday hardships; it can be seen as a psychological need in order to alleviate breakdowns and keep the morale up to face the Crisis. Radio, theatre, music halls, and particularly cinema were the most famous entertainment sources for the Working Class. Movie theatres' tickets were cheap enough to be bought by anyone. It was the beginning of popular culture.

Politically speaking, Britain was firmly dominated by the Conservatives. It was the time where Labour was the least popular after Macdonald's failure that led him to be expelled from his Party. The Conservative Party obtained 56% and 54% of 1931 and 1935's turnouts respectively (Mougel, 2000). Led by Baldwin firstly, and then by Chamberlain in 1937, the Tories zealously pursued a pacifist economic approach with rationing, government interventions, and protectionism. The Party's unity and program succeeded in creating a feeling of appeasement among the British society.

The Labour Party lost its appeal because of the pressure it was under since the Crisis began. The nascent and inexperienced Party was in power by the time the Great Depression hit Britain. Caught between two fires, with the imposition of the Liberals and the Conservatives, the Labour Party was forced to implement severe cuts to avoid unmitigated budget deficit. These measures proved to be very unpopular; Trade Unions and supporters as well as workers and job-seekers who were living on doles likened the measures to conservatives' policies. The Party leader, Ramsey Macdonald, was expelled by his colleagues for betraying his own Party's ideology.

Throughout the thirties, the Labour faced a lot of troubles and was unable to unite firmly again after that many disagreeing members stood back.

The thirties were also synonymous with the rise of fascism in Britain. Founded in October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1932 by Sir Oswald Mosley who was strongly influenced by Benito Mussolini, the British Union of Fascists grew rapidly. However, only two years after its foundation, the movement which enjoyed certain immediate popularity and sympathisers started to decline because of its radical ideas and anti-Semitism, and by the end of the thirties it became very unpopular and lost the backup it had. It was eventually permanently banned in 1940 due to the war. It may sound strange that such radical ideas could be promoted and popular in a democratic country like Britain, but one should ask oneself what could be the reasons behind it. The Economic Slump played a lead role in that, since it nurtured extremist ideologies.

The creation of a fascist Party in Britain is neither a coincidence nor an isolated event. Its apparition was introduced by an external influence; at that time, Fascism was already adopted in Germany and Italy for many reasons. First, The Treaty of Versailles could be seen as a humiliation to Germany. The unfair measures taken to punish the country destroyed its economy, shattered the pre-existing geographical unity, and paralysed the German army. With the Great Depression, Germany faced hardships and could no longer pay her never-ending debts. Thus, resentment rapidly grew against the countries that partook in the Treaty. Hitler took advantage of the situation to preach his extremist ideology; it was easy to convince the German to embrace his ideas under those circumstances. The same can be said about Italy. The second reason is that although Italy was victorious, she did not obtain what was expected as a compensation for the Great War. When Mussolini came to power, he was perceived as the hero who would get Italy out of misery. There was the communist threat as well; in 1922, Russia decided to found the USSR and spread in order to gain power.

The sudden rise of totalitarianism and the expansion to the neighbouring territories represented a real threat to Great Britain and other countries. Perhaps one of the main

reasons for the decline of British Union of Fascist is the danger of a possible bloody coup like that of Russia. British people watched the spread of totalitarianism with concern. The road to the Second World War was inevitable when Hitler attacked Poland. Great Britain officially declared war against Germany.

### **1.2.2 The forties:**

Great Britain's involvement in the Second World War, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939, was seen as a daring challenge to the existence of the Empire since it automatically included the British Commonwealth and colonies altogether. Being the sole belligerent against Germany and against the Axis after the early fall of France in 1940, Great Britain was afterwards subject to direct attempt of conquest for the first time in her modern history. It was clear that Britain was underprepared and vulnerable; even internally there were turmoil. Chamberlain resigned after a House of Commons' session in which he could not defend his war policy and had members of his Party support the Labour's ideas. It was then when Churchill came to power at 65, and proposed a coalition with the Labour Party.

The Blitzkrieg<sup>12</sup> intensified on Britain and the danger spectrum grew very fast in 1940-1 after that all of Belgium, Holland, and the Ardennes successively succumbed to Hitler. Hitler was ready to invade Britain when he took over France but eventually preferred to attack Russia first breaking thus his pact with Staline. His obsession against communism made him change his plan which was a blessing for Britain. In fact, had he not changed his mind, Great Britain would have fallen certainly. But on the other hand, the decision was a curse for the third Reich and a turning point for the war as Hitler's army was badly defeated twice: in the Battle of Stalingrad in Russia, and his Afrika Korps army in North Africa by the British. These events lifted the British people's spirit to a possible defeat of the Nazis.

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<sup>12</sup> From German, literally meaning "lightening war", it consists of sudden and intense (aerial) military attacks.

New hope was born as the American war machine entered the war by 1942 because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour 1941. Churchill in fact confessed in his diary that he slept well now that the U.S.A was at war; it meant that he gained a strong ally. The road to peace was facilitated with the American intervention, and Hitler's army gradually collapsed due to lack of food and ammunition. In 1944, the American troops landed in Normandy in order to free France, it was known as the D-Day (delivery day) It was crowned with the victory of the Allies against the German.

The war officially ended in May 1945; the Peace treaty was signed a day before in Reims. Socially speaking, the British people were deeply traumatized after the conflict. War casualties and victims number was high which meant that in almost every family, there was a war victim.

The British celebrated the end of the war with much excitement; the crowd gathered in front of Buckingham Palace to see the monarch. There, something very special happened. After that the King and Queen greeted the crowd from the royal balcony, Churchill came out and stood between them. No political figure has had been there before. Churchill who had been prime minister since 1940, i.e. during Britain's darkest period was considered by the monarch as a hero who had saved the country. The problem is that the royal balcony is not made for politicians and the royals should not show any favouritism towards them. That day was significant because Britain started preparing for the General Elections and what happened then was simply encouraging people to vote for him.

Of course, everyone was expecting The Conservative Party to win the election since they were in service for years and they swiftly dealt with the war, but they did not. In July 1945, the Conservatives lost and it was not even a close result: it was a landslide victory for the Labour Party.

First, Churchill made some mistakes. To begin with, as soon as the War ended, he started attacking the Labour Party as being a threat via his radio speeches. Besides, their political manifesto as well as their program was centred on Churchill's

personality and on international affairs and the Empire. Labour on the other hand, focused more on people and people's concern. They were interested in people's welfare and to providing them a better future "*let us face the future*" was their manifesto. This is what the British needed the most after that they lost almost everything during the war.

Second, the Labour Party outmanoeuvred the Conservatives in one major measure. In 1942, government asked William Beveridge, an economist, to analyse and write a report on how the British social security should be designed in the aftermath of the war. He came up with the famous Report in which he identified "*five giant evils*" that government should fight in order to improve the social situation. The five evils were want, squalor, ignorance, idleness and sickness. This report which immediately became a bestseller was adopted by Labour as their official post-war welfare policy. In the General Election, people had the choice between the two parties and they obviously opted for Labour.

Subsequently, the Labour government enacted nationalisation of major means of productions such as the Bank of England, transportation, electricity and gas, communication, coal, and steel and iron. They also passed the Nation Insurance act against sickness, old age, and unemployment. The NHS was obviously implemented too to enable people to not to pay for health care services. The Welfare state seemed to work well at the time till the economic crisis of 1947 stroke Britain. Labour had to revise his Welfare program and to apply austerity measures so as to avoid bankruptcy. The decision was very unpopular amongst the people, because they thought Labour failed them.

### **1.2.1 The fifties:**

The fifties were relatively quieter than the preceding two decades. The war was over, the economy started to flourish again, and society witnessed some deep changes. Everything seemed to work well with the Labour government and their Welfare program. As mentioned above Nationalisation, the National Health Service,

allowances etc were swiftly implemented and enjoyed certain popularity. However, the Labour Government experience was short-lived. In 1951's General Election, The Conservative Party won; the fragile Churchill became the prime minister at 76. This leads us to wonder what could have led the voters to turn their back to the Labour Party this time.

Many reasons were put forward. Some argue that the British people were disappointed and dissatisfied with the Labour's achievements and hoped for more. The NHS was not 100% free as initially promised, for instance. Furthermore, the Labour party was split because of the nuclear bomb project, a fact that undermined its stability. Still, in spite of the ideological contradiction the welfare state represents to the Conservatives, the consensus to keep those measures the Labour invested in was maintained.

The country also witnessed many socio-cultural changes. Britain had a new Queen, Elizabeth II, in 1952, a young beautiful lady who recently had given birth to an heir, Charles, in 1950. Her crowning ceremony was broadcasted for the first time in history. At the time, TV sets started to *invade* households as their price was then affordable. Indeed, the decade was also synonymous to prosperity. It was the era of full employment, wage levels increased fast, increasing thus the purchase power. The 1944 Education Act opened up educational opportunities and encouraged a certain degree of social mobility. The famous "us" and "them" contrast to some extent decreased partly thanks to the Labour post-war achievements.

The consumerist wave came from prosperous America, the young British generation wanted to embrace the American way of life. As a consequence, recreational activities expanded among the working class to include sports which were reserved to the Middle and the Upper Classes before. The decade was also the starting point of the affluent society where youngsters could have pocket money to go out to, say, cinema halls, restaurants, or other leisure activities.

It must be added that the notion of adolescence was discovered during the fifties; before then, people were either children or adults. The advance in psychology enabled to better understand teens' behaviour which in turn contributed in encouraging the affluent society and self-indulgence. Another noteworthy point is that the change in mentalities entailed relative religious beliefs and practices decrease during this period since people preferred to indulge themselves in rather hedonistic lives and make the most of their time instead. So all in all, the fifties can be considered as a breakup with the past and with tradition. But if most people 'never had it so good' they didn't take prosperity for granted. Respectability, deference, caution, and consensus toward the Establishment were maintained in the fifties.

Internationally, however, things were not that prosperous and smooth as in Britain. Soon after the end of the Second World War, resentment grew between two new superpowers, that is, the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R. Both of them wanted to extend their hegemony and influence over the world but it was clear that their contrasting ideologies would not match. As a matter of fact, the post-war world entered a new phase called the Cold War.

Great Britain, on the other hand, had lost her prestige and power that she had enjoyed before; the very fact that she started decolonizing at the time witnessed her relative decline. By the fifties, the U.S.A had taken over her role; worse than that, Britain's "special relationship" with the U.S indirectly dragged her into this unwanted war that it will not speak its name. *Pax Britannica* was definitely something of the past especially after the humiliation of Anthony Eden, the then Conservative Prime Minister, by the U.S.A after that the latter had ordered his army out of Egypt along with France's during the Suez Canal Crisis in 1956.

To a greater extent in the occident, the Cold War was 'un'famous for propaganda against the Communist bloc which was according to the U.S. a serious threat to democracy and personal liberties.

## **1.3 Development of Cinema in Britain:**

It is commonly known that British cinema witnessed its heyday in the first part of the twentieth century, just before that television, an even more affordable entertainment means, took over it by the fifties. Early cinema used to be silent, with, music playing, sometimes on live, as a background; captions were used between scenes to describe what the actors were doing or saying.

However, by the late twenties and early thirties, technicians could synchronically incorporate separately recorded sound with the moving image - playback; it was then called “the talkies”. This brand new advance was a double edged sword, though. One important drawback is that the talkies were fatal to many actors’ careers. Indeed, many had to stop acting because they had heavy regional accent while the industry imposed actors speaking with RP-like or a more or less standard variations of English. Sir Alexander Korda’s first wife’s career, Mária Corda, for instance, was terminated because of her strong Hungarian accent. Because of the costly technique, the audience had to wait a little bit longer so that colourful film would be generalized in all cinema halls even if Technicolor, with the three-colour system, has been developed in the thirties.

This section is an introduction to cinema in Britain in terms of cinema and legislation; genres and movement; and studios and directors from its early days to the end of the fifties. The aim is to familiarise the readers with the topic so that they acquire the necessary information to better understand the coming chapters.

### **1.3.1 Cinema and state protection:**

By the beginning of the twenties and thereafter, Hollywood had already become the most prominent and creative film producer in the world. For instance, in 1927, the number of American films released in the U.S.A was of 678 films (Wood, 2009). Hollywood, combined with the then economic boom, indeed triggered what had come to be known as film industry. But the entrepreneurial endeavour to develop film industry was originally due to a fierce competition against French companies like



Gaumont and Pathé (Street, 2005). What is more, American films were being marketed inside and *outside* the U.S.A and, of course, Great Britain was not an exception to the expanding phenomenon. The American cinematic productions enjoyed much popularity among the British.

However, Hollywood's prosperous and massive productions soon invaded British cinema halls; consequently, fewer national films were projected at the time. The problem is that this invasion was very harmful toward British productions. The reason is that, first, Hollywood filmic productions outnumbered the ones of Britain, and, second, the audience preferred them to the local ones. In a British Film Institute detailed report, a survey shows that the percentage of US films released in UK oscillated between 65% and 74% in the 1929 - 1939 decade (Wood, 2009, P. 118).

The British governments, to their habits, expanded their protectionist policy over cinematic productions so as to work out a solution. Therefore, in 1927, Parliament enacted the first Cinematograph Film Act<sup>13</sup> to guarantee continuity of production (Street, 2005). Its purpose was to limit the rate of projections of Hollywood films (and indirectly any foreign film) and encourage British films ones instead. Thus, they imposed a quota of British films to be produced annually so that the American ones could be eventually screened in turn. For instance, in the first year of its application, the percentage was set at, at least, 7,5 % to exhibitors (Street, 2005).

Initially, the measure was meant not only to increase British films by setting a certain number of films to be produced annually, it also intended to raise a filmic *armada* to face their increasingly powerful challenger. However, the plan turned to be a real failure. Like a cobra effect, British film exhibitors and hall renters started to project low cost short films only to reach the necessary quota, especially that the Act did not specify what kind of films to be produced nor did it mention the approximate

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<sup>13</sup> Not to be confused with the first Cinematograph Act of 1909; this stipulates that films be projected exclusively in dedicated and decently equipped cinema venues. The measure was passed so as to avoid fires that were caused by the inflammable nitrate cellulose, a material films were made of.

total costs; these kind of films were known as “Quota Quickies”. It only contributed in harming the reputation of British films accordingly.

Ten years after, the first Cinematograph Film Act expired because of its many shortcomings and unexpected outcomes mentioned above. Parliament passed a second Cinematograph Film Act, a sort of a modified version of its ancestor with some changes pertaining to its framework. In essence, the quota was maintained, but the act insisted that its application extends to that of short films and documentaries. Besides, a minimum production cost was this time set at £7,500 per film (Street, 2005). The motivation behind a second act is to sustain the economic and ideological goals of its predecessor on the one hand, and to foster quality productions on the other. A decade later, a third Act was passed to increase the percentage to 45% which exhibitors could decrease to 30% by 1950 after some pressure (Street, 2005). The Act was finally abolished in 1983.

The Second World War’s cinematic production witnessed an unprecedented government intervention. Fearing the collapse of cinema because of war circumstances as what happened in the Great War, Ministry of Information’s Film Division actively intervened in order to produce war documentaries and historical films (Street, 2005). This partly explains the thematic homogeneity of war time films which revolved around national unity, patriotism, and propagandistic stances. Alternatively, the State requisitioned half of studios for war purposes while others were served as studios of Ministry of Information propaganda films (Aldgate and Richards, 2009).

Cinema and legislation under the Labour Government just after the Second World War did not really change with the exception of the third Cinematograph Film Act. One can argue that the decision to sustain a quota Act is to keep the propaganda going against American films. Apart from that, one new measure Labour put into action is that for the first time government provided financial help through the National Film Finance Corporation (1949) scheme in order to encourage even further national films and be able to be promoted and exported abroad.

That cinema industry could be a powerful means of State propaganda is hence clear enough; the abovementioned Acts demonstrated that film industry is also subject to government control. This control was strongly defended and justified by the Conservatives. Viscount Sandon MP from the Conservative Party once wrote a letter to *The Times* in January 1927 in which he directly attacks Hollywood:

*Children and young men and women, who pour nightly into the cinemas in the UK, see perpetually stories of divorce, of running away with other men's wives, distorted home life, burglaries, murders, revolvers, produced as a matter of course by all and sundry...evidence of police, judges, school teachers, all accumulates to prove the disastrous effect of this on the rising generation. (Sandon quoted in Aldgate and Richards, 2009)*

The protectionist argument was then that Hollywood's invasion was seen as too immoral to be freely screened in Great Britain and could negatively influence society. However, this prevention and limitation can be interpreted as censorship.

As a matter of fact, one well-known facet of British cinema is the quasi omnipresence of censorship. As early as the development of cinema in Britain is concerned, authorities indirectly managed to keep a relative level of censorship. Modernist ideas along with Soviet films were thus often subject to strict censorship or simply banned. The British Board for Film Censors (henceforth the BBFC) was founded in 1913 by film trade in order to control, monitor and possibly ban any exhibition that is politically or morally unacceptable. The BBFC is supposedly not attached to government though it often supported the ideas of the Government of the day; it was up to town halls to decide for the projection or not of films. Thus, one single film could be projected in a county and banned in another. The power of the BBFC reached its zenith during the thirties when extended its prerogatives to oblige film directors to submit the scripts to them prior to commencing the shooting. The motive is that the BBFC would suggest recommendations and modifications so that it fits in with their standards (Street, 2005).

Those standards of censors comprise not only themes pertaining to moral values, it also comprises social and political matters as well (Fielding, 2013). Sensitive topics to be absolutely avoided included any criticism to the British Establishment; thus, a level of zero tolerance was set against films that attacked the monarchy, church, government, judiciary, and sensitive subjects such as strikes, Communism or Fascism (Chapman, 2005). Other sensitive content which consisted of violence and crimes, cruelty to animals, as well as implicit or explicit sexual content were not welcomed either, though, the latter enjoyed a relative loosening by the fifties and the new youth culture trend. As a consequence, by the thirties, very few films could derogate from the norms; The BBFC only contributed in maintaining and reinforcing the *statu quo* and the socio-political consensus.

In some ways then, censorship was triangulated between three elements. Just like a close-knit thread, the relationship was tightly linked between the film trade (industry), the British Board for Film Censors, and the local authorities. The trilogy opened a door to some to use it as a tool for monitoring film content in favour of the owners' ideology.

### **1.3.2 Genres and movements:**

British cinema has always been eclectic; there were various genres and movements even during silent cinema era. However, early films consisted of adaptations of literary works (Fielding, 2008) such as those of Shakespeare's plays about monarchs or Dickens' depiction of nineteenth century lifestyles and hardships. It is because of the lack of dedicated scripts that the industry initially opted for screening literary works. Genres released in UK in the first half of the twentieth century ranged from musicals, drama, documentary, romance, comedy, as well as war films, film noir, historical films and social realism, so it is obvious that one cannot discuss them extensively in this thesis.

It is interesting to pause and ponder about the fact that the percentage of the most released film genre in Britain in the thirties were as follows: comedies, between

11.4% and 18.0%; melodrama, between 12.7% and 21.7%; and drama, between 8.5% and 17.8% in comparison to naught for political and propaganda films of the same period<sup>14</sup> (Wood, 2009, P. 115). Sir Michael Balcon, a famous Ealing Studios director in the forties once declared that when he was head of Gaumont-British Studios in the interwar period that “*We were in the business of giving the public what it seemed to want in entertainment*” (Balcon, 1969, P.27). So one can deduce the industry understood that the British audience was not interested in “serious” matters like these in such circumstances (the Great Depression), and was more inclined to entertaining, escapist matters instead.

For this reason, the genres we would like to shed light on in this section are the above mentioned along with war films and the social realist movements which will be presently analysed.

Drama, and more particularly the historical drama subgenre, constituted a sort of bypass for direct political representations at the time when censorship was at its apex, i.e. the thirties. Historical dramas are biopics<sup>15</sup> in which “political figures from Britain’s past appeared as protagonist or supporting character” (Fielding S., 2013 P. 3). Whilst it is true that those films implicitly depicted some political figures, those representations were often mythical, for they lacked realist faithfulness and tended to idealise them: “*films presented their protagonists as wise, paternalistic, and humane*” (Fielding, 2013, P. 22). Moreover, Fielding argues that some films contained blatant historical distortions. Actor Arliss<sup>16</sup> himself does not seem to be bothered with historical accuracies: “the man in the street... doesn’t know anything about the history of his own country, and doesn’t want to know” (Arliss quoted by Fielding, 2013, P. 10). *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), *Victoria the Great* (1937), or *The Iron Duke* (1935) which indirectly depicts Benjamin Disraeli, are famous examples to name just few.

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<sup>14</sup> From 1929 to 1939, the percentage here is given from the lowest to the highest rate respectively throughout that decade.

<sup>15</sup> A biographical film

<sup>16</sup> An actor whose eighteen-film career was devoted to representing the Duke of Wellington, a fictional prime minister, and above all, Disraeli.

Social Realism movement, as its name suggests, is thought to provide the viewers with a 'faithful' representation of the world. Therefore, it often focuses in the representation of ordinary labouring people's lives especially that of the working class's "daily heroism". The movement was a reaction against escapist films that prevailed in the thirties. Art, according to this movement, should be concerned with the activities of the working class who struggles everyday with daily hardships. Social realist cinema did not always come in form of dramatic films; many came under a comic substance like the *Old Mother Riley*<sup>17</sup> series of films. Working class audience could identify themselves with protagonists of this kind and laugh at their own harsh life conditions. While it is true that social realist films were much appreciated for their commitments and their 'too' realistic themes, decor, and clothing, some others did not really like the fact that it only concentrates on hardships, poverty, and misery. Social realist films were openly disdained by some London West-End critics for being vulgar and crude (Shafer, 2005).

War films could be said to be the backbone of British film production, especially during the Second World War and, to some extent, the immediate post war era. These films were sometimes financially backed or even proposed by the Ministry of Information. The war time was very particularly prolific, for film production rate intensified. Crown Film Unit's *Target for Tonight* (1941), Ealing's *In Which We Serve* (1942), or Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's ... *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942), along many others all have a common point: the theme always revolved around the national unity, a common enemy<sup>18</sup>, patriotism, and common people's heroism in war time. A further discussion will be given in the third chapter in this concern. Considerably fewer war films were made after the Second World War, with the exception of Ealing Studios which tried to maintain the same topical subjects. This relative decline was due to the fact that the audience grew fed up with the same recurrent themes and wanted to have new insights.

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<sup>17</sup> A popular series of farce caricature film lasting from the thirties to the fifties portraying an old washer-woman, very much appreciated among the working class audience.

<sup>18</sup> As we shall see later in the third chapter, the common enemy is no one else than the Nazi

As for the fifties, the even fewer war films that were still marketed put special emphasis on the heroic role Great Britain played in the Second World War instead of just producing Manichean films. Some possible explanations for this decline may be that the audience was no longer interested in watching films that reminded them of the atrocities they have been through. Even internationally, the Hollywoodian counterpart was shifting to another period of its cinematic history, the Classical period; as a result, war films did no longer fit in with the then current affairs and were soon swept under the rug. Alternatively, cinematic production tended to get back to making realist films.

The panoramic account provided above enabled us to have a clear vision about first, some statistical data on what kind of films were prevailing in the time span we chose to tackle. And second, it allowed us also to be acquainted with the key features of those kinds of films. One can notice that the rich and productive industry was definitely not merely an entertaining leisure since ideological positions were the main constant which motivated film makers.

### **1.3.3 Film Makers and British Studios:**

When people hear the word ‘cinema’, the first image that is drawn in their schemata is likely to be the giant Hollywood’s and very unlikely to the British’s. Even cinema critics’ attitude tends to conceal the latter’s merits though more or less implicitly as Truffaut put it in his interview with Hitchcock ‘*the English countryside, the subdued way of life, the stolid routine... the weather itself is anti-cinematic.*’ (Truffaut quoted by Shail, 2007). Yet, British cinema does have a lot to offer even if the British studio system was calqued from the Hollywood model. But this *calque* implies that films were often firmly monitored by the executives, i.e studios’ directors. The literature in history of British cinema repeatedly reports renowned studios like British Lion, Ealing Studios, or ABPC... and conversely, often fail to bring under scrutiny notorious film directors as it is the case with, say, Ealing Studios: its talented film

directors were almost always overshadowed by Michael Balcon's<sup>19</sup> style instead. This is because the system put emphasis on the producers' point of view and tended to marginalize film directors. The double-fold purpose of this part is to shed light on some distinguished film directors firstly, and then to look at some notable studios.

If the "Quota Quickies" were damaging to the British film industry quality, they were, nevertheless, beneficial to the now canonical film makers Sir Alfred Hitchcock and Sir Alexander Korda. Their début in cinema was indeed thanks to the production of films of such kinds. Sir Alexander Korda<sup>20</sup> is undeniably one of the most prominent British film figures. He is Hungarian originally, and was born in 1893; he had to flee his country from the "White Terror" at the time after his condemnation to death. He pursued directing films in Germany, Switzerland, and France, and then moved to Hollywood before finally settling for Great Britain. There, with some discreet financial help, he founded the London Film Production:

*both Colonel Claude Dansey and the Special Intelligence Service, and Robert Vansitart of the Foreign Office with their secret funding and support, he was able to build the only British film studio to successfully compete in the international market, producing films equal in quality and appeal to those made by Hollywood itself (Peirce, 2010:15).*

Although he is more known for being an influential studio director, he in fact directed numerous films himself: he signed no less than sixty films. His productions are known for their prestigious, polished style that made his works reach international audiences. He also demonstrated a strong penchant to the 'Britishness' theme which was skilfully projected in his important film, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933).

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<sup>19</sup> Sir Michael Balcon is unquestionably one of the most prominent British cinema icons. He immigrated to Great Britain where he worked as film studios director in Gaumont-British Studios in the thirties before heading one of Britain's oldest and most notable and productive studios, Ealing Studios. He was knighted afterwards.

<sup>20</sup> He owes his knighthood to Churchill, for he was his special envoy to the U.S.A during the Second World War.



Another British Canon is Alfred Hitchcock who was Michael Balcon's special protégé:

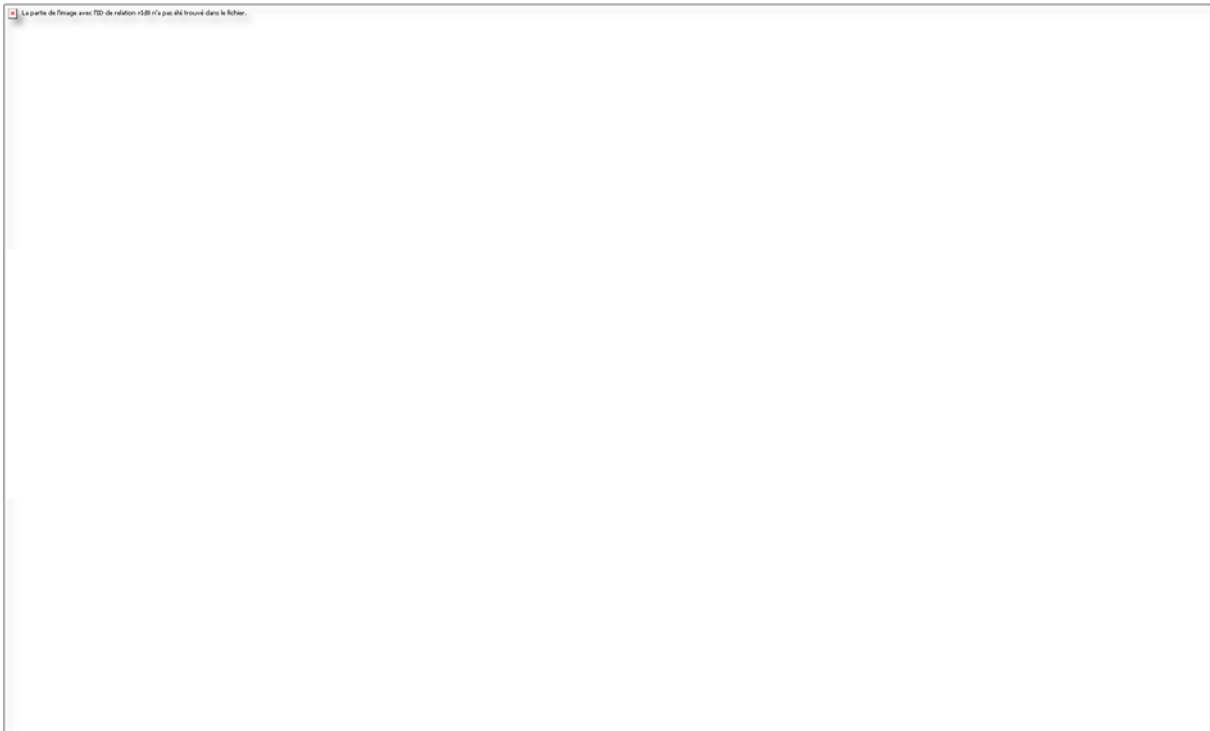
*Balcon [...] wished to improve film's reputation – it was generally seen as rather classless, cheap entertainment. Balcon intrinsically understood the motion picture business needed directors who could raise people's expectations of what movies could be. His money was on Hitchcock, who had the potential to impress with both his carefully controlled image and his precisely constructed movies. (Schemenner, 2007, P. 04).*

Although, most of the time, his name is associated with that of Hollywood cinema, Alfred Hitchcock owes his fame and experience to his mother country – Britain. His beginning in cinema was not an immediate success though; it is only thanks to Balcon's assistance that he could climb up the professional ladder and reach a canonical level. One obvious stylistic divergence between him and his British counterparts is that he did not put emphasis on British context. His recurrent genre is the thriller; *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) is a famous example.

Other interesting film makers to discover are Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. The talented duo's reputation stands as high as Hitchcock's. The merit is that their works reflected British society, identity and culture par excellence. Powell, as his Korda or Hitchcock counterparts started up his career with low-budget fillers – the quota quickie but could make his way up with *The Edge of the World* (1937) a film which depicted life in a Scottish isle. Powell collaborated with Pressburger, also a Hungarian émigré who set foot in Britain in 1935 to work as a scriptwriter. After numerous successful productions, the duo left Korda's London Film to work for The Rank Organisation umbrella system in 1943 before eventually setting their own industry called The Archers. It was then when they produced the famous *Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) which Churchill repeatedly tried to ban for its caricaturist representation of an actual war hero and his friendship with a German.

The short-list description above only witness about the richness, but also, of the team spirit that existed between film directors. Also, it bears witness on the laissez-

faire spirit that reigned Britain at the time; indeed, as shown many film makers are immigrants who could make it professionally in Great Britain. Furthermore, Britain had had, and still has numerous studios as well. The following map shows a plethora of studios concentrated around London



**Picture 01 Map of London Studios. Source: Motion Picture Almanac 1937 – 28**

The map offers us an interesting view. One cannot see this map and not think about the important density of film studios headquarters in London in 1937. Indeed, in 1937, the capital city comprised no less than twenty-two studios. Contrary to what non-specialists may expect, studios were proliferating as early as the thirties, and by extension cinematic productions.

One key British studio for instance is the well-known Ealing Studios. Inaugurated in 1896 under the name Studios Will Barker first, and then under Associated Talking Pictures (A.T.P) with Dean Basil before eventually bearing the name of the London borough–Ealing with the heading of Balcon in 1939, it is believed to be the oldest film studios still working in the world. The studio, which still exists, was especially

renowned for its numerous comedies during the thirties and forties that often depicted British community spirit at economic hard times (Sorlin, 2000). The Second World War period enabled Balcon's studio to reach its zenith in terms of artistic and productive point of view. But it was attached to Rank Studios due to some financial issues in late forties where its stylistic features were altered by that corporate giant. In 1955, it was acquired by the BBC to produce films for television (Harper and Porter, 2003).

Rank Organisation is also a prominent figure which has had a considerable number of other studios under its umbrella. J. Arthur Rank's notable asset was that he benefited from national and transatlantic distribution; the purpose, he believed, was to make British films marketable in the U.S, especially that his films production's cost were relatively high which in turn confers to them a certain prestige abroad. These measures enabled him to secure his industry financially. As a consequence, Rank could bring under its umbrella several studios such as the British National film company (1935), General Film Distributors (1935), Pinewood, Denham, and Amalgamated Studios (1936–38) and the Odeon cinema chain (1938). In the early 1940s, Rank also acquired the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation (1941). Rank Organisation produces films, but it also distributes them; so it also owned some circuits to promote its own films (Harper and Porter, 2003).

Established in the thirties, the British Lion, our third studio, has become the second film distributor in the fifties with its 150 films. Initially established to specialise in "quota quickies", it soon grew to reach international distribution so much so it attracted Alexander Korda to buy a share in the forties where he became its executive (Harper and Porter, 2003). The British Lion was bailed out by government because of financial difficulties in 1949.

Though apparently short, the above review of British film makers and studios provides us a significant conclusion. Indeed, unlike some popular beliefs and preconceived ideas, the review enabled us to highlight the fact that British cinema has had highly important works and iconic studios which are not always known by the

worldwide audience. This fact leads us to think that this situation may be caused by the giant Hollywood's global shadowing corporate system.

To a greater extent, this cinematic passage section enabled us to revisit the development of British cinema, film genres, and studios as well as the vital role it played in British economy with its various productions and projections. Besides, it showed how British cinema evolved, despite its ups and downs, into full maturation throughout the decades to reach international reputation. It equally stressed the fact that it was also a tool for 'counter' Hollywood cultural and economic hegemony and ensuring a certain thematic homogeneity the purpose of which will be discussed in the coming chapters.

To sum it all up, this chapter attempted to provide a broad overview of first the critical theories we would like to apply for the study of cinema and politics, second, of the relevant historical background which synthetically attempted to browse the three decades, and last, it provided a tentative snapshot about the development of cinema in Britain along with genres, studios, and filmmakers. It sought to pave the way to the readers to proceed in the study and get them acquainted with cinema.

In short, it must be acknowledged that this chapter only surveyed the topic and did not go through any analysis. But then, it must be added that it was precisely the purpose of this chapter to come up with the necessary background information. The next chapter will be devoted to analysing/contrasting two British films and audience attendance from the thirties and try, when relevant, to link them to the historical context in order to come up with a better understanding of this issue.

Chapter Two:  
Sailing through  
the Escapist  
Thirties

## 2. Sailing through Escapist Thirties:

Our research journey starts in the ‘troublesome’ thirties where unemployment was prevailing and global political unrest and fears dominated the public opinion. It is also the decade when the freshly enfranchised Working Class members enjoyed escapist recreational activities that enabled them to wind up and distracted them from current issues, particularly picture-going as admission cost only few pence at the time. It was also the period of consensual politics with first the coalition and then Conservative diplomatic measures to levy the recession. As to British cinema, it was still in pain to establish a confirmed position among international film industry, not to mention the ‘quota quickies’ that burdened and damaged its reputation. The main difficulty remains in the inherent difference that marked the British markets in comparison to that of Hollywood in terms of flexibility, aesthetics, and themes. Still, because cinema could impose itself as being part and parcel of mass media, government’s concerns gradually grew as to its content since it easily reached considerable number of people around the country. A soft way had to be found so as to monitor and what, when, and how to filter films which did not meet the norms.

In this chapter, our focus attempts at examining the ways political propaganda was administered through films during the thirties. The analysis aims at stressing principally the effects of historical authenticity, the representation of class and class relations, power relations. It will first consider how the Conservative Party made use of mobile (van) cinema as *direct* party propaganda, as well as, the ways they targeted the audience and the type of content it exhibited. Afterwards, and more essentially, it will move to commercial films in order to tackle a more subtle method of promoting political stances. First, the escapist genre will be dealt with via Korda’s successful film *The Private Life of Henry VIII*. Subsequently the then sensitive genre, Social Realism, will be illustrated with Baxter’s *Love on the Dole*. At this point, we will explore the issues of censorship, class, and propaganda altogether and place them against the historical events that led to the banning of the film.

## 2.1 Direct Film Propaganda:

During the First World War, the British authorities relied heavily in propaganda<sup>21</sup>, mainly in the news and specifically via films in form of short documentaries that justified war and promoted the government's measures (Levine, 2006). However, shortly after the war, people were disappointed with the outcomes of the Great War and soon tensions grew around the world; some started calling for radical changes. The Conservatives, the then ruling and strongest Party, sought to limit these movements through soft means so as to peacefully quieten any possible revolution menaces as what happened in USSR.

The growing threat of socialist ideas internally and the communist and totalitarian ones internationally concerned the British authorities so much so the use of propaganda at that time reached great persuasions. Traditionally, direct party propaganda consisted of meetings or pamphleteering or leaflets. However, during the inter-war era, particularly the end of the twenties and the beginning of the thirties, a brand new kind of party propaganda was introduced: cinema vans. The origin of cinema vans came out of the fact that most cinema halls managers would refuse to exhibit explicit political films as they feared it would harm their reputation, affect the flux of the audience strictly according to their political affiliation, or generate ideological arguments and quarrels: in any case, this meant losses to them:

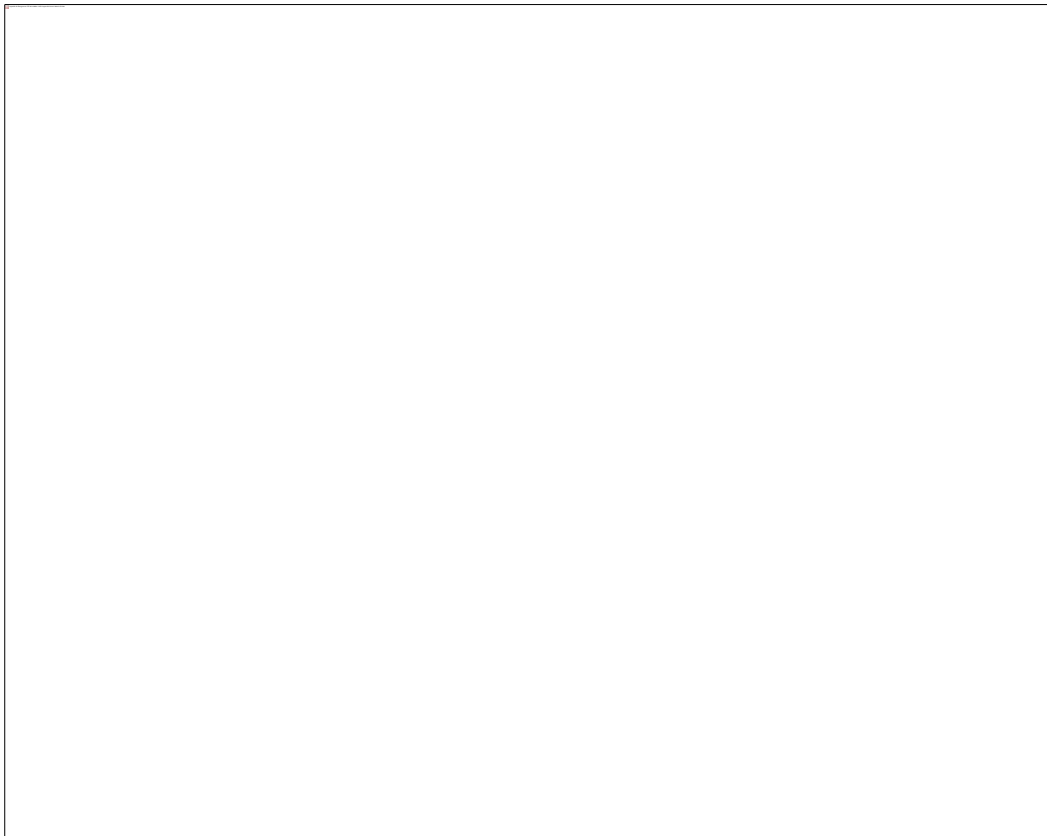
*the problem of exhibiting political propaganda film is one of such difficulty that at the present time it is only by the production and use of our own cinema vans that they can be placed before the public, the managers of cinematograph theatres being unanimous in their opposition to the exhibition of any film of a political character. (Baldwin quoted in Fielding, 2008)*

Against these circumstances, cinema vans, the attractive invention which was first used in August 1927 (Hollins), consisted of vans that are equipped with mobile projectors and cinematographs. “*Between 1925 and 1939 film was believed to be one*

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<sup>21</sup> The word “Propaganda” in the inter-war period did not bear negative connotations as that of the contemporary meaning of the word; it was in fact synonymous with publicity.

*of the most potent and effective methods of publicity at the party's disposal.”* (Hollins, 2:1981) The vans are believed to be effective for they not only allowed screening in daylight, they could also reach several remote cities and constituencies as well in order to attract more potential voters and sympathizers. The illustration below shows how they looked like:



**picture 02 Mobile Cinema van, undated (1929 ?). Source: Warwick Archives.**

In the left side of the political spectrum, the coming of cinema vans as a propaganda means was seen with a sceptical eye. The Labour Party underestimated the power of such a tool: “The official Labour Party [...] despite being the party of progress and of the people, or perhaps because of this, showed itself to be particularly conservative and slow to act in matters of party publicity, and continued until 1938 to rely on traditional methods for direct political propaganda ” (Hollins, P. 2, 1981). Labour considered films as economically and politically unbeneficial and therefore put away the idea of investing in them. It was quite a serious mistake considering the conditions at the time.



Indeed, The Representation of the People Act of 1918 along with the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 dramatically expanded the number of voters in threefold. Furthermore, newly enfranchised people most often considerably lacked political education or opinions as well as sufficient educational background. Some of them might have been interested and willing to follow politics had they had the chance to be acquainted with it. In this sense, that particular part of society represented a truly fertile soil for propaganda and ideological inculcation. The Labour Party, however, had apparently missed the train in gaining popularity in exploiting this new method of Party publicity. Instead, they opted for leaflets or pamphlets which ordinary working class people could not always read or understand.

The Conservative Party, on the other hand, foresighted the importance of cinema vans and actively worked in expanding its 'fleet' across the Midlands and in the hinterland where cinema was still a 'new thing' for the peasants. "Ball was anxious to reach not the converted but the unconverted working classes, a section of the populace which no traditional method of publicity appeared effectively to reach." (Hollins, P. 03, 1981) Ball, the chief publicity officer of the Conservative Party from 1927-29, made sure to fill in the gaps where other means of propaganda could not cover or fulfil its tasks, so they had major advantage over their counter-part, Labour, in catching the attention of would-be voters. The Conservatives were eager to vary their publicity palette as a way to target and convert more electors from the Working Class and empower weaker parliamentary seats (Ball and Holliday, 2013; Ball, 1995).

Films projected from vans seemed to be efficient in drawing a large number of audiences from different walks of life and different political stances; in addition, they not only diverted and entertained people, they also helped in discreetly conveying conservative stances at the same time. The projection is basically short, from 10 to 15 minutes; it was commonly followed by a speech and a debate. As far as content is concerned, it mainly consisted of cartoon<sup>22</sup> films that lampooned their political counterparts "*It was decided to endeavour to produce cartoon films (similar to the*

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<sup>22</sup> Some dedicated their works only for the Conservative Party like cartoonist William Ward.

*well-known "Felix the Cat" films) ridiculing the policy and tactics of our political opponents"* (Baldwin quoted in Fielding, 2008). Alternatively, early films put special emphasis on imperial glories, patriotism, and discarded revolutionary ideas. The sketches also emphasised the Conservative's successful policies in the primary and secondary sectors. In a way then, the Tories were indirectly conveying the image that they are close to the people and always in touch with them, where the Labour Party failed to fulfil the challenge.

The unusual propaganda operation succeeded in attracting the crowd and keeping them amused for a few minutes before that an official Party speaker would then switch to serious political talks afterwards. Thus, it can be said that this technique functioned as bait that would gather people at anytime and anywhere, unlike formal, already scheduled political meetings that tended to intimidate simple, ordinary people. Besides, it was easier to convince people when entertained rather than in more earnest settings. *Report on Tour of Daylight Cinema Van* reported that, statistically, the cinema vans were as a matter of fact more efficient and financially more lucrative (£30 to £40 without having to pay for the venue) than the classic ways of party publicity (Baldwin quoted in Fielding, 2008). The coverage could reach up to 1,555,000 Britons in 1935's General Elections (Swann, 1989). It is also important to mention that cinema vans "patrols" intensified during elections and by-elections mainly during the thirties'. In 1931, the then minister of health, Neville Chamberlain acknowledged their usefulness after that he had released a political film in one of those vans. In his paper to Hilda Chamberlain, he confesses:

*It is very remarkable how they can get publicity when meetings fail. During the LCC elections on two nights when large halls had been booked and good speakers brought down only about 50 people turned up. On the same two nights speakers going round with the van reckoned that they addressed audiences amounting in the aggregate to over 3000 each night. (Chamberlain, 1931 quoted Fielding, 2008)*

It is estimated that by the 1935's general elections, 1.5 million people were exposed to party films projected from vans. However, the vans gradually lost in popularity with the outbreak of the Second World War as they were converted to war publicity instead. In addition, their use was restricted after that a new law prohibited road impediments. Eventually, they were all sold out in 1953.

If the conservatives' explicit political films were prevented from circulation by cinema halls exhibitors, they nevertheless found a reliable alternative to improve their films. Chief publicity officers like Ball or later Clavering<sup>23</sup> in the thirties could palliate to that and cultivated special relationships with some renowned film and studio directors to improve the quality of the film and hence gain even more power.

In his article, historian Hollins (1981) went on and quoted Baldwin's unsigned memorandum which goes:

*A substantial interest in a large British film company such as Gaumont British would enable us to influence the production of patriotic and national films, and would also place us in a position to secure the exhibition of suitable films by the films news agency which is under their control.... It would enable us to exercise a considerable amount of influence in the entertainment world generally. It would give us substantial power in the cinema world, which could be used to prevent or at least make more difficult, the public exhibition of films containing any objectionable matter. (Hollins quoting Baldwin)*

Another noteworthy point, Clavering, who personally owned a cinema hall, was "a close friend of Isodore Ostrer, president of Gaumont British, whilst his brother, Arthur, was a director of Pathé. Michael Balcon and Alexander Korda advised and assisted him on propaganda film production" (Hollins 1981, P.06). Clearly, based on the ground that Korda or Balcon would support the Conservatives, it is easy to deduce that these film directors would also try to expand their political affiliations to their own commercial productions. But since exhibitors are careful as to whether to

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<sup>23</sup> He previously worked with 10 Downing St. to expand war film propaganda during the First World War.

allow direct propaganda or not, one thinks that they would opt for a softer, implicit, but still efficient instrument as we shall see in the next section.

So far, this section has concerned itself with direct political films for Party publicity and it showed apparent discrepancies between Labour' and the Tories' use of propagandistic cinema. It has also demonstrated that cinema vans were more successful thanks to them relying on humoristic and visual representations rather than complex political discourses which the uneducated, common, recently enfranchised people could not grasp hitherto. One major point to stress again is that the Conservatives enjoyed a strong back-up from famous film makers and studios. In sum, the detainers of wealth and means of productions partook in spreading and maintaining the government's ideology via what Marx coined as "the base/superstructure" dichotomy, and to a greater level the keeping of the *status quo* which Gramsci highlighted in his works.

The coming section will tackle a more subtle way of disseminating and sustaining conservative thoughts: commercial feature films through Korda's canonical film *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) followed by the problematic case of censorship of *Love on the Dole* (1941).

## 2.2 Escapism and the Problem of Historical Accuracy:

*The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) is undeniably the film that fast-tracked the freshly established director Alexander Korda, and by extension British cinema, into international film industry (Dalrymple, 1957). In terms of numbers, it was classified as the second most popular film to be projected that year according to Sedgewick's statistical data. It came at a time when British film production was "either quality or quota" (Chapman quoting Low, 2005).

The film was almost simultaneously exhibited in Great Britain and the U.S.A and, though it was not a financial success in the British difficult and limited markets, it generated relatively considerable profits in the American counterparts with no less than \$469,646 net profits compared to only £81,825 in the British box-office (Street, 2002). Perhaps the only ironical fact about such typical 'British' films representing national history and aspects of British identity like this one, is that most of them were produced by émigré directors, i.e. non British subjects. A probable clue that British directors were still struggling to adapt themselves with home markets in particular and global markets in general. In terms of aesthetics, journalists and commentators as those of the *Picturegoer* welcomed the film as the best British film ever made in a British studio in terms of screenplay, acting, and decor.

More significantly, the film set the trend to what would come to be known as 'historical' films<sup>24</sup>, particularly those that pertain to monarchs' biopics and which were much appreciated among the audience. Nevertheless, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* triggered a serious controversy then as to its historical accuracy. Earl of Cottenham lamented that "a great king should be portrayed to the world as a buffoon" while another correspondent commented "[it is] a pity that English history should be made cheap and tawdry". Considering these statements, it is important to meditate on

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<sup>24</sup> Most critics agree upon other naming such as "costume films", "period films", or "heritage films". The common definition is that historical films are any film which is set in the past and is roughly linked to actual historical events.

some questions such as whose history is being screened, by whom and to what purpose?

Regardless to the fact that it was produced by a non British film maker, the script is said to have been manipulated by Korda. Despite the fact that the story has been elaborated by Lajos Biro and dialogues by Arthur Wimperis, there are some elements that show Korda was also involved in the writing. First, the film stylistically calques Korda previous films prior to his coming to Great Britain such as *Samson and Delilah* (Austria, 1922), *A Tragedy in the House of Habsburg* (Germany, 1924), and most significantly, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* (Hollywood, 1927). What is more, Wimperis himself confessed that the scripts were strictly examined and revised by Korda “there are three of us in collaboration – first and foremost Alexander Korda (privately known as Alexander the Cruel, owing to the merciless manner in which he dismisses our pet ideas!), who has forgotten more about story construction than most people ever know.” (Wimperis, 1934, P. 11). For these reasons, one can conclude that the distortion is mainly due to Korda’s interventions, but the reasons remain obscure. Let us presently examine the extent to which (or not) the film sticks to the actual events, or at least to the ‘recorded’ historical facts the books report about Henry VIII and what effect does it leave on the audience.

The mise-en-scène strives to be authentic, for example. The first appearance of the king as well as his posture strikingly resemble to that of the well known German Hans Holbein the Younger’s portrait of Henry VIII. Let us examine the scene:



Picture 03 : Henry VIII's first appearance in the film.

It is interesting to pause and consider the decor of this long shot, skilfully framed with the arched door. Apart from the actor's (Laughton) sumptuous costume that reminds us of the German painter's portrait of Henry VIII, or the coincidence (or not) of him stepping on lighter tiles at the threshold, what catches the attention at first sight is the loaded symbolism this shot conveys. The background features the Fleur de Lys, the symbol of the French monarchy, a part of which was under England's control. Plus, The Tudor Rose covers the soil of the room in a chequered manner, along an alternation with the Fleur de Lys. Last, the arched door pictures the Kings' 'badges': the lions (or the 'leopards' in heraldic language) as well as dragons holding the monarchy's blazon, which are the symbols of English Royal Standards and of

Wales respectively. All these signs bear witness to the power of the kingdom and its dominance over different territories. It also suggests authority and supremacy, especially with the posture. The posture is so close to the painted portrait of Henry that one cannot but think it is intentional. In many other scenes, Henry/Laughton adopts the same position when he stands still as a way to remind the audience of his authority.

Nonetheless, historians strongly disagree as to the authenticity of most of the sets and costumes in other scenes. Indeed, Charles Beard, a historian and a specialist in heraldry, argues that many details betray the historical faithfulness saying that it is “a hotchpotch of all periods, mostly of the middle and second half of the seventeenth century [and] gardens bear no resemblance to those at Hampton Court as they were at the period” (Charles Beard quoted in Chapman, 2005). While it is right that films cannot literally reproduce artistic details exhaustively, the rest of the decor that is more or less faithful to the actual customs, architecture, and so on, tries to convey the message that by extension to the furnishings, the story that is being told is in turn likely to be real too.

If that posture suggests power, the image is quickly swept by his first dialogue. Indeed, his coming in was unexpected by the ladies in waiting who were preparing his wedding's ceremony. He entered at the moment when one of the servants were criticizing Henry's sexual drive and his decision to get married with Seymour right after the beheading of Ann Boleyn. That comment would have cost the servant her head too, if she were caught by the actual, cruel, and hard Henry VIII, the historians report about. However, his reaction immediately sets the tone to the kind of person he is. Instead of reacting accordingly, he easily fell under the charm by the servants' reply that could catch up her faux pas by praising his manliness. That servant is in fact Katherine Howard, his future fifth wife.

King Henry VIII that is offered to the audience is then a much more different person than what History tells, and that is not all. His manners and behaviour do not suit a king's either. His caricatured representation evokes the idea that Henry VIII is



ill-mannered in the sense that he repulsively devours a chicken leg during dinner time, throws it over his shoulders and sarcastically regrets the decline of manners “there’s no delicacies in these days,[...] refinements are something of the past, manners are dead!” while belching noisily. In addition, he entertains very familiar relationship with his subjects, particularly his servants. For instance, his nurse literally hushes him when he rushes into his newborn son bedroom, and he obediently executes her orders. She also prevents him from taking the baby out in the sun, saying “*my poor little baby*” and he jealously replies “not poor, *my son!*”. The barber tells him that “*the well is dry*” during a careless talk while they were discussing the possibility of a fifth marriage. There are many other examples that converge with the idea of clumsy, childish, ‘unkingly’ behaviour. The purpose of this awkward, comical representation that is very unlikely to be authentic is to promote the image of a sympathetic, open, and humorous king that cares for his servants and does not look down to them. In view of the aforementioned points, this has the effect of making the non-knowledgeable audience think the king is one of “them”, that is, one ordinary member of the community.

Omission of prominent historical events is also a prominent trait in *The Private Life of Henry VIII* particularly those that pertain to his six wives. To begin with, his marriage with the “respectable” Katherine of Aragon is completely omitted to a simple title card, dismissing her story as being “of no interest”. However, it is because Henry’s private life is inherently political, that is, such a marriage cannot be dissociated from the script. In so doing, Korda is simply discarding the reason why the divorce occurred and most importantly its crucial consequences. Indeed, his divorce marked the break with Catholic Church of Rome and the establishment of the Church of England as well as deep changes in the system that affected the country for more than a century later.

Similarly, Anne Boleyn’s marriage is also cut from the script. The Story begins in medias res with the chamber maids preparing Henry’s third marriage and with Boleyn’s preparation for the execution. The audience is left with no explicit reason

for the beheading; worse, they are left to believe there needs no motive to do so. Moreover, much emphasis is put on Boleyn's beauty and charm over the dramatic situation she was facing, adding irony to the state of affairs "it's a pity to lose a head like this" says Boleyn to herself while getting ready. In addition, she seems to accept the punishment; there are absolutely no indications as to whether she is genuinely guilty or not. As a matter of fact, historians do not agree upon her being culpable or not, indeed, many believe she was innocent and her condemnation was used as an alibi so that Henry could remarry again. The decision is thus questionable. One can thus conclude that the audience's attention is diverted from serious affairs and are invited to focus on trivial details instead.

The annulment of Anne of Cleves seems to be plotted not by Henry as History tells us, but by Anne herself. She purposefully made herself look ugly and she first met the king while being heavily drunk. During the nuptial night, she bargained the annulment while playing cards with the king and winning all the rounds by cheating. The King's affairs with Katherine Howard while being still engaged to Anne of Cleves is represented as something acceptable under the argument that he was in love with her. All Henry's harsh acts and decisions are whitewashed by some justification or another. Added to this, his relations with his daughters are completely absent despite the fact that the film was dedicated to his private life or the domestic sphere. In this sense, the film can be said to hold a paternalistic discourse, and more globally, encourages the status quo because the film avoids criticizing the monarch or the British Establishment and plays the role of embellishing Henry's image instead. In another way, it can also mean avoiding topics that may invite potential reactions from the audience.

The film passage through the BBFC did not go swiftly, however. The script was given to be revised prior to the shooting and some details have had to be removed as to whether the marriage to Anne of Cleves was consummated or not<sup>25</sup> (Chapman,

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<sup>25</sup> The marriage was declared "annulled", necessarily implying it was not consummated, while in the original script, it was. Leaving it uncensored means the invalidity of the annulment.

2005). As put before in chapter one, the BBFC endeavours to avoid dangerous, controversial topics as Lord Tyrrel<sup>26</sup> of Avon once put it “*We may take pride in observing that there is not a single film showing in London today which deals with any of the burning questions of the day.*” The issue of whether contemporary concerns were totally clouded by the BBFC remains largely debatable, though. This is what we seek to challenge and demonstrate presently.

If one looks at the rare occasions where political meetings are held in *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, one can then effortlessly draw some parallelisms with current historical contexts. In the early scenes, during a meeting with his ministers, the King calls for trebling the fleet to protect the Isle from the conflicts between the German and the French. This goes hand in hand with the historical context of nineteen thirties: the growing power of Germany and the rise of Nazism, its hatred to the French for the humiliating Treaty of Versailles, as well as its withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 clearly signalled a potential danger to Great Britain. The message the film conveys converges with that of Churchill, that is, massive rearmament. The only issue they face is funding the project. Thomas Cromwell suggests raising taxation, but his proposal is curbed by Henry: “new taxes? My people are bled white already”. Under the apparently nationalist, caring response lays a subliminal message; it directly criticises the Labour’s tax to spend policy. As for nationalism, it is also put under the lime light too. When Cromwell tried to appease Henry not to embark in costly projects and advocates diplomatic measures instead, Henry plays the chauvinistic, nationalist card:

*Henry:* Diplomacy, diplomacy my foot! I’m an Englishman<sup>27</sup> and I can’t say one thing and mean another. What I can do is build ships, ships, then more ships.

*Cromwell:* You mean double the fleet?

*Henry:* Treble it. Fortify Dover. Rule the sea.

*Cromwell:* To do that will cost us money.

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<sup>26</sup> President of the BBFC in 1935.

<sup>27</sup> Note that he is originally Welsh!

*Henry*: To leave it undone will cost us England

Between Cromwell's diplomatic appeasement and Henry pro-rearmament plan and considering the circumstances under which the film was made, one can hardly dismiss the connotation the dialogue bears here. To a greater degree, another parallelism can be drawn in that Cromwell represents the Labour's, and even the Conservative Chamberlain's, strategy not to react against the growing danger of totalitarianism and the Conservatives like Churchill who call for reactions instead (Chapman, 2005).

All in all then, this film can be said to be escapist in essence in many respects. Its blatant populism reflects the audience's taste, in other words, discarding realism and favouring comic representations. But then, and as seen above, the serious historical distortion can transport the common audience into taking them for granted. Also, biopics like these that stress the past over current affairs can prove to be an effective tool to divert the attention from problems of the present. Thus, escapism is an ideological apparatus that reinforces the Conservatives beliefs and help maintaining a strong hold of people's opinion over political business. Briefly, this film falls into the categories of films that spread false consciousness and help keeping the status quo through cultural representation.

## 2.3 Social Realism as Left-wing Resistance Narrative:

In chapter one, we have introduced the social realist movement that prevailed during the thirties and which was subsequently revived in the sixties with the New Wave movement. The usual convention that marks this movement is the recurrent topical representation of working class people's everyday social and economic hardships in an as much realist way as possible. The social realist movement as well as the documentary movement put so much emphasis on this kind of topic that they were coined 'Left Wing Film Movement' by Macpherson (Hollins, 1981). Perhaps the most famous British Social realist film is *Love on the Dole* by Baxter, the analysis of which is devoted for this present section.

This film is an adaptation of Greenwood's novel bearing the same title. The novel itself witnessed an immediate success and was reprinted many times afterwards and translated into several languages (Constantine, 1982). Additionally, it was adapted in a form of a play and attracted three millions of playgoers by 1940 (Levine, 2006).

As for the film, it was produced by British National, directed and produced by John Baxter. The story takes place in the outskirts of the industrial Salford, 1930. The film tells the story of an underprivileged working class family. Mr Hardcastle is a coal miner and his son, Harry, an apprentice. The daughter Sally who works in a cotton mill is engaged to Larry Meath. Harry has had an affair with his girlfriend and she becomes pregnant. As a consequence, he is evicted by his father and has to rent a room with his girlfriend. Problems rapidly rose when he became unemployed by the end of his apprenticeship contract just as his father due to the economic recession. Larry was fired too and the dream of marrying Sally started to fade away. Life conditions worsen even more because government introduced the Means Test: soon the family faces severe economic predicaments as the dole's rate, which depends on the income, was cut. The climax is reached when Sally's socialist fiancé is accidentally killed during a police confrontation that was specially organised against the Means Test. Sally had to ask for credit from Sam Grundy, a local bookie, to finance Larry's funeral. However, Grundy who had already expressed his interests in her to her

brother, takes advantage and promised jobs to her father and brother provided that she becomes his “housekeeper” – a euphemism for his mistress. At first, she declined, but then she was caught between two fires: she discovers that her brother and his girlfriend are to be driven out by the birth of the baby. She eventually put away her moral values and accepts Grundy’s offer. Her reputation is shattered; her parents could not accept such a situation. Nonetheless, by the end of the film, they found out that she did that so that she would be able to help them financially and provide them with jobs.

What is intriguing about this film is that, in spite of its successful literary predecessor, it was a true *bête noire* of the British Board of Film Censors. As a matter of fact, the BBFC actively struggled to keep it censored and prevented its exhibition for many years under the alleged reason that it was “a very sordid story in a very sordid surrounding”. However, many critics agree with the fact that it was not a convincing cause to censor such a film as the novel itself did not give rise to such an ‘uproar’.

This said, in order to understand the significance of censoring *Love on the Dole* it is vital to place it in its historical and cinematic context. The film was originally produced in 1936 when, say, escapist films and comedies reached their apex in popularity and were much appreciated among the audience. The audience needed recreational means that made them forget about their destitution and poverty for a while, thus a dramatic film would not have been suitable at the time. Additionally, it coincided with the abdication crisis of Edward VIII<sup>28</sup> which created a deep moral, religious, and political turmoil at the time. Hence, the BBFC thought it was necessary to ban the film in order not to promote non-conservative ideologies. As far as the BBFC is concerned, many analysts put forward what could be the “actual” reasons for censoring *Love on the Dole*.

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<sup>28</sup> King-emperor Edward VIII fell in love with Wallis Simpson, an American actress that previously divorced twice. He wanted to marry her but the government and society opposed to his decision because of the fear of modernisation and modernism altogether. As a consequence, he renounced to his royal title as well as to his offspring so as he could eventually marry. His choice was unpopular and shocked many British people.

Legally speaking though, the BBFC is allegedly independent, non-governmental, and is not subject to any direct political manipulation. Nevertheless, its well-to-do members were often from the right wing and usually had a friendship network that would extend to parliament (Levine, 2006). Based on this point, it might be convincingly possible that the BBFC may have been influenced in this sense to promote or keep conservative perceptions of lifestyles. Indeed, as we have seen in chapter one, to ensure sustainable legal activity, the BBFC often filtered topics that are likely to alter already established moral or political values, thus maintaining conservative premises. Levine reports in her paper that the BBFC indirectly worked “hand in glove with official politics” (Levine, 2006:3). By official politics she means the Home Secretary: in 1931, the Home Secretary reported “The Home Office is [...] not responsible for the Board of Film Censors and does not desire to assume any responsibility at all. At the same time, it is necessary that the Home Office should keep in touch with the Board of Film Censors.” (BBFC Verbatim Report quoted by Levine, 2006:3). This declaration is quite controversial: how close was the Home Secretary to the BBFC and what kinds of topics were discussed? The statement remains obscure. The Home Secretary wants to expand its hegemonic control over the BBFC without assuming any liability at the same time so that they can wash their hands off controversial decisions as it is the case with the distribution ban of *Love on the Dole*.

But then, the motives set above only partly account for the censorship. The question that needs to be answered is why the film was censored and *not* the novel or the play. But then *again*, one should bear in mind that there is a sharp difference between novel reading, play going, and cinema attending. Essentially, the main difference lies in the fact that, by tradition, the two formers are supposed to be “aristocratic” activities, i.e. mainly reserved for the Middle Class or the Upper Class and not to the working class (James, 2011). It is only after the Education Act of 1944 that secondary education became free and the leaving age was increased to 15. Before that year, extensive reading was still seen as a privilege, not common among the

Working Class' children who preferred to embrace vocational training to back up their parents' limited income, for example.

Conversely, cinema going was much enjoyed by the working class since it was the most affordable recreational activity (Fielding, 2013), and does not require any intellectual effort to be understood. Seen from this angle, the former category belongs to the "us" circle and therefore its reception of such works does not represent any 'danger' to the Establishment. On the other hand, the latter is the other, the "them" group. It was then of an utmost importance to monitor what the masses, the "them", watch and filter all that does not fit in with the "us" political positions and values.

Thus, allowing such films at that period of time, that is to say the Great Depression, increase in poverty, the spread of fascism, would mean triggering the Working Class will to revolt against the living conditions. This reminds us of Manufacturing Consent's first and fourth filters of the propaganda model: ownership ideological beliefs and *flak*, i.e. avoiding deep controversial topics, respectively (cf. chapter one).

Most of the available literature about this film deals with the issue of the BBFC and censorship and seems to fail to deal with the film *per se*. Thus, let us presently have a closer reflection at the film. Aesthetically and technically speaking, the film in itself does not deploy particularly significant effort. Most of the shots are set in long to medium length, making it difficult for the audience to tell what point of view the scenes try to put across<sup>29</sup>. As a matter of fact, contrary to the novel and the play, the film retells the story from Sally's point of view, stressing on her decision to let off her moral values so as to guarantee a better tomorrow for her family. However, throughout the film, most scenes focus on the brother or Sally's late fiancé; it is only by the last quarter of the film that the spectator comes to understand that the main character is actually Sally. Notwithstanding the technicalities, the most striking and important point the film tackles is the peculiar class relation theme.

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<sup>29</sup> This was the main trait that characterised British film and differentiated them from Hollywood's.



Class is perhaps one problematic concept to define in sociology. Each person has their own definition of class as being a particular social category or stratum that share the same characteristics. Yet, sociologists do not always agree upon what characteristic to include so that class could be attributed. One common misconception of class may be that people that have a high income should necessarily belong to a higher class; however, this cannot account for the fact that a plumber for instance earns a considerable income and still be classified within a lower class. Indeed, a tentative definition could be that class is a group of people from different ages belonging to a given society and have, more or less, the same degree of income/wealth, educational background, type of occupation, family, manners, and linguistic variation (Mooney et al., 2011). This apparently short description may sound simplistic, but this will be the definition upon which we will rely for in this research for many reasons.

The first reason, the setting of the film is in Salford, an industrial city in North-West of England which hosts a lot of slums. The house in which Sally lives is dark and too small. The oven/heater lies in what is apparently the living/dining room. In the opening scenes, we see the father even takes his shower there by stepping in a large low container. Sally and her brother, who are pretty much late teens/young adults, share the same room and even the same bed separated by a hung fabric as a way of a screen. The same can be said for their neighbours and friends' tenements that lie in the nearby. Secondly, the father and the son work in a coal mine and therefore do not earn high wages as we see they are penny-cautious, carefully sparing every coin they have. The clothing reveals to us a lot of things too: shabby, wrinkled, and often dirty. The mother is obliged to borrow some money from a grudging old woman in order to offer a suit to her son so that he could wear it for a date with his girlfriend. The son, very happy with his first suit, forgets good manners and instead of laying a handkerchief to his girlfriend so she could sit on the fern, he does it for himself lest he dirties his new pants. Thirdly, there is no evidence that tells us the family, or at least the children, have had advanced education. The young son pursues a vocational internship to become miner as his father and Sally's job is not clearly

stated though she is often shown going out of a cotton factory. Finally, the characters' accent deviates from the Received Pronunciation<sup>30</sup> which is the shared linguistic variation of the middle and the upper class<sup>31</sup>.

Hence, from all the reasons stated above, one can certainly conclude that the family belongs to the lower working class as they suffer from poverty, joblessness, lack of education etc. Now that the meaning of class is set; how can these facts be problematic in a British cinematic context? As matter of fact, the British have always been class-conscious and the notion of a class-based society had always shaped their ways of life and of interacting with one another. *Love on the Dole* tackles this particularly sensitive theme at the time in three different but intertwined ways.

First of all, the film puts forward the peculiar issue of cross-class romance. Sally was repetitively courted by the well-to-do bookie, Grundy, who tried to offer her rides with his luxurious car or take her to the pictures. However, his attempts proved to be unsuccessful as Sally demonstrates her disgust toward him and her faithfulness to her would-be fiancé. Still, by the end of the film, when Sally found herself in a dead-end, she turned to him for help in exchange of being his lover. The idea of a working class woman having an affair with a wealthy middle class was quite disturbing at the time and for a conservative society as that of Britain. More importantly, it goes beyond cross-class romance, such seemingly modernist ideas, with the roaring 20s freshly over behind at the time, raised many eyebrows among the fiercely conservative and 'sectarian' middle class. That clearly went against their moral values and concerns.

In addition, both of Sally and her brother Harry strive for earning more money. "I'll get some money one of these days, you'll see if I don't!", "people wanting things like us, you know better houses and steady jobs". They dream of moving away and

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<sup>30</sup> R.P was the norm in films during the thirties, *Love on the Dole* derogates from the standards in order to convey a realist portrait of the Working Class people.

<sup>31</sup> Accents in Britain, unlike many countries, are not only geographically determined, they are class-determined as well (Mooney et al., 2011). Thus, the Received Pronunciation is restricted to the Middle or Upper-class.

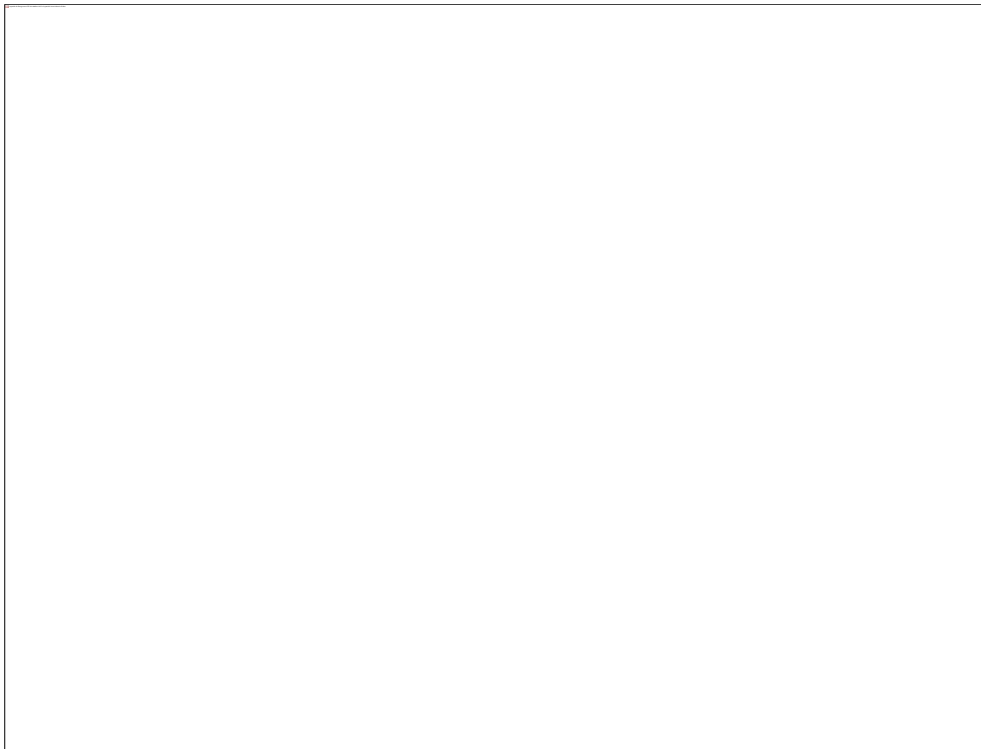
having a better financial situation: social mobility. While improving one's poor life conditions might be unlikely with those circumstances in real life, the characters eventually succeeded in doing so when Sally hands in a note to her mother in which a job contract was enclosed. Combined with what comes to be known "cross-class romance", the film indirectly promotes upward mobility. Put differently, it encourages the audience to seek for climbing the social ladder, thus, competing with the already established class and the limited circle of the detainer of wealth.

Lastly and most importantly, the Hardcastles are implicitly depicted as being a victim of the system that exploits and obliges them to be poverty-stricken, particularly when the dole was cut and that Sally could not afford decent funerals for her late fiancé. The fact that the bookie took advantage of the situation and drags Sally into being his lover also demonstrates the fact as though the middle class is always trying to use and dehumanise the needy by any means so as they could achieve their aims and reach their personal interests at the expense of others. Moreover, the system is portrayed as being coercive, too. When the police violently tried to stop the demonstrators who were demanding the right for either work or a dole to afford their "daily bread", Larry, Sally's late fiancé, is killed by a bobby's horse which ran on him during a mob clash. There is no redundancy money or compensation for the killing. It seems as if Law and Order is uniquely at the service of the powerful.

All the above-mentioned elements prove that class relations in *Love on the Dole* are asymmetrical. Power relation favours the capital detainers so as to dominate the proletariat.

Regarding Larry, he, too, is an interesting character to consider, for he looks and sounds different from the other characters despite the fact that he is a factory worker as his fellows. He is good-looking, eloquent, and analytical. Even his accent is different and tends to be more or less RP-like; this suggests that he has a certain educational level. His behaviour in fact encapsulates the socialist dissident par excellence. Throughout the film, he is shown as an educator giving lectures and

public meetings to coal miners, pushing them to think over their working conditions and acquainting them with politics about which they seem to lack knowledge. “[government] started to economize on you [people]”. He persistently tries to raise awareness among the masses and proposes ways to change the situation with soft plans against the system’s diktat “Human conditions are not beyond human control; I said men had made these conditions, well he can remake them!” with a firm tone.



**Picture 04: Larry criticising the “system” in front of steel workers. Plaque featuring “LABOUR PARTY”. (17’08”)**

Indeed, he is sceptical, but diplomatic, about the government measures and blames the Establishment for the worsening living standards. As a matter of fact, Larry’s script can be said to be Marxist in essence if one pays enough attention to his talks and dialogues altogether. There is class struggle “we don’t put the blame on any one section of the community; we challenge the system alone which sets man against man and robs all security”, while it is not clear what Larry means with the word “community”, it is often agreed that the term comprises a close-knit group of people sharing the same interests. In this sense, “community” is inclusive to the Working

Class while “system” is all that belongs to the “them” group, hence the middle and upper class since they have capital.

Equally, he indirectly rejects the imposed status quo “the problem is that those people [Working Class people] never get the chance to see how good life could be... and they will never learn.” Put differently, the Working Class is confined to be busy with basic needs such as earning money to buy food; so much so, they cannot think about anything but to survive. Additionally, when he is with Sally over a hill on a date talking about the beauty of nature outside their city, he again implies the danger the ruling class’ hegemony and points at power of false consciousness “If you live all your life in an ugly place, so the beautiful things seem out of reach. And then we end up thinking they’re too good for us, that’s the trouble.” Above all, the scene closes with Sally’s determination to rise against the situation and calls for union to fulfil this goal, and then Larry replies with “You can Sally, and you must! If only everybody lends a hand.” Echoing thus Karl Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) “WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, *UNITE!*” (Emphasis added).

Still, he is most of the time considered as unintelligible, an alien, and a trouble-maker by the members of his own community. The misunderstanding shows the length of wave difference and, to a greater degree, demonstrates that the Class hegemony somehow succeeded in making the simple workers incapable to think or to decide for their own wellbeing and interests. Worse, they made them endorse Upper/Middle Class ideological stances. Indirectly then, the film suggests the ideological and intellectual firm grasp the ruling class detains over the less powerful sections of society.

Hence, in this sense, Larry represents a threat to the Establishment because of his subliminal messages that urge the audience to rethink the way society and power relations are made up. Globally then, and throughout the thematic study shown above, that is, cross-class romance, class mobility, class exploitation, and Marxist indoctrination, the film seemed to go against and even challenges the then accepted norms and mindset laid by the BBFC in particular, and the Conservatives in general.

As mentioned before, the film was swept under the rug for five years; then the ban was ultimately lifted in 1941, i.e. two years after the outbreak of the Second World War. Once again, this leads us to wonder how that could be possible. What are the motives for the previously coined “sordid” film to be released in such a troublesome period as 1941<sup>32</sup>? There are many explanations for the shift.

The film was due to be made when government was under coalition with the Labour Party and when Dunkirk was to be evacuated (Fielding S., 2014). With some Labour pressure, government came to an agreement that the film can serve state interests (Fielding S., 2013). As mentioned in the third section of the first chapter, films released during the war were mainly used for propaganda ends by the Ministry of Information; the release *Love on the Dole* is not an exception as it will be shown. Below is a list of three main reasons enumerated by Caroline Levine in her article “Propaganda for Democracy: The Curious Case of *Love on the Dole*” (2006).

The first reason might be that government wanted to come up with a new image of Great Britain, a different image of that of the Great War. Indeed, propaganda was extensively used during the First World War in Britain and helped manipulating people’s opinion about the war. In the 30s however, propaganda was often linked to Hitler’s dictatorship as he dedicated a ministry for propaganda under the heading of Goebbels. The Ministry of Information sought to strike back to Hitler’s successful propaganda but this time in a more subtle way as propaganda itself was then synonymous to “undemocratic” countries like Germany. Britain was at war against totalitarianism and dictatorship and wanted to convey a democratic image to the empire; therefore, they looked for ways to use propaganda covertly. Projecting *Love on the Dole* then was a message to the British people and the rest of the world that unlike Germany, Great Britain is a free, liberal, and democratic country.

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<sup>32</sup> War reached its apex for Britain at the time when Germany occupied Holland, Belgium and France and was bracing itself to invade Great Britain before it finally opted to attack the USSR instead (cf. Chapter one, section two).

The war has had its economic advantage, too; it generated full employment and consequently there were dramatically fewer job seekers. The Great Depression's hardships seemed to be "things of the past", and people were satisfied with war economy policy. The Ministry of Information made the most of the situation in projecting the film, for they have then passed over the recession's discontents. The second reason might be then that government wanted to salute people's individual's sacrifice to the benefit of the community in times of difficulties. Indeed, by accepting to be a mistress and abandoning her moral values, Sally could eventually be able to ensure jobs to her brother and father. This can be seen as war propaganda as the message aims to remind Britons of their bravery and community spirit and encourages them to do the same, that is to say, to sacrifice their personal life for the sake of the community and by extension the country. The previously "sordid" film was accordingly used to keep up the war morale and sustain faith in government's decisions. The community spirit or "common people's war" in cinema will be extensively dealt with in the third chapter.

Thirdly, the Ministry of Information wanted to play the transparency card. Just as the democracy's strife abovementioned, government's motivation may have been to show the reality about miserable life conditions a portion of British people were forced to live with. The audience watched the film with retrospect, with historical detachment. It appears that there was no risk in projecting a film that directly criticized the government Means Test measure and screened the middle class as immoral and greedy. Context changed and the working class was busy serving the country's plea. The plea is indeed to prove that Britain is evolving and modernising; put like this, releasing that film would serve as propaganda to Britain in the sense that Britain is no longer as conservative, traditional, and single-minded as it used to be. The new notion of cross-class romance or upward class mobility is thus the intended representation of Great Britain.

In essence, under the light of the above thematic analysis, this section tackled the issue of censorship, class relations, and propaganda. The main premise of this part is

that from the BBFC point of view, *Love on the Dole* represents a menace to the imposed *status quo* and threatens the ruling class's firm control over the Working Class. It also endorses the idea that the detainer of wealth would use any means to achieve their ends even if that suggests dehumanising the financially disadvantaged. Finally, it calls for rethinking norms and taken for granted established ideas and determinism. The gramscian/Chomskyan reading of the film proved that these messages clash with the ideological positions of the BBFC as well as the conservatives.

The first journey through British cinema has enabled us to have a clear vista about the state of cinema, or rather state *and* cinema in a British context. From direct propaganda and lampoons in van cinema to more subliminal ways via commercial feature films, we have seen how films are intrinsically political in some ways. Some films like *we were* welcomes because they serve the capitalists interests while others were shunned because they do not. Many other films of the same period can be compared to the chosen films of this study too such as *The Iron Duke*, *The Tudor Rose*, *Victoria the Great* and so on... They also share obvious similarities in content and form and support the thesis of this chapter indeed.

This research goes in the same way as the chosen theoretical framework suggests; that is to say, it has demonstrated that ownership, ideology, audience targeting, soft contents play an essential role in shaping the opinion and inculcating principles to the lower classes.

To conclude, thus, it can be said that cinema was used as a type soft power as an instrument of what Gramsci names "cultural hegemony" in order to impregnate 'the masses' with false consciousness. The thirties are noticeable with the highlighting and the embellishing of the monarch and politicians lives and avoiding all that is related to the Working Class socio-economic suffering. But was this kind of "top-down" representation sustained during the forties when the Second World War broke out and that historical context changed accordingly? Further consideration shall be explored in this sense in the forthcoming chapter.



# Chapter Three: Docking at the Reassuring Forties

### 3. Docking at the Reassuring Forties:

British wartime cinema witnessed a considerable stylistic shift. The then successful escapist movement that knew its hay days during the thirties was soon replaced by the documentary film movement. The latter was ‘shunned’ before the war because its audience was confined to that of the left-wing intelligentsia and a small proportion of the élite. The said blunt documentary film movement, however, was in turn somewhat modified and combined with feature films of the realist genre in order to increase its appeal (Chapman, 1999). Moreover, thematically speaking, these films tended to focus on ordinary people’s lives instead of famous monarchs or politicians as previously mentioned in chapter two. In this sense, British *national* cinema came to maturity at this period, diverging thus from the giant American counterpart-Hollywood. During a survey made by the Arts Enquiry, author advances that:

*the success of films such as Millions Like Us, The Way Ahead, Waterloo Road and Way to the Stars [sic] during the war, has shown that there is another way of overcoming Hollywood domination by producing films which reflect the British scene realistically in a way that would be impossible for Hollywood. (Chapman, 1947, p. 201)*

Indeed, other prominent films such as *The Target Tonight* (dir. Harry Watt, Producer Ministry of Information, and Warner Bros 1941), *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* (dir. And Producer Emeric and Pressburger 1942), *They Also Serve* (British Pathé, 1940), and so on, all share this common thematic trait. Critics agree that it only is during the Second World War that feature films started to pay more attention to the people rather than celebrities. They also noted that film makers endeavoured to represent them as faithfully as possible as Roger Marvell noted “[British feature films] showed people in whom we could believe and whose experience was as genuine as our own” (Manvell, 1947, P. 85).

Great Britain has always been a class-based society. This notion came to life during the Industrial Revolution, before then, the class notion was not really clear cut

since people as well as the then thinkers did not make use of this term and preferred the term 'rank' instead. It was only by the nineteenth century that society started to acknowledge the class division and accepted it as one of the Industrial Revolution outcome. The notion of class-based society was from then on consensually maintained. However, if one considers British Films of the forties, and more particularly wartime films, one would instantly notice that cinematographic productions tended to blur this division and to homogenise Britain as being one common man.

As a matter of fact, critics have coined British War time films as "Common People's War" film. They chose the word "common" because, first, these films laid much emphasis on ordinary people, usually from the working class. Second, the word people's 'war' for films screened these people as the guardian of the home front and as directly being the ones responsible for the country's safety by involving them in a war the *government* itself decided to embark in. Thirdly, common people's role was often exaggerated and amplified into blatant heroism.

It is true that wars are often linked to male soldiers, ammunitions, and battlefields - the military corps so to speak. However, the ability to sustain war against the enemy through a continuous armament and aircrafts or substitution of killed or wounded soldiers entirely rest upon civilians. The latter are responsible for the production of material needed for warfare circumstances. Therefore, by the beginning of the Second World War, Great Britain was often subject to Blitz attacks with the aim to weaken civilians, a quite predictable tactic to undermine in turn the army. A specific phrase has been coined for the role of civilians in wars; it is called "Home Front".

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how far the above statement is true and more importantly to what aim film studios shifted their attention from the thirties' reassurance and escapism to heroism. We will try to have a close reading of Ealing's *Went the Day Well?* (1943) as a way of a typical and famous example of war films type. Another noteworthy point to tackle is how thematically consistent film

studios were during the Second World War *and* during the immediate post-war period.

### **3.1 Common people's War, *In Which We Serve*:**

*In Which We Serve* (1h54mins) is a black and white feature film released in September 1942, i.e. amidst the war against the Axis. The film stars the famous playwright Sir Noël Coward as a lead role that happened to be not only in charge of directing<sup>33</sup>, producing, writing the script; he also composed the music of the film. *In Which We Serve* direction propelled Noël into film industry after he has firmly established himself as a theatre *enfant terrible*. This British war film was produced with the help of the Ministry of Information (Emsley, 2009), which makes of it a direct propaganda film for the government. It was distributed in Great Britain by British Lion and in the USA by United Artists and generated a total of 2 million dollars in the box office for a £ 240,000 budget (Balio, 2008).

In spite of some negative feedback from the navy which lampooned the title as *In Which We Sink* (Cookridge, 1966), the film was considerably successful among the audience in Britain and America for its aesthetic and technical prowess. Less than three months after its premiere, the film was titled as the Best English Language Film of the Year by New York's National Board of Review of Motion Pictures. It also won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Film and was nominated for many other awards. It was a success.

Coward's *In Which We Serve* is far from being a 'reassurance film' that used to prevail during that war period. Most of them focused on linear schemes, with positive, happy ending plots where the good triumphs over the evil, the British over the German, or the 'Us' over the 'Them'. Instead of an over-washed, overly Manichean topic, this film shows a British Destroyer being sunk by the forces of the Nazis. It may seem alarming that such a propagandist film would project a failure as

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<sup>33</sup> With the assistance of David Lean who, according to the BFI website, did not receive enough credit for his efforts in directing the film and was often clouded by Coward in the film posters and reviews.

many thought of it; however, the genuine purpose of the film was to demonstrate the way the British lived and behaved at such extreme conditions, this theme will be discussed later in this section.

The film is, as the narrator puts it at the opening scene, “the story of a ship”, and actually, it originated from the sinking of Captain Lord Mountbatten’s destroyer HMS<sup>34</sup> *Kelly* in the Battle of Crete in 1941. Noël used this background to write the script that shares obvious parallelisms with the unfortunate fate of HMS *Kelly*. Indeed, in *In Which We Serve*, HMS *Torrin*, a Royal Destroyer which captain is named Kinross (Noël Coward), was critically bombarded by the Luftwaffe at dawn and the surviving sailors were commandeered to abandon ship and cluster around an inflatable while the ship was capsized and slowly sunk before their eyes. The majority of the surviving crew was gradually killed by other diving Nazi bombardiers. The story then goes to and fro the past telling the audience what happened before HMS *Torrin* engaged in this battle. The shift then focuses more about the crew’s ‘ordinary life’ than on the ship itself as initially promised. There are several episodes delivered through the use of the flashback technique. In one of the scenes, the audience learns the death of one of the crew’s wife and mother as they were blitzed in Britain. This is just one example among many others where the audience is told about the sailors’ family they left home, to serve the country and the anxiety they went through waiting to hear from them. Finally, the surviving crew, a handful, is rescued by another British destroyer and were sent back home as heroes.

We decided to dedicate this section on this film specifically not only because of its commercial success, but also, for both its aesthetic efforts and thematic relevance to our thesis. Through a selection of some sequences, the analysis below will demonstrate how this film was used as a means of lifting up the morale of British people by highlighting the themes of common people’s war, heroism of the ordinary people, and self-sacrifice in order to justify the War.

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<sup>34</sup> Shortening for His/Her Majesty’s Ship.

### **3.1.1 Appeal to nationalism and union**

The opening scene starts with competently and dynamically put montage and short shots featuring the building process of HMS *Torrin* with classic music as a background soundtrack. In a documentary-like style and in an elliptic mode, the camera, and from different angles, tilts and pans over the vigorous workshop displaying hundreds of labourers working in perfect synergy and efficiently together till the project fruition - a finished powerful destroyer. It was then sent to the sea, and many lengthy shots focus on the big waves the ship generates while sailing fast off the coast. This scene is interesting because it is indirectly inviting the audience to think over the British industrial power and remind them of its historical knowledge in ship-building. The workers shots also reminds us of the unity that a team needs in order to fulfil its goal, and by extension, it can be said that this is a kind of visual ‘parable’ that serves to reinforce the idea of unity in times of war. Hence, from the beginning of the story, the audience gets to know that the film is propagandistic in nature.

The theme of unity and team spirit is quite recurrent throughout the film indeed. In many instances, Captain Kinross (Noël Coward) is represented as a humane, caring, and thoughtful leader. In one of the flashbacks series, for example, when he was delivering a speech to his crew prior to sail for the battle, the captain asks them that the boat be an “efficient and a happy” one and insisted in them being mutually inclusive. Efficiency cannot be obtained in a stressful environment. In this way, this scene emphasises the fact that Britain would succeed provided that its citizens are ‘happy’ with their conditions. That is rather intricate because history tells us that Britons in the front or home alike deeply suffered from war conditions where food, for example, was scarce and could only be provided with coupons; where civilians security was questioned with the Blitz Krieg; where Great Britain was the only belligerent fighting against the Nazis.

Furthermore, when one member of the crew<sup>35</sup>, pretty much young and novice, out of terror during a deep sea confrontation with the Germans, deserts his post during a torpedo manoeuvre, Captain Kinross, in lieu of punishing him as is the usual procedure, left him with a caution only. In another occasion, another example of compassion is when the captain stopped and took special care to take note of his dying crew member's last wishes and their addresses to their families instead of delegating the task to someone else. Such a devoted and humane reaction tries to demonstrate how professional and social class stratification are neutralized for war circumstances, at least momentarily.

In other words, this appeal to emotion and display of mercy can be seen as a way, not only to reinforce the image of group work spirit, but also, to show that leaders are compassionate towards their subjects. In this sense, the captain who is depicted as one of the middle class members in other contexts is aligning himself with his most likely working class crew, blurring thus the famous cross-class barrier that define British people.

Although the film is set in a war circumstance and explicitly referring The Second World War, the audience is hardly introduced to the enemy the destroyer is sailing off to fight. The only occasion we learn about who the belligerent is, is during one of the flashbacks that dates to the ante bellum period. One of the officers is peacefully having his breakfast, speculating about the possibility that Britain may go on war again. It is the only time Hitler is mentioned (22'55'')

*Kath (Wife)*: I don't believe Hitler would be this silly, what would you expect him to gain of this war?

*Hardy (Officer)*: "World domination, this is what that little rat is after, you mark my words!"

It is interesting to consider the diction chosen to describe Hitler: 'little rat'. That would be a weak word one would use to insult one's enemy in such a situation

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<sup>35</sup> It was Sir Richard Attenborough's debut, who later performed the role of DeVere Cox in *I'm Alright Jack* (1959) cf. Chapter four.

indeed. However, this somewhat ‘euphemistic’ insult is due to the strict linguistic censorship that was imposed at the time. In fact, many other films share the same feature in that they attenuate the choice of words in scripts; this is actually due to the still conservative thoughts that were prevailing at that time and sustained via the BBFC for a considerable period of time, up two or three decades thereafter.

Below is a scene a man reading a paper (picture n.05). It is a short medium shot that serves as an anaphoric tool, that is to say, to mark time and space shift from one scene to another, especially that the plot is not linear. The technique of using the newspaper as an anaphoric tool is not new<sup>36</sup> but proves to come in handy. Indeed, the headline reads: “400 SNATCHED FROM HITLER’S HELL-SHIP”, and right at the top of it is a quotation saying “You Saved Us from Hell!”. The shot is left decontextualised, leaving the audience to deduce who is “you” and “us”. If we look closely, it is easy to infer that those 400 individuals are German who were apparently forced to work in the Nazi regime. Put this way, the film tries not to blame Nazi soldiers who were acting under the order of their oppressor – Hitler. “Us” is undeniably the British marines, here represented as the saviours, Salvationist, and good doers. Hitler’s ships are sharply different from that of Captain Kinross’s. The binary opposition is too strong here; however, the shot is short and uncommented. Again, the enemy is not given an active, substantive role to perform.

Otherness conveyed here puts emphasis on British Chauvinist feeling with the hope to get the viewers to believe in their ‘Just War’.

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<sup>36</sup> It was used in the thirties. *Love in the Dole* made use of it several times to provide background information to its audience.





**Picture 05: Man reading the paper, notice the headline. ( 53'06")**

Unexpectedly then, the enemy, it appears, is not demonized as in other classical wartime films of nowadays or then alike. In fact, they are not even granted a scene except that of the Luftwaffe dive-bombing the British destroyer. The enemy is muted and even avoided in the film. This convention divergence serves the purpose of focusing the audience's mind on the crew as individuals and as a group at the same time, and above all, to focus on what these ordinary men are fighting *for* instead of what they are fighting *against*. Values and beliefs prevail over domination, this is what the film tries to convey.

### **3.2.1 Classless society and Self-sacrifice**

Drawing the attention toward the crew has also another major role to fulfil. In fact, there cannot be argued that the film highlights one and only major character over the others as is the accustomed plot structure. Instead, as soon as HMS *Torrin* is bombed, viewers are transported to memories of several crew members through the use of the flashback technique which is, by the way, repeatedly introduced by the oil dissolve fading technique and distorted echoes. This anaphoric structuring device is successful

in conveying the idea of past memories and in preparing the already conditioned audience to face one remembrance episode of the defeated squad.

The scenes in themselves do not represent any particularly important details that serve for the understanding of the plot. As a matter of fact, they are routine scenes where one of the marine meets with his relatives and exchange some words about their daily life or politics.

Talking about routine flashbacks, *In Which We Serve*, as said before dives us back to past casual event in order to achieve a certain purpose. Self-sacrifice and selflessness truthfully dominate throughout them. The wife of Captain Kinross admits that the most influential rival of any seaman's wife is the ship itself. Ships are granted human-like worth to depict the extent to which sailors were devoted to their work and to their country. Indeed, despite the fact it is considered as a rival, the wife entails it is a necessary one, for the common good and well-being of the community. Later in the film, during a torpedo manoeuvre, some of the crew members carried on striking against the enemy despite the fact they were directly targeted by a missile and could hardly proceed with their tasks. Such an act can be thought of as being heroic indeed, for it is thanks to this kind of self-sacrifice actions that the enemy could be possibly beaten or at least their comrades be protected.

Strikingly, here again, there is a contradicting value depicted. Individualism and self-help, two major Victorian values which were encouraged and reinforced before are now swept under the rug. This is just another example how ideology seemingly changed during the war. But how far did it change?

Class boundaries are blurred and all of the characters seem to be equal despite the fact that they actually do belong to different social classes. Class-barrier can be signalled through accents, particularly regional ones as Fox points out "To the British mind, accent has long been an indicator of social status and individual or collective identities." (Fox, 2006, p. 01). Fox used a different case studies and came up with the conclusion that films targeting working class audience tend to contain stronger accent

in comparison to Received Pronunciation “In attempting to connect the wider populace with the war effort and the drive for unity, propagandists knew that representations of the “ordinary” had to be realistic, creating an individualized, personal identification with the role of the “everyman” and foregrounding “his” experience” (idem, p. 01). Fox deepens his point when he appeals to the history of British cinema and accents. As stated in chapter one, the coming of ‘the talkies’ brought forth many changes in cinema, and Oxford English was the most preferred accent to be spoken in film due to its clarity and somehow classlessness. Fox argues that the trend has been curved due to wartime efforts in highlighting Common People’s War in cinema. According to him, clarity was soon substituted with authenticity in order to appeal to audience and to make it more credible (Fox, 2006).

For this reason, the syntax of working class characters is deviant from Standard English. During a Christmas dinner at Shortly Blake’s place, an ordinary seaman, we could come across sentences like “them kids,” “it don’t do no such thing,” and “we was in the Red Sea”. A good attempt indeed, but one thing, however, seems to be odds: the actors performing working class characters probably belong to the middle class for they try hard to forge a regional accent but then fail to sustain it fully during the film and consequently, at many occasions, they draw back to Received Pronunciation. Such an inconsistent accent is blatant. This leads us to wonder as for the faithfulness of the image the film strives to convey. Alternatively, Sarah Street argues “In so doing, however, the films ultimately fail to conceal the social contradictions involved in representing such an ideal picture of a unified nation at war. Class conflict is de-emphasised, but cannot be completely eradicated from wartime narratives.” (Street, 1997, p. 48).

Indeed, however intense and various the attempt to provide a positive image of British people was at war, many critics, however, pointed at the partiality of such a

biased representation. As Robert Mackay advances in his book, *Half the Battle*, while referring to another work<sup>37</sup> (Mackay, 2002, p. 05):

*The book served to cast doubt on the veracity of this comfortable image of a nation united in the spirit of Dunkirk and the Blitz, cheerful, resourceful and unselfish. It drew attention to some discreditable features of the 'people's war' that had previously been ignored or neglected: panic and defeatism after big air raids; looting of bombed premises; crime and black-marketeering; evasion of evacuation billeting obligations; class war and town versus country attitudes in the reception areas for evacuees; strikes, absenteeism and low productivity in industry; hostility towards refugees and ethnic minorities.*

Mackay's comment is remarkably eye-opening. During a Blitz attack in which Hardy's wife is killed, the aftermath reaction is quasi-inexistent and the focus is instead shifted to them being in intensive care units in hospitals. There seem to be no panic or defeatism whatsoever. Even Hardy's reaction could be said to be too flat or not emotive enough.

The major premise of Noël Coward's *In Which We Serve* was thus to set individual differences aside and to unite every member of the society to fight for freedom and common sense. In so doing, the film is not only realist in the way it depicts the sinking of HMS *Torrin*, but it also can be said to be escapist at the same time as the basic message put across here is union and combat as well as reinforcing the feeling of nationalism and common people's heroism. The film did so by bringing to life characters from different social class but equally represented notwithstanding. The use of linguistic tool, however clumsy, also attempted to tailor speech to fit into its audience's identity and to provide them with something they can relate to.

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<sup>37</sup> Angus Calder's *The People's War*,

### **3.2 Demonising the Enemy, Modernising women, *Went the Day Well?*:**

British society, like many other contemporary Western societies, has always had strict gender roles. Traditionally, society was divided into two distinct spheres: the domestic sphere and the public sphere. While the former refers to the home and was ‘naturally’ associated with women who take care of their husbands and children, the latter, conversely, refers to all that is outside the home, particularly the professional, political and the military domain. Hence, work, studies, or politics were dedicated to men who were in turn in charge of sustaining an income to feed their families. This conservative, paternalistic mindset was the agreed norm in Britain till late 19<sup>th</sup> C and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> C when the suffragettes, however lightly they were taken, somehow shook this belief.

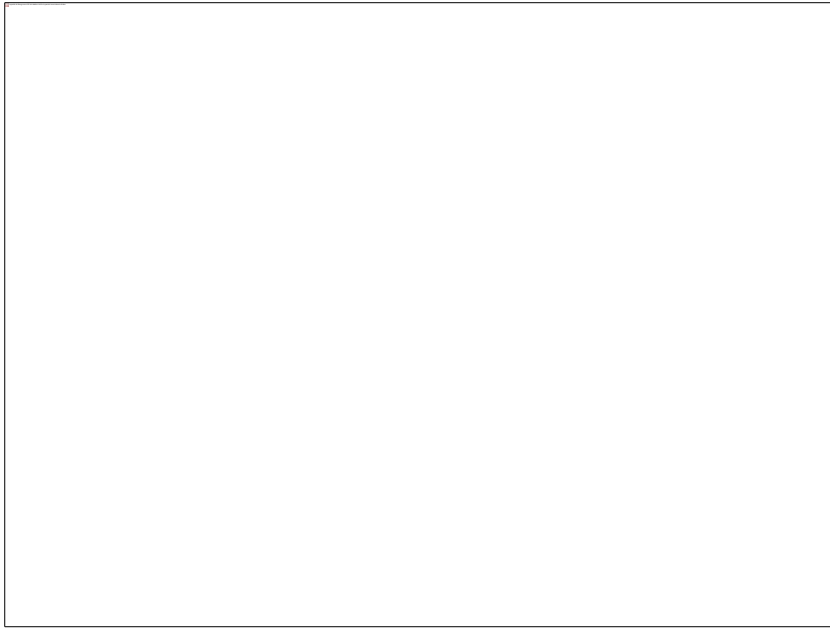
Antebellum films perpetuated this tradition and pictured women according to the established point of view, i.e. frail, feminine creatures in need of a man to protect them. However, when the Second World War broke out, this classic representation changed tremendously. The role of women was revisited into being an active member in the public sphere and new insights were explored into making them as ‘mobile women’. This said, however, we are not trying to say that the notion of mobile women was made up; rather, we think that it has been manipulated to some purposes. It is true that, professionally speaking, women gained certain liberty with the coming of the War, especially in domains that were hitherto men-exclusive like engineering and industry. Figures show that female work force rocketed to 45% from 1938 to 1944, but then slowly started to decrease afterwards (De Cacqueray, 2008). The rise and fall of women’s work force can be explained by the fact that Britain needed its citizen to fill in vacant positions after men were sent to the front to fight. They resumed their position after the war and women were sent back home accordingly (idem, 2008).

As this section will demonstrate, this figure is unsurprisingly relevant in war time cinema. As said before, the theme of ‘mobile women’ was extensively exploited during that period. As a way of illustration, we have decided to deal with one

archetypal British war time feature, *Went the Day well?* (September 1942) directed by Cavalcanti, Ealing Films, 92mins, inspired by a short story of Graham Greene “The Lieutenant Died Last”. The film could have been more exciting were it premiered a little earlier, when the invasion threat has not yet been eliminated. Still, the film received much acclaim from the Ministry of Information as it helped to keep up the morale of Britons.

The story begins with a car moving toward a remote British village called Bramley End. It is told from the first point of view, that is to say, the viewer sees the way the passengers would inside the car progressing forward. Then, a random villager starts a conversation with the audience. We discover that this remote, quiet village was once an arena as it witnessed an attack by the Nazis during the Second World War. Logically, the story is told from the future, foreseeing thus the end of the war with the victory of the Allies. Afterwards, story is provided through the use of the flashback technique. Some undercover German parachutes besiege the village in an attempt to invade Britain. As the attack progresses, their plan fails, and they are temporarily defeated by a bunch of unskilled women, children, and elderly men, using rudimentary tools sometimes. Eventually, the real British Home Guards arrive to put an end to the ‘invasion’.

The title of the film, *Went the Day Well?*, is intriguing because of its unusual grammar. The auxiliary “do” is absent from the interrogative sentence. The film’s title is in fact the first line of an epitaph that it often accredited by critics to be John Maxwell Edmonds’, though the original source is quasi extinct. The film itself displays the epitaph in full in the opening scene while the camera keeps moving towards the village in a dirt track:



**Picture 06: Opening scene of *Went the Day Well?* at 1'55"**

It is important to pause and consider the significance of this shot. First of all, the use of “day” here signals that the plot happens within a 24 hours span. Secondly, this epitaph serves as a foretaste for the audience to guess what is to come. In other words, it is expected to come across individual sacrifice –death- that would benefit a community “Freedom, we died for you”. Again, the typical Second World War filmic themes of nationalism, community heroism, and the combat against a common enemy are hinted at. And, indeed, the film does picture death scenes of British subjects and German soldiers alike, however shocking it seemed at that time, demonstrating that even British people were killed, distancing themselves from the undefeatable protagonist stereotype as well.

Many British films of that period do not offer significant artistic efforts or provide new cinematographic techniques, *Went the Day Well* is not an exception. When the actions become more dynamic and the rhythm goes faster during the climax, the montage seems to be completely at odds with them. It is badly cut, so much so that as viewers, we do not feel engaged with the climax. Music also is terribly lacking, especially in decisive scenes like that when the Home Guards were crawling toward the manor to save the village. Consequently, the film sounded dull at many occasions.

Such basic effects are vital to the aesthetic success but were quasi absent throughout the film.

Still, the narrative action is relatively exceptional. The film has quite an unconventional opening. It starts with what is thought to be a car in motion, in a sort of first person point of view, heading toward the village where it finally reaches a churchyard. Inside the graveyard stands a middle-aged cosy-looking man smoking his pipe and addressing the audience. The audience is then told about what happened in that village during the Second World War. For the beginning then, we know how the story ends. That would certainly not be a good technique to make a film's plot worthwhile, but, actually, it serves a purpose in order to bring forward other themes.

The focus of the film is in fact not on the attack of the Nazi as the audience is informed right away about the tragic event. Indeed, the director is trying to switch the audience's attention into the way the villagers reacted instead. It becomes obvious when the narrator ironically announces "this is the only bit of England they could get", the 'bit' referring here to their respective graves. The viewers are invited to imagine how the Nazi intruders ended there; consequently, the plot becomes more like a guessing game, teasing the audience's attention to the 'how' rather to the 'what'. Further comments on this matter will be discussed below.

The narrative is accordingly a flashback because the narrator opens the scene, then the plot goes back to the start, ends, and then goes to the present time into the initial character. In this sense, we can say the narrative is circular.

### **3.2.1 STEREOTYPING THE ENEMY:**

It does not necessarily need extreme contexts such as war or conflicts for, say, literary or cinematic works to stereotype the Other. As discussed in chapter two, this pertains to one's ideology or mindset, and they are most of the time unconsciously constructed within us. Still, unsurprisingly of course, the odds are that propagandistic films are not likely to contain stereotypical representations of the enemy as they are



meant to put into the foreground the “us” circle’s positive traits as is the case with *In Which We Serve*. *Went The Day Well?* is among the rarest films to represent actively the enemy within propaganda films, or at least films of the Second World War period. This part of the section will focus on how stereotypical the representation of the enemy was.

According to Cambridge dictionary of English, stereotypes is “a set of fixed ideas that is generally held about characteristics of a particular type of person or thing, which are (wrongly) believed to be shared by all the people and things of that type”. It is from this perspective that we should try to see how the Nazis were stereotyped throughout the film.

First, the most recurrent stereotype that can catch the viewers attention is German’s constant need to be fed. As a matter of fact, once they reveal themselves as being parachutes, the scenes thereafter almost always open by picturing soldiers eating up in their hitherto hosts kitchen or being served considerable amounts of food. Their manners also show that they are voracious and glutton. They never ask for tea but prefer coffee instead, with a lot of sugar, widening thus the cultural difference between continentals and the Britons. In one earlier scene, when the Nazi officer, the fifth columnist, Nora and her father gather at the Lady’s manor for a welcome dinner, this latter expresses her disgust towards Nazis “stuffing themselves with French wines”. At first, the audience might be inclined to think the woman was just being judgemental toward the Germans, acting in a predictable Conservative way, but then, the subsequent scenes prove she was ‘right’ about them eating too much. Whether it was a fact or not, Germans looked as though they were starving or at least malnourished. Starting from this point, Ealing Studios, with the assistance of the Ministry of Information, helped in inculcating negative propaganda against the Nazis.

Cruelty of the Nazis is also poignant. Women, children, and elderly people all suffer from maltreatment despite the fact they are not armed and do not constitute a potential danger whatsoever. German soldiers’ ethics are also debatable when they brutally occupy the church in which a service was being held. This negative coding is

highlighted when the vicar refused to obey the orders of the assailers describing them as “the force of evil” and “oppressors of mankind”.

Talking about the negative coding of the Germans, this constant endeavor to demonize the Other is not always successful. As it can be seen, the undercover Nazi chief who heretofore spoke fluent skillful English, for instance responding « and you ? » for « how do you do ? », all of a sudden changed. His linguistic mastery abruptly shifted into someone who speaks English with a slight German accent. That strategy is rather ridiculous and clumsy because it is not likely that someone switches accents this rapidly. This attempt to strengthening Otherness is apparently a mere failure.

While this overt strive to Otherize the enemy was a usual technique in war time cinema, and reinforced with the assistance of the Ministry of Information, it is not always efficient as we have seen with the example of the Nazi general. Notwithstanding, this negative representation could be useful to manipulate the audience’s point of view towards groups toward whom they are not always acquainted or well informed. That is likely to influence Working class viewers because of their cultural or educational limited background.

Otherness is not bound to different ethnic groups or foreigners. It in fact exists in even closer bounds within the same social fabric. Gender otherness is also a way of interiorise or marginalise the weaker one. The next part of the section will focus on gender roles and relations in *Went the Day Well* and the extent to which women were liberated, or not.

### **3.2.2 Women’s Emancipation Signs?**

One of the main reasons this film has been selected for analysis is the prominent way it handles women’s role in society. This part of the section will shed light on the different techniques performed in order to give women a new image. How far is it new? And how far is it realistic and how far could women go? To carry out this quest,

this part will take a closer look at women, place, and war agency. Finally, women stereotyping will be examined and compared the initial purpose of the film.

The representation of women in artistic productions in the western world prior to the Second World War confined them to specific, traditional roles. Somehow, it is just a projection of the actual, everyday life, assigned gender role that prevailed back then. These roles were usually linked to the private sphere, that is to say, inside the home. That was the norm, the accepted, taken for granted role given to them. The assigned role in question is a conservative one in the sense that women were to be wives and mothers and should not trespass the feminine borders and step into men's world. Such a patriarchal representation was widely shared and reinforced through cinema and helped in maintaining this conservative view of social roles.

However, a considerable power shift is noticeable in filmic production during the Second World War. Indeed, female characters in films have been attributed new gender roles. Many British films depicted gender roles in a rather very 'unconservative' way so much so they have been very negatively received by the audience (de Cacqueray, 2010). In *Went the Day Well?* (Ealing Studios, dir. Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942), our case study, most of scenes picture women outside the home rather than inside. For instance, most shots are set in the Church where villagers has been captured, or in the workplace like that of the postmistress. In fact, like many other examples, this film pays less attention to the private sphere and focuses more on the public sphere, i.e. the men's arena being shared with women. De Cacqueray reports that "When a home is shown it figures mainly in order to indicate that it has been occupied by the invading German army, so it is not so much associated with its possible female occupants and their feminine influence" (De Cacqueray, 2010, p. 02, emphasis added by the author).

Of course, homes were not completely omitted; the postmistress's house is briefly included in the narrative when the Nazis invade the village but not focused upon. Instead, it is her workplace that is foregrounded to show her commitment and engagement to her professional life. In addition, the lady's manor in the final scenes

is foregrounded in order to show the German's occupation and attack on innocent children and not to demonstrate its family-bound role.

The aim behind inverting women's place/space is to highlight both women's active role in fighting the enemy at war and to represent the German as being cruel and immoral for violating sacred places such as the church or the home where helpless people such as women and children are. Thus, it can be said that the film narrative was used for propaganda purposes.

The most striking role women carried out throughout the film is the resistant one. As soon as the soldiers who infiltrated the British village were acknowledged as being Nazi ones, women did not hesitate to take on men's job and defend the British soil using even violence to achieve this purpose. The film trespasses the preferred principles because it represents women in an unusual, unnatural, unconventional role. Ideologically, and as put above, women at that period were supposed to be mothers, hence being soft and sensitive. The film was therefore shocking to many viewers (De Cacqueray, 2010).

The then British law forbade women the use of weapons unless there is an imminent danger like invasions. The British were accustomed to this, and women abided to the laws. However, the film violently shakes this deep-rooted belief when two female characters were handed rifles and shown how to use them in order to prevent German soldiers raiding into the manor where children were being safely kept.

The film can be said to be cruel and striking as well in the sense that it bluntly and openly pictures violent scenes. In the denouement scene in the manor, Nora, the main character, takes a pistol and goes down to the parlour where she spots the fifth columnist and would-be fiancé who was trying to undo the barricaded windows, and coldly shoots him dead, avenging thus her father.

The postmistress, after being held a hostage in her workplace and prevented from communicating or receiving telephone calls, manages to trap and axe her aggressor

dead. She immediately reached the telephone and tried to get through the outer world before being in turn bayoneted dead by another Nazi.

The recurrent theme of personal sacrifice over community well-being is again represented in the end of the film. Without any previous notice, the audience is left shocked at the death of the Lady of the manor. While making sure the village's children were safe in her place, a German grenade gets into the children's bedroom. She valiantly and dexterously grabs it and runs out to the corridor where the grenade immediately detonated, becoming thus a martyr in the eyes of the audience.

These scenes were the most violent actions women ever carried out in the film. Softer resistance illustrations are also put across. Women make use of wit to try to denounce the parachutes' attack of the isolated village. For example, the dairy product delivery woman, whose actions were closely watched by a Nazi Soldier, decides to write secret messages on eggs and hands them to a newspaper boy who was unaware of the intrusion. Additionally, the Lady of the manor secretly put a note on a coat of her talkative, 'outsider' guest. Definitely, the image of women here is remarkable; the film attempts to underline the "common men's heroism" and merges with the fashion of that time.

Really, unlike other prototypical films of the same period which mainly focused on military themes set in war areas away from the home, gender roles in this film are visibly different from the established ones. Women seem to be able to perform men's job in fighting the common enemy in different ways. Throughout the aforementioned details, one can notice the new insight Second World War British cinema tried to communicate to the audience, to the world. Women seemed as though they were freer and emancipated; active and engaged in the war, just as equal as their male counterpart. Can this brand new image of women be a faithful representation of an ideological shift among the British society? How far can women really go with their changing social role?

A closer look at the narrative reveals that despite considerable attempts to embody women in a new way, far from the conservative, paternalistic standpoint, there were some signs that just betrayed these efforts.

The film remains, broadly speaking, consistent within the then preferred reading of audience in the sense that men keep a strong hold of the floor. Indeed, in mixed-sex interactions, women's linguistic role is often passive while that of men is most of the time dominant. By the dichotomy passive/active, we mean that female participants are listener rather than speakers and the opposite is true for men. In this sense, their role does not seem to have evolved enough to claim female's emancipation. Indirectly, the film maintained the unconscious linguistic roles in mixed-sex conversations.

If listening is considered as passive, therefore negative because of the lack of power, it can come in handy at times, if used wisely. Female characters could have foreseen the imminent enemy attack before anyone else. However, they simply missed it. Again, the narrative is against women however active they seemed to be in chasing out the enemy, as we shall see.

The dairy product delivery woman was engaging in a conversation with one of the newly come supposedly British soldiers who became her guest for the occasion. In one incident, she asked him where he was from and he quietly replied that he was from Manchester. She could have noticed that he was very confused when she mentioned Piccadilly but then she just mockingly replied that she was talking about Manchester's Piccadilly and not that of London. Furthermore, his behaviour was too stiff, too wooden in comparison to hers, which can account for the cultural differences between the two. That was one of the earliest signs of invasion.

The postmistress for instance was puzzled at one undercover Nazi soldier, as he bluntly answered "no" when she asked him whether he finds the venue "comfy". He failed to communicate with her, as he does not master English: the preceding scene shows him speaking fluent German. When the postmistress was raising a toast with

other supposedly Royal soldiers and sergeants in the evening, she failed to notice the morbid facial expressions the soldier dropped when she said “down with Hitler”.

Nora, the Vicar’s daughter and one of the major characters, also spotted many telltale clues. First, she noticed that digits and figures on the telegram the postmistress picked from that German-speaking undercover Nazi soldier were written in the continental style<sup>38</sup>. In another scene, she found obvious evidence. While tidying the room of her undercover Nazi general guest, she found a chocolate box where the word chocolate was spelled the German way - Schokolade.

Nora was the unique female character who visibly had doubts about the newly come soldiers. In fact, at several points, she tried to raise awareness among her fellow friends and neighbours the manor Lady and the post-mistress; however, they both dismissed her remarks implying she was mistaken and over-thinking. This leads us to consider another facet of stereotyping the film conveyed. Women, though apparently were the Guardians of the Home, were to blame for the delayed reaction against the enemy’s intrusion into the village.

Were it not for women’s behaviour, the villagers could have chased the Nazi way earlier, saving many casualties in the process. Undeniably, had the Lady of the Manor taken Nora’s remarks seriously, she would not have been killed eventually, Nora’s father either.

The blame on women is implied in various instances in the film. The negative stereotype of women being ‘chatty’ or ‘inattentive’ is enhanced throughout the film. The postmistress was killed because the telephone female interlocutors on the other side of the line were busy gossiping instead of replying to her SOS message. The female clumsy driver visiting the village accidentally broke the eggs in which help messages were written; they were hoped to reach the outside world. She also unknowingly destroyed another hidden S.O.S message the manor Lady discretely put in her coat pocket by using it as a joint to fix her car window. These unfortunate

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<sup>38</sup> Sevens contained strikes while fives were stretched; the British way of writing these numbers is different.

incidents all have a common point; they were all caused by careless women. As a matter of fact, it was foregrounded in the beginning of the film when Nora started to be suspicious, the postmistress ended the conversation with “we will let the sleeping dogs lie” and the Lady of the manor confidently replies “We will!”.

Although the film tries to show women as powerful figures, the narrative and the plot structure seem to contradict these efforts. The film starts and ends with a male character, he masters the plot. Additionally, what enabled the Nazi Germans to be effectively beaten is not women’s shooting, but rather the boy who could escape the manor and alert the neighbouring villagers. Finally, it was thanks to male characters, specifically British soldiers, Home Guards, that the besieging eventually took an end and the denouement took place. Women were only performing secondary, subordinate roles, while men “stole the lights” off them. Women temporarily took the lead before handing it back to their original holder – men. Hence, it can be said that this seemingly modern representation of women is only a means of propaganda; in fact, it is manipulated to serve the Ministry of Information interests (cf. Chapter one, section 3).

It is then undoubtedly seizing how *Went the Day Well* both converges, yet diverges from its regular contemporary filmic production. As stated before, it is amongst the rarest film ever to depict the enemy this overtly, diverging thus from the common themes. Still, it is equally noticeable how Ealing Studios granted a brand new image of women and gender roles altogether. This cinematic image was used and abused in many other similar British films such as *They Also Serve* (Dir. Ruby Grierson. Ministry of Information. 1940) or *Millions Like Us* (Gainsborough Studios, dirs. Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, 1943) which follow a fairly parallel themes.

“Common People’s War” argument is quite recurrent with women taking on men’s responsibility for the well-being of the community. Gender equality is also projected as propaganda means in order to embellish Britain’s image to the Western world. However, this is just a hasty conclusion because women were just seemingly equal and were not in any case objectively projected. Their role was subordinate and



temporary; male figures dominated the narrative all along. It may seem that this microanalysis is over-generalising; however, post-war corpora all are thematically divergent with those of the Second World War. Furthermore, cinematographic production did not succeed in influencing the British society to innovate in gender role matters as the employment figures demonstrated earlier in this section. Working women were sent back to the home and men took over those positions. Truly then, and by comparing fictional productions with the workforce facts, one can say that the film as a whole does not faithfully mirror the British society reality and showed a deceiving facet of the matter indeed.

One last point to add is that *Went the Day Well?* can be perceived as a sort of *mise-en-abîme*, i.e. a picture within a picture, because it is the Second World War altogether which is micro-scaled into this film. The isolated village being the British Isles, away from the continent, the parachutes being the “forces of evil”, the Axis power that is. The narrative resemblance with the U.S intervention is uncanny, especially when help finally arrived to uproot the Nazis from the village. Of course, the film was produced and projected much earlier than the American intervention, but the symbolism remains just as strong, as though it was prematurely announcing the end of the war, and to a greater extent, rejoicing the British audience for a while.

To conclude this chapter, British popular cinema during the Second World War revolved around three major axes. The first one was that cinema was used as a means of reassuring the masses and appeasing the atmosphere about the imminent danger of the war and to keep up the morale of the British society. In order to achieve this task, films often treated the themes of ‘common people’s war and played the card of self-sacrifice and heroism of ordinary persons over the individual interest. In this sense, film promoted a communitarian image of the hitherto individualist British society. The second one was to destroy class barriers and homogenize the British society into one strong community. This effort however was not always successful so much the notion of a class-based society was akin into their mindsets. The third axis is to pay a tribute to women’s effort and contribution in the war by attributing them an

unconventional social role, in other words, that of women acting outside the private sphere. Such a theme goes against the previous decade thematic consensus that confined women in the private sphere. In this sense, it can be said that film studios, with the help of the Ministry of Information most of the times, apparently attempted to break the status quo that prevailed hitherto.

No matter how novel and modern these ideas may look at first sight, they are however, temporary and typical of War Time cinema only. They cannot be considered as a genuine ideological shift in any case; instead, it is better to think about them as means of propaganda that helped sustain the status quo by maintaining general agreement amongst the working class as for the decision to launch a war and seeking consensus through cinema as false consciousness. We have also seen how cinematic productions were tailored so as to appeal to the audience with the hope to diminishing or minimizing ideological discrepancies and thus facilitate the said agreement in the process. The fact that the Ministry of Information closely worked with film studios such as that of Ealing clearly proves that film sources do not always stem from artists but from governmental agents that actively partook in disseminating the conservative ideology. Talking about the conservative standpoint, the discussed films were also eye-opening in the sense that conservative thoughts were not necessarily overt and obvious. Indeed, most of the time, analysis had to scratch a little bit deeper to spot obvious contradictions.

In brief, and digging into the framework of this study, the outwardly sudden ideological ‘evolution’ during the forties is just on the surface and not genuine. At the outside look, British cinema appears to be reflecting ‘new’ Britain, but clearly, it is only a means to sustain and inculcate right wing viewpoints. Wartime films were unquestionably powerful means of ideological manipulation.

Chapter Four:  
Reaching the  
Final Destination  
the Rebellious  
Fifties

#### 4. Reaching the Final Destination: Rebellious Fifties

In the previous chapter, readers have been acquainted with wartime British cinema and have discovered that thematically speaking, it was rich and diverse. The context of war helped in bringing forth British film industry to an international level as discussed previously. If war was beneficial to Britain's film industry, its end, however, brought about many shortcomings. Many critics agree that British cinema of the fifties was synonymous with dullness and sometimes conservativeness (Ian Mackillop and Neil Sinyard, 2003, P.2). There seems as though there was nothing much to say, wartime films slowly lost their distinction among the audience, many directors relied on novel/play adaptations, and the need to compete with the Giant Hollywoodian counterpart was deeply felt.

Still, one should not overstate the many advances British film industry achieved during this decade. Indeed, the aesthetic dimension considerably developed then in comparison to the previous decades. *I'm Alright Jack* (dir. John Boulting, 1959) is for example a good case in point of British cinema aesthetic maturity where the filmic language was suitably deployed throughout the narrative.

It is true that some films of preceding decades did deal with politics, but it was performed in a diluted way, in crude comedies such as that of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* previously discussed or that of *Old Mother Riley MP* (1939) where an old working class woman succeeded in becoming a Member of Parliament and broke out a crusade against corruption in government. If one point should be retained at this stage is that the US vs. THEM dichotomy persisted and Manichean representation marked these films, however subtle, or not, it was. But then, what about the fifties?

Films engaging in directly projecting politics in Britain were quasi inexistent and there are some reasons for that. Steven Fielding argues in his work, *A Mirror for England? Cinematic Representations of Politicians and Party Politics, circa 1944-1964*, that it is due to the fact that the audience itself being constituted of working class men, women and youngsters are themselves not interested in politics (Fielding,

2008). He reports that, according to this category of the audience, politics was frowned upon and thought of being too complex to understand and was therefore reserved for the *élite* (Fielding, *idem.*).

Furthermore, it must be said that the messages films transmit cannot always be attributed to its producers taste and standpoints; otherwise, they would probably cause a serious sales decline if their messages clash with the ideology of the audience. Truly, there are many factors that lead film studios to choose this or that theme. These include what the producer, the director, the actor, and the audience make sense of media texts, here being films. And, in turn, these elements diverge into many audience categories all of which can be infinitely blended altogether: age, gender, social class, ethnicity etc. The process is so heterogeneous that it is difficult to tell what 'reality' is being translated into the silver screen. Still, because production is at the hands of the studios, it is likely that a great majority of film does reflect, to some extents, their perception of reality.

The fifties, as stated in chapter one, were marked by very tense events. It was the beginning of the British Empire dismantlement, the independence of India in 1947, and the Mau-Mau movement in Kenya 1952; the rise of two other competitive superpowers, USA and USSR; the affluent society mindset witnessed its early apparitions. The conservative Party came to power again and maintained a consensus after that Labour had enacted the Welfare State policy.

It cannot be denied that the fifties, however unstable internationally, were considerably stable domestically and politically speaking. It was only then that the typical British two-party system was firmly ingrained with the emergence of Labour and Tories as the two dominant, yet opposing, Parties. It is through this lens that the first section of this chapter will focus on the cinematic representation of these two factions. How were they implicitly promoted and or criticized?

## 4.1 Deference decline:

*The Happy Family* (1952) is a fictitious black and white 86mn British comedy produced by Sydney Box and MacQuitty and directed by Muriel Box. It stars Stanley Holloway and Kathleen Harrison who performed Mr. Henry Lord and Mrs. Lillian Lord respectively. The story basically revolves around their family's resistance against their house being confiscated in order to lay a road instead.

The story is an adaptation of Clayton Hutton's West End's play of 1951 with some considerable script cuts, especially passages with strong political opinions (Fielding, 2014). Here is a brief synopsis.

The story opens with long shots on the Thames River as well as on central London; the camera then focuses on a giant workshop at Southbank. The workshop being erected is Festival of Britain's. It is spring 1951, i.e. a year before the film premiered, and London is about to start a fancy and diversified festival to celebrate art, science, industry and technology. And above all, it aimed to celebrate the centenary of 1851's Great Exhibition, when Great Britain, at the apex of the Industrial Revolution, used to be the world leader *par excellence*. However, problems shortly rise when the workers realized the blueprint contained a 'slight' mistake in the scale, leading to a considerable divergence on the site being built.

The issue is quickly communicated to the Civil Servants and then to the Prime Minister. The only solution they could think of is to destroy a small house, serving also as a family shop, at the corner of the street in order to allow a new underground station to open there and to lay a road that leads to the festival. Tensions soon grew between the family itself and government as they refused the government compensation however interesting it was. After burning up all the senior Civil Servant's housing and refunds proposals, the latter decides to forcibly evict them off their premises. On the D-day, The Lord's family, having barricaded their property beforehand, threw eggs, flour, and cans and whatever the shop contained at him and the Bobbies, who eventually had to surrender and give up on evicting them.

Their story quickly became a Cause Célèbre which gave birth to a strong community spirit among the British people who then stood at their side. Media, the prominent BBC then, also played an important role at relaying the Lord's news via a young, handsome, good-looking, posh, ambitious and self-centred reporter who infiltrated the Lord's house with the hope to acquire a promotion. Having been under a pressure of a national scale, the Prime Minister, i.e. the then Clement Atlee, finally accepted to respect the Lord's will and negotiated a different track for the tube. The 'House of Lords', as the family's place was funnily named to echo the upper chamber of Parliament, was at last victorious.

As mentioned above, it is a comedy meant to entertain, therefore, an unlikely scenario. Still, one cannot overlook some hints and hidden messages the film is full of. But before then, it is worth highlighting some key events that actually took place during that particular stretch of British history prior to proceed to the discussion.

Great Britain, though eventually victorious, was left quasi bankrupt by the end of the Second World War. Every infrastructure was to be rebuilt or restored starting from housing to the primary and the secondary sectors. Worse, after having affirmed its position as the sole world dominator for such a long time, Great Britain was forced to accept U.S's financial help through the Marshal Plan, conceding thus its place to the latter, and giving therefore the lead away: from *Pax Britannica* to *Pax Americana*.

Almost every food item was rationed and people could not buy, say, meat, milk, or bread, i.e. the most basic necessity, without coupons strictly provided by the government. The Sterling's value was also lagging behind.

By summer 1945, and to the surprise of everyone, the Labour Party won a landslide victory, stealing off the lights to Winston Churchill who has long wished to become the Prime Minister then after 'saving' Britain from the Axis' threat. The reason for such an odd turnout results is due to the fact Labour promised social stability to their citizen by introducing the Welfare State policy.

But then, why is this historical review is restated here? Simply, this is just to remind the viewers of the film that the decision to both evict the Lords from their household and to erect the Festival of Britain was made by the Labour Government, aka the Tories major opponents, which at this stage, raises more questions than it answers.

There lies the aforementioned key point this section seeks to address. Indeed, the fact that the film's central plot revolves around families opposing the government is by no means to be considered as a mere coincidence. That the 'tyrant' government represents the Labour Party is unquestionably the main hidden agenda of the film.

In fact, the film seems to put subtly a certain message across. The way the theme, the Civil Servants, and the family altogether are represented is quite enlightening.

First of all, if we look at the way the two main factions behave or speak, we can notice a form of Otherness. As a matter of fact, the audience is driven to align itself with the family's cause. Indeed, like the films of the Second World War tackled in the previous chapter, propaganda films usually focus on common people instead of states or official institution in order to better reach its audience and seek their agreement. Therefore, the protagonists, that is the Lord's, are represented as 'commoners', and we the audience, tend to feel empathy toward them because of the barefaced disproportion of power balance between them and the government.

Being part of the Working Class, their behaviour is typical in many respects. Their language use is simple, regional, and colloquial, consequently appealing to the audience's own social class. Conversely, the governmental figures are "posh"<sup>39</sup> and pay careful attention to their appearance. Their attire could be said to be rather intimidating with black suits, leather gloves, and Anthony Eden hats. They use strong traditional, stiff upper lip Received Pronunciation as well as relatively complex, Latin-driven<sup>40</sup> words which the mother often fails to understand and which the Civil

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<sup>39</sup> To quote the daughter's description of the Civil Servant's attire.

<sup>40</sup> By Latin-driven, I mean words that originally come from French and that are adopted in the English language, more particularly used in formal/academic/political contexts.



Servant often needed to ‘translate’ them into Anglo-Saxon equivalents such as when she asked for the meaning of eviction or when he said “ demolition” and she replied “that means pulling down, doesn’t it?” Seen from this angle, there is a certain barrier between the two, a cultural one, to which the official political figures do not make the least efforts to break so as to be more approachable, thus reaching a possible consensus. They are represented as being distant and rather arrogant. Accordingly, Stephan Fielding’s thesis of the upper-class being the ‘Them’ and the Working Class being the ‘Us’ visibly lends support to this claim (Fielding, 2012).

The film also depicts the failure of “making politicians represent their constituency’s concerns” (Fielding, 2014; P. 96). They have successively been passed on from their councillor, to the housing committee, to the mayor, to their M.P, and finally, to the Civil Servant who has made the planning error. When came the time for the father and his wife to seek an explanation from the cabinet, that Civil Servant’s replies were full of clichés and go-everywhere answers/expressions such as: “we have explored every avenue of approach of this distressing matter”, or “we haven’t left any stone unturned”. The way of speaking also alludes that his speech was unnatural, rather rehearsed. All in all, every reply converged into a refusal. In this sense, the film attempts to highlight one of the shortcomings of socialism: bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the Civil Servants meetings often lack a serious tone. For instance, during one meeting when they were to decide for the fate of the Lord’s house, the general supervisor, Sir Charles Spaniel, seemed to be impatient and in a hurry for a dinner break amidst a serious discussion. He finally opted to cut it short and transfer the responsibility to some Mr. Filch to transmit the news to the Lord’s. Such an attitude is not an isolated one, all the way through the film, he is shown to take everything lightly and take easy decisions. It is also inferred that the cabinet meetings always start late compared to regular workers and are incompetent.

It is also interesting to consider the naming of these two Civil Servants. Sir Charles Spaniel’s name uncannily resembles a name of a dogs’s race, Cavalier King

Charles Spaniel, while the senior Civil Servant's name, Mr. Filch, is synonymous to pinching. The irony is striking even more when he signs the eviction letter with "your obedient Civil Servant, Mr. Filch".

Here again, Labour is indirectly criticized as being ironically not only unprofessional, but also as being 'antisocial' in contrary to what it originally sought to be. Indeed, the ministry's cabinet is chosen by the government of the day, hence the anti-labour propaganda.

Perhaps, the most striking and blatant form the Whitehall staff is represented is with them being dishonest. Because of the refusal of the family to leave the premises, the former decided they evicted them on grounds that the house being infested with dry rot represents a public danger and can collapse at any time. Prior to that, however, the Civil Servant maintained that it was for the Englishmen who are waiting for the festival and more importantly to the nation:

- Mr. Filch: The *government* is waiting, the *festival* is waiting, and although they don't know it yet, the *English people* are waiting [...] you'll be refusing to help your country if you don't do that!
- Mr. Lord:[...] in order to show to the world how we really progressed in England, and to show them what sort of people we really are, you're prepared to use force to tear me and my family out of my house?!"

Another occurrence of insincerity is as the denouement comes into action. Mr. Filch, hitherto strongly against the resistance and employing firm antagonist discourse against the Lords' Case, makes an astonishing 180 degree move when he arrives at the premises with a white flag, happily announcing that "we have this day won a great victory [...] we, the people! This day will go down the annals of our glorious history as a day of the little men". Using the inclusive 'we' here makes of him and the family one entity, as though they have been fighting together instead of one another.

The stereotypical representation of both the Working Class and the Civil Servants reinforces them being different in every single aspect of their life (language,

behaviour and so forth...) and at the same time shape the audience's point of view in a way the governmental figures seem to be part of the "them" circle (Fielding, 2013).

Thus, it is against this background that one can properly put forward that Manichaeism is purposefully projected and serves to deepen the gap or rather the clash between the two distinct social classes. It is a flagrant point that the recurrent thematic Second World War British cinema of a united, *classless* society (cf. Chapter three) appears to go up in smoke. Film directors produced back to the right-wing ideology with the hope to dissuade voters from choosing the Labour Party. The next section will tackle the right-winged ideology of the film.

The second point this part attempts to point at is that there are many instances where the plot endeavours to transmit Conservative stances. That the government decided to demolish a peaceful home could be said that it is, to a certain extent, a metaphor of government interventionism criticism, for the state here chose to interfere in private affairs of a hard-working family.

It is intriguing that despite the appealing offers Sir Charles Spaniel proposes to the Lords by suggesting alternative, new, bigger, and modern accommodation with additional financial compensation, the latter categorically decline them. Fielding puts forwards that the Lords refused what he called "benevolent administration" (Fielding, 2014, P. 96) that is to say, "state-sponsored" goods (Idem, P. 96) probably for the following reasons.

Speaking about hard-work, the father's career consisted of being a 40 year long train driver who has reportedly performed his tasks skilfully. As for the mother, she also worked as a servant during the hungry thirties and dreamt of a house and a shop of her own. Their ambition came true, and after many years of self-sacrifice and sweat, they could finally afford the said house. In this way, their economic status has relatively improved with them becoming landlords and running their own business after having been common tenants. To a greater degree, the Lord's have here

achieved the famous Victorian values of thrift and self-help and reliance<sup>41</sup>. The Lord's success story is a sort of a micro version of Conservative's value of private ownership and entrepreneurship, and this film came to crystallize and put much emphasis on this notion. But then again, all their effort and self-improvement endeavours were jeopardized by the Socialist government and their pompous project.

Over his very first visit to the Lord's, Mr. Filch, the appointed Civil Servant, started his dialogue with a thorough account on the costs of the project which were estimated to over six million pounds. The mother, who was the only interlocutor along with her daughter, was amazed with the sum of money.

The project in itself initially sought to re-embellish the image of Britain around the world by exposing some scientific and technological prowess and advances as stated during a council meeting. When Mr. Filch paid his first visit to the Lord's, he started the conversation as follows:

- Mr. Filch: I wonder if you realise, Mrs Lord, how much it is costing to build the Southbank Exhibition.
- Mrs. Lord: A pretty penny I should think?
- Mr. Filch: [laughs] A pretty penny indeed. More than six million pounds, yes 12000 men [...] they have used 960000 bricks 6600 tons of cement, 3960 tons of steel, 400 tons of aluminium.
- Daughter: enough for a couple of houses in fact?!  
(He then went on giving further details about the types of plants and flowers)

The father, who met Mr. Filch the same day later in the evening during a family reunion, was not; and this is where the point becomes interesting. When the father asked about the benefits of the project, the Civil Servant was left baffled and said that in the contrary, they were hoping it would not exceed a two trillion loss.

The rationale behind the aforementioned over-informative conversation is to shed light on how superfluous and meaningless the Festival was, more than that, how extravagantly expensive the cost was. The criticism of the price is rather justified considering the post-war context Britain was going through as stated before. High

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<sup>41</sup> A notion which, this must be reminded, have long been blurred during Wartime British cinema.

public expenditure, which is often attributed to socialist governments, is ridiculed and severely condemned in this scene, and above all, the austerity measures that were meant to curb Britain's decline were clearly infringed. It is as if the film tries to tell us that the austerity policy adopted right after the end of the Second World War overlooked the Festival expenditure and focused on limiting vital necessities only.

Steven Fielding would also advance that the error in the plan (the blueprint) stands for the socialist government failure to plan, since socialism in itself rests under firm economic planning, and seen from this perspective, it is a symbol meant at criticising the Labour Party (Fielding, 2014). Indeed, if we look at the play, that is, the original story line, there was a passage that openly suggested the idea "[It] even makes a direct remark to the Labour's government disastrous Groundnut Scheme, locating its fictional mistake to a context of real planning failure" (Fielding, 2014, P. 97).

Mr. Lord has a pet hare which he particularly cherishes, Winston as it is named. That the rabbit shares the same first name as the late 1951 Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, hardly leaves any room to think that this is a sheer coincidence. Taking into consideration the fact that the film was projected in 1952, that is to say, roughly a year after the successful coming back of Churchill in autumn 1951, means that the pet hare here serves as a symbol for the Conservatives.

The previously implemented Welfare State was maintained through what has come to be known the 'post-war consensus' while two economic regimes coexisted together (Mixed economy) as Fielding reports: "Second World War spawned a policy "consensus" embraced equally by the Labour and Conservative leaderships." (Fielding, 2008, P. 03). What Labour has implemented during the immediate post-war period was somehow transferred to the Tories thirteen year old leadership, as if they stole the lights off them.

Hence, going back to the initial point, Winston, the pet, could be said as being an epitome of Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Indeed, once the barriers were fixed everywhere, Mr. Lord did not hesitate to undermine his barricaded house in order to

save it as he realised he locked it out. When he was asked about his risky decision by his spiritual, psychic sister-in-law, he answered: “[Winston is] something that makes life worth living, *innit?* Winston is *my* dream or at least part of it, *Winston stands for many things: [...] retirement, pension, peace, security, settling down with the family around me.*” (Emphasis added).

Following logical grounds, there seems to be no compelling reason not to argue that Winston is a symbol, an analogous symbol, especially that Mr. Lord adds that he has been waiting for Winston since he got married, and during the hungry thirties and the miserable forties when his son, Peter, passed away during the war in 1944, he kept hope to have him.

Another noteworthy point about the film is the recurrent theme of union and nationalism at the same time as promoting individualism. Indeed, while these themes were known to be more typical of those of the Second World War era, and that there was a relative thematic shift thereafter into comedies and film noirs (Harper and Porter, 2007), this film seems to reiterate these themes again with the hope to possibly gain the audience’s empathy.

Alternatively, the Lords witness an out-bursting supply of help. Some neighbours attempt to join in the ‘resistance’ with all the shovels and other rudimentary tools to back up the Lord’s cause. As Cyril, the daughter’s boyfriend, predicted “The Englishmen love the underdog to fight; they can’t bear injustice!”

The BBC also, in a way or another, helped disseminate their story all over Britain, indirectly influencing the British people into supporting the Lord’s. The press would even employ the hyperbolic word “isolationists”.

Furthermore, talking about words, their resistance has often been coined as being a revolution and this term has been used a dozen of times to refer them. The ‘revolution’ sparkled when Ada, the spiritual sister of Mrs. Lord consulted the spirits and they communicated back with one single word “Robespierre”. Here is a pivotal event that pushed them to employ violence against the authorities as Robespierre was

one key figure of the French Revolution. By calquing the situation, Labour Government is here the tyrants that the peasants sought to expel.

Notwithstanding that, the father insists that the revolution they are to start should be reasonable and for a good sake and not just for revolution's sake: "[...] and not being led about like sheep, to our Englishman's castle, and all the millions of little castles belonging to little people all over the country." The tone is appealed into a resistance that seeks to protect the Englishman's individualism.

The second point this section tries to point at is the film make use another classic propaganda technique called "appeal to pathos". The audience cannot but feel empathy vis-à-vis the peculiar Case, especially when Mrs. Lord loses her nerves during a negotiation meeting with Mr. Filch and starts a lengthy soliloquy:

*Mrs Lord: I said bricks and moulter my foot Mr. Filch! It's far more than that to us! Me [sic] and my husband got married on thirty bob a week<sup>42</sup>, He worked in the railway and I went out scrubbing and cleaning to make both ends meet. We didn't grumble! Then was the time we went hungry! And during the thirties it was most of the time. Still, we just went on and minded our business. My husband didn't strike because we're not the striking kind, we had four kids and very often they either went hungry or we did, so we did! Dad worked and I worked and when the kids were old enough, they worked too. And all the time we dreamt of a little house of our own. A shop for me, and a home we paid for and couldn't be kicked out with a short notice. Well, we got the house and we got the shop, and then the war came along and one of our boys didn't come back. Still! We didn't grumble! We don't owe nothing to nobody! [Sic] This is our land and we have our own home in our house, and no one can take it away from us! You understand? No one is going to drive a road through my sitting room or the subway under my shop! You understand? (Emphasis added)*

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There again lie strong conservative values, that is, this passage informs us that the Lords have achieved the ideal Tory values. From living on thirty bob a week, they

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<sup>42</sup> Thirty bob a week (slang): the equivalent of 1£50 per week.

could afford a decent house in Southbank solely by being hard worker and sacrificing much of themselves, and above all, by being patriotic enough not to strike and serving the country at wartime.

All in all, Muriel Box, the film director, succeeded in conveying such values by seeking validation amongst the audience.

Indisputably then, *The Happy Family* is Conservative in nature in many ways, as stated above. However, because of its nature *per se*, there are some elements which seem to go against the concept, or to put it differently, perpetuate the working class stereotypes.

If we look at the way the characters are portrayed, one could notice that the family members behave in a traditional way. The mother, Lillian Lord, consistently fails to understand ‘serious’ conversations with the senior Civil Servant as well as with other authorities representatives such as the mayor due to her possible lack of knowledge in this concern. In many occasions, precisely four times throughout the whole film, she replies with “but they can’t do that, can they?” The tag question at the end of this sentence adds to her uncertainty and tentativeness. This representation of women is in contradiction to that of Second World War women’s cinematic representation where they would act defiantly (cf. Chapter three).

The middle daughter’s fiancé is just as interesting to consider. While the Lord’s family are more or less homogeneous in terms of ideology, that is to say, conservative, Cyril is significantly different from them with his messy curly hair, baggy shirt and trousers, and his duffle coat<sup>43</sup>. He identifies himself as being a “fellow traveller” and is openly ideologically divergent from the rest of the characters: he believes in revolutions “what is 1945’s General Election if not a revolution?!” He often promotes radical ideas; in fact, the barricade idea is his proposition, because he was the only one who could decipher Ada’s vision about

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<sup>43</sup> Duffle-coats were associated with the military uniforms before becoming popular in early 50s. From then on, it became trendy among students, is commonly believed to be worn by left-winged young adults; hence, the link between Cyril and his radical ideas.



some Robespierre, a French Revolution leader: “you spend your time [...] talking about freedom when you don’t know the meaning of the word, you’re like a lot of bloody sheep...” he emotionally preaches them with a nervous stuttering.

At first sight, it seems as though there was an equal share of left-right wing within the family. However, no sooner does one realise that the sole left-winged character is just a mockery. First, he is often interrupted while he speaks, he is clumsy and emotive “I’m only a human!” Moreover, he is represented as being ambitious but obviously lacking experience. Eventually, he opts to vote to give up the resistance over a “little discomfort” when they ran out of food and water.

These are just some occurrences where common people are laughed at for being what they are, for embracing a different ideology from that of the conservative one. It appears that even though the story line supports commoners, the latter are ‘asked’ not to be too divergent with their ideological stances.

All in all, one of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that post war British cinema is ready to support the weaker ones provided it does not undermine conservative interests. As a matter of facts, it was often anti leftist in nature taking into consideration the aforementioned example.

With hindsight though, Films treating the theme of ordinary working-class families resisting or being involved within any kind of disagreement with government is far from being an unusual case. As a matter of fact, there had been several instances where the central plot put forward the victory of commoners over the Establishment after the end of the Second World War. Ealing’s comedy *A Passport to Pimlico* (dir. Henry Cornelius, 84mns, April 1949) could be said to be among the films to screen decline of deference. Broadly speaking, the film tells us about a London borough that was declared to belong to France after that inhabitants discovered a Middle Age property document belonging to a Burgundy’s duke. The citizens then were besieged in order to contain the mock rebellion and walls are erected all around, and food and water soon started to be scarce. At times, food supply would come from planes that

would drop packages, echoing thus Stalin's Iron Curtain over Berlin besiegement. By that time, though, Ealing started to adopt a certain trend of populism and a mild support to Labour (Fielding, 2014).

Alternatively, away from the film, the Festival of Britain initially meant to be of an international scale and which was later on shrunk into a national and limited exhibition did not last long though. It must be added that the very festival was destroyed by the order of Churchill once he came to power probably because of its excessive cost. Some critics however tend to argue that it was demolished because the Festival of Britain was more like a political clash between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party than a mere celebration of technological and artistic proficiency (Conekin, 2003). Hugh Casson, the Southbank Exhibition's chief architect reports that "Churchill, like the rest of the Tory Party, was against the Festival, which they (quite rightly) believed was the advanced guard of Socialism" (Casson quoted in Conekin, 2003, P. 49).

As for Labour, Clement Atlee was mistakenly<sup>44</sup> thinking the Festival, long accredited to the Prime Minister, would help them gain a larger majority for the autumn's General Election, and he, indeed, took advantage of the popularity and success of the Festival to call for a premature General Election right after summer (Conekin, 2003). This is yet another reason to believe the film was only a counter-attack against Labour.

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<sup>44</sup> To their surprise, after only one year of their second mandate, Labour Party lost the 1951's General Election with a big majority to Winston Churchill.

## 4.2 Institutional failure:

*I'm alright jack* (dir. John Boulting, 105mns, 1959) is a black and white satirical comedy produced by the twin brothers John and Roy Boulting, and a script developed by the tripartite Frank Harvey, John Boulting, and Alan Hackney, the storyline is inspired by the latter's novel *Private Life*, according to the British Film Institute. The film stars familiar actors such as Ian Carmichael, Peter Sellers, Dennis Price, Richard Attenborough, Terry-Thomas, and Miles Malleson playing Stanley Windrush, Fred kite, Bertram Tracepurcel, Sydney DeVere Cox, Major Hitchcock, and Windrush senior respectively. Almost all of which held similar roles in a 1956 comedy entitled *Private's progress*; in fact, it could be said that the plot of this film paved the way to *I'm Alright Jack* because of the striking resemblance.

The Boulting Brothers, who were originally engaged with drama and war films in the forties, were, nevertheless, mainly famous for their political satires upon which their career rests, especially during the mid fifties and early sixties. Perhaps the most significant motivation of such a choice is their 'divorce' with left-wing ideology and embracing the right-wing one instead (Shail, 2007).

*I'm Alright Jack* is the most acclaimed film dealing with industrial relations between owners and workers. Films revolving around film industries were extremely rare, and this is mainly due to the fact that the BBFC had a firm grasp of what to allow to project and what to censor (Richards and Aldgate, 2009). However, by the fifties, the trend witnessed a certain thematic change indeed. Richards and Aldgate try to explain the trend with the concomitant events that marked Britain in the fifties: "In the ten years before 1955, for instance, there was an annual average of 1,791 strikes, involving 545,000 workers and resulting in 2,073,000 days lost. In the ten years after 1955 there an annual average of 2,521 strikes, involving 1,116,000 workers and resulting in 3,889,000 days lost" (Richards and Aldgate, 2002). Hence, the Boulting brothers wanted to illustrate the way post-war British industry was deficient because of trade unions's strikes, or what the Germans came to call 'die Englische Krankheit' (the English disease) .

The story is about a young, upper-class, ambitious but naive Stanley Windrush who after leaving the army and having graduated from Oxford seeks a management job but awkwardly fails a couple of management position's job interviews. He then consults his uncle Bertram Tracepurcel who with the intervention of his friend Sidney DeVere Cox, convince him to accept an unskilled blue-collar job at his missile's factory in spite of his aunt's disagreement.

Stanley then joins the factory where he has his baptism by fire with the overwhelmingly 'shocking' manners of lower working class personnel. There he meets a communist shop steward, Fed Kite, who accepted to help him up and lodged him over with the hope to convert him to communism. At the same time, the personnel manager, Major Hitchcock, hired an expert to measure the labourers' efficiency per hour (time and motion calculation); however, the workers, all of whom are trade-unionists, decided not to accept his quest. Eventually, he succeeded in trapping Windrush into assessing him and results show he could work much harder and quicker compared to the other qualified workers, questioning thus their efficiency. This leads Kite and his fellows to call on a strike in order to protect the union workers' wages.

By then, no one suspected this incident was actually a secret plot by Cox and Tracepurcel. Cox also holds a missile company which could win a larger contract with an Arab country; except that they intend to do it dishonestly by doubling the costs with the cooperation of Mr. Mohammed, the Arab representative. The plot did not go down well, ultimately triggering a supportive strike among Cox's workers (secondary picketing). The story becomes nationally famous as the press intervenes, relating that Windrush was unfairly sent to Coventry<sup>45</sup> by his fellow colleagues for "working hard". Windrush was kicked from Kite's place as he confessed he was the owner's nephew, which, in turn, leads Kite's family to 'strike' to protest against Mr. Kite's decision.

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<sup>45</sup> English English (Idiom): to send someone to Coventry means to stop talking to someone and to ignore them as a way of punishment.

In an attempt to appease the atmosphere, Cox tries to persuade Windrush to resign with a bribery, which he refuses and ultimately exposes to the public as well as the secret plot in a televised talk show for he realised he was used as a scapegoat. As a result, the audience jumps on the money and riots ignited in the studio. Stanley Windrush was then taken to the court where he was found guilty of ‘public disturbance’ and was sent to his father, in a nudist colony where he was subject to the female residents’ interest.

Because of its satirical character, the film does not spare an effort in order to make ridicule of both the working class and the upper class just as equally, or almost equally.

It was a period of a growing membership in trade unions where the latter enjoyed a relative power. And, in parallel, the number of workers’ demands and strikes accordingly rocketed and, at the same time “The enhanced status of the unions after the war, their increased bargaining power and full employment all served to stimulate a rise in trade union membership throughout the 1950s” (Richards and Aldgate, 2002, P.174). This paved the way to the proliferation of rank-and-file membership, that is to say, trade unionists with a left-leaning militancy that would bargain more and more power from the hierarchies through their shop stewards (Richards and Aldgate, 2002). Throughout the film, there was an allusion that because of their black-mailing practices, the company seemed to be owned by the workers and not Tracepurcel.

*I’m Alright Jack* is certainly a product of its time, for British people then showed growing interest in industrial relations and the economic decline of Great Britain. The Unions were mistakenly held responsible for it (Howell, 2009). The shop steward, Mr. Kite, best illustrates this assumption. He calls workers not to work too hard and limit their efforts to the minimum; he also discourages workers from cooperating with the time and motion agent, and indirectly injects his political (communist) stance among them by pushing them to militate in their work place. Howell argues that the economic decline Britain was diving in should not be attributed to the Trade Unionists, for the decline started before that. In fact, he adds that their impeding

practices should be seen as a consequence rather than the cause because of the deteriorating working conditions back then (Howell, 2009).

The film was released many months after the coming of the Conservative Macmillan to power in the 1959 General Election. Prime Minister Macmillan negotiated ‘organised labour’ to quieten labour movements, a decision that “exacerbated right-wing suspicions [...] [and viewed it as] Communism domestic vanguard” (Pitchford, 2011, P. 96). The Boulting Brothers apparently shared this viewpoint with their release of *I’m Alright Jack* and their caricature of Mr. Kite.

Mr. Kite best encapsulates these kinds of figures in *I’m Alright Jack*. His discourse shows abundant use of militant jargon and politically correct phrases, which most of the time do not make any sense: “*is it or is not* your intention to sack this man?” or “*did you or did you\_not* in fact collaborate with the management?” it is funny to consider the redundant syntax of these yes/no questions; also the oxymoronic combination: “*quite* definitely, *quite* definitely, *a definite* breach of the existing agreement...” This reminds the audience of the famous George Orwell’s essay entitled “Politics and the English Language” in which he exposes his despise regarding opaque, superfluous discourse of politicians and what he coins “verbal false limbs” as those demonstrated above (Orwell, 1946, P.3). Indeed, according to Orwell, such a linguistic usage not only reflects incompetence, but it also hinders the understanding of the message. Talking about incompetence, Mr. Kite on several occasions proves to be inept.

Politically correct discourse is often attributed to leftists, mainly communists (Mooney et al., 2011) and Mr. Kite happens to be a strong supporter of Lenin and Marx. At several occurrences, he avoids revealing his commitment to communism pledging that “my political beliefs are a matter between my consciousness and the ballot box”. Obviously, he constitutes a threat to Establishment considering the Cold War Context and the issues of communist spying the West.

The Trade Unions engage in several malpractices that often cause many losses. In his first day of work, Windrush was asked not to move more than one crate at a time

and that he needs not work hard because they were paid on fixed bonus. There seems to be a common compromise between workers not to work any harder than the minimum required.

The trade unions are blamed for keeping some employees hired without them doing anything at all. When Stanley started moving crates with the forklift, he incidentally found a group of men playing cards and drinking beer. When he enquired about them, he was told they were “redundant” worker, the company wants to sack them but Mr. Kite’s Trade Union black mails them with a strike if they ever did. As a result they are obliged to keep them in scot-free.

The Trade Unions are also blamed for secondary picketing even if the ‘struggle’ is not really worth it. When Mr. Kite and the Missile Ltd. Employees went on strike for refusing to work properly, those of Cox did as well, as a way of “showing sympathy” to them. The film seems to downgrade the reasons workers might go on strikes into a trivial matter, indirectly leading the country into a national scale strike.

As stated before, the film does not attack the Trade Unionists solely, even the upper class, mainly the ruling one is blamed as well. The overprotected Stanley’s naive behaviour “rendered ridiculous such notable ‘English’ virtues as honesty and fair play” (Plain, 2006). Equally, the upper-class characters, mainly the two businessmen, Cox and Tracepurcel, are denounced as being corrupt and selfish by taking advantage of both Windrush and the workers in order to win a contract with an inflated price with the Middle Eastern representative

In fact, even the Government is unable or unwilling to intervene or restore order to the increasing tension between the involved factions. As he is about to enter 10, Downing Street, the Minister of Labour ironically confesses to the journalist that: “I see great principles at stake here, as ministry of labour, you can be sure that I shall act, you can also be sure that I will not interfere, that is with those great principles that are at stake”. This passage not only mocks politicians’ wooden yet bold language, but it also demonstrates the incapacity of the Government of the day to find a solution for that industrial crisis.

The only characters that seemed to oppose the strike were Mr. Kite's cockney wife and Windrush's aristocratic aunt, Dolly – women: “The only groups identified among protesters supporting the right to work are the British Housewives' League and the LEL<sup>46</sup>. This suggested that the Boulting Brothers knew exactly who was prepared to confront the unions when the Conservative government would not.” (Pitchford, 2011, P.96).

Along similar lines, the representation of women in the film confined them into very traditional roles as housewives and pictured them as being intellectually indifferent and limited:

*Mrs. Kite (Irene Handl) is pragmatic and does not agree with her husband's rigid and hypocritical politics [...] Their daughter, Cynthia (Liz Fraser), is a full-bosomed blonde in search of pleasure and has no interest in her father's tirades machinations. Aunt Dolly (Margaret Rutherford), Stanley's eccentric aunt, wants nothing more than for Stanley to do the right by his class and his upbringing (Landy, 2014, P. 385)*

However, they are not subject to satire like the other characters. All in all, this representation diverges with that of wartime films (cf. Chapter three).

There is also the interesting case of Mr. Mohamed. He is consistently referred to as “the black man” by both his fellow businessmen and the factory workers even if he has olive skin. This is an instance of racist discourse toward him; and what is more is that Mr. Mohammed has the archetypal representation of the ‘uncanny’ Other with his exaggerated accent, greediness as he snatches three cigars when no one else was watching, and dishonesty as he accepts to pretend he was a diplomat.

Even Mr. Kite makes use of scaremongering when he threatens the workers that soon they will be replaced with black men as those bus drivers of Manchester were they not ready to go on strike.

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<sup>46</sup> LEL stands for Lower Earnings Limit.



Taken together, and to sum it up, the decline of deference that prevailed in British cinema of the fifties might be explained by the fact that:

*The Macmillan-Gaitskell era [...] started with such a bitter falling [...] Britain's humiliation in the Suez crisis and the continuing suspicion of the British official lying (about the British-French-Israeli collusion) destroyed the legitimacy of the country's traditional rulership class - a defeat from which it never fully recovered. And this defeat also helped forward the beginnings of a more democratic, less deferential culture (Haseler, 2012, P. 40)*

*I'm Alright Jack's* satirical criticism towards both the Working Class and the Upper Class seems to go at odds with mainstream British cinema that used to avoid criticising the Establishment. As a matter of fact, there seemed to be a sort of tug of war between cinema made by Upper Class members and those of the Middle class. To echo Wheeler Dixon in his book, *Re-viewing British cinema, 1900-1992: essays and interviews*, the motive might have been that the coming of Labour Party to power and their implementation of the Welfare State<sup>47</sup>, and the sympathy of Macmillan towards the unions' rising prerogatives, and the upward social class mobility that resulted from the full employment and the affluent society that the Welfare State brought about, simply undermined the existing Middle Class interests "That great Victorian era invention, the middle class, had always affected to despise both these other classes, although remaining ready to allow the ruling class to rule and the working class to work as long as its own class position as 'the backbone of England' remained undisturbed" (Wheeler W. Dixon, 1994, P. 151).

Throughout this chapter, the study put under scrutiny two different films in terms of substance yet eventually convergent in purpose. The fifties went through sweeping changes and marked with Labour government, the rise of the Cold War, the loss of world dominion and the disintegrating Empire. Domestically and socially, affluent society started to prevail thanks to full employment.

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<sup>47</sup> Funnily referred to as "The farewell State" by Major Hitchcock.

British cinema of this period often screened palpable deference decrease, considerably diverging thus from their forties predecessors. From a classless and united society, film changed into anti-Establishment cinema taking the stake of the Working Class. The upper class seemed to have lost its 'diplomatic immunity' and became the target of a lot of criticism. A contextual analysis could bring some explanation of such a change in the sense that late forties and early fifties British cinema was at a crusade against Atlee's socialist government.

But then the second film analysed here came at odds with all of the others tackled previously in the sense that it attacked both the Working Classes and the Upper Class alike. Furthermore, it denounced the malpractices of these factions and exposed the harms it was doing to the national industry. It also criticised the Government failure to bring back order and improve industrial relations. Equally, there were many allusions to the danger of communism being infiltrated via unions. As discussed above, the motive was that there was an increasing fear of the Working Class getting more powerful than the Middle class which was stuck between the two.

Ownership, audience, common enemy, historical context, and so on, all of these elements shaped the way films were produced in the fifties. These very elements constitute the major concepts of the chose theoretical framework, and results discussed above follow similar trends with the theoretical assumptions of Cultural Hegemony and Propaganda model.

It is valuable to examine films that dealt with other themes but domestic issues, such as the issue of the Cold War and Britain. Indeed, despite the fact that the literature dealing with this topic is noticeably meagre, it might help broaden the results and strengthen them. Cases like *A Hill in Korea* (1956) for instance demonstrate that Cold War British cinema was centrifugal to the British people and the effect of wars on them. Because of the lack of space and sources, this film was not included in this chapter.

# CONCLUSION

Here comes our research journey into a full circle, it is now worthwhile to go throughout what this work has put forward and have a bird-eye view regarding the different points tackled above. Before drawing our conclusion, few considerations have to be mentioned. At the time of writing, one major and unprecedented event marked the Cannes 2016 festival. Ken Loach, the fervent leftist and the pillar of New Wave movement, who accumulated more than fifty years of career, and who militated for the social wellbeing through his Welfare State/social-realist drama with his oeuvres has won the Palme d'Or for his strongly critical, Orwellian, and dignified film *I, Daniel Blake* to the surprise or shock of many. The point is that, Ken Loach who has always opposed the dominant ideology was finally granted a tribute he deserves after years of his works being swept under the rug.

I have decided to mention this important detail as this thesis examined Cinema of the dominant ideology. It may be sensible to, say, compare this study with his works that especially date back to the sixties and seventies and enlarge the perspective in this concern. Going back to our study, below, is a general summary of the points raised in the preceding chapters.

This dissertation has basically attempted to explore the still undiscovered merit of British cinema on the one hand, and at introducing new insights regarding British Studies, more specifically 20<sup>th</sup> C British history and culture, on the other by examining its filmic productions. It aimed at considering the extent to which films could prove to be a solid tool of ideological manipulation of the audience by focusing on several elements such as film producers, recurrent themes, the audience's category, as well as cinematography.

After considerations brought to the existing body of the literature in this respect, I have come up with three main research questions. These central questions, let us not forget, revolved around the existing relation between film producers/directors, the content of films, and the different manipulation/persuasion techniques performed in order to convey certain hidden messages. Put simply, it has endeavoured to explore

the efficiency of these in representing certain social or political groups in such or such a way, and more importantly, what are the principal purposes behind it.

The initial hypothesis argued that, most of the time, films sought to serve the right-wing ideology, promote the Establishment, and maintain the status quo while still upholding its original entertaining function, mostly targeting a working-class audience.

Throughout the work, two main theoretical frameworks were followed. The first one concerns itself with the Gramscian perspective and the second one the Chomskyian propaganda model, both of which belong to the Marxian perspective. Gramsci's perspective stipulates that the upper class, because of them holding capital, can control the lower classes through cultural hegemony, which is intimately linked to the Marxist base/superstructure ideology. In this respect, it swears its alliance to action theory because it claims to erase false consciousness and raise awareness of the top-down manipulation. As for the propaganda model, it basically advances that media (hidden) agenda is usually fabricated following a framework that must be religiously applied. The framework is a set of five filters<sup>48</sup> which are: media ownership, audience, sourcing, advertisements, FLAK, and anti-communism/war on terrorism.

It is under the light of the aforementioned theoretical background that we analysed the films. The films themselves have been selected following purposive sampling and are diversified in terms of genre. The study is diachronic and synchronic in nature, covering a period of thirty year time lapse.

To summarise the content of this dissertation, let us trace its structure. The first chapter tackles three different points. Firstly, it provides the readers with a brief account of the above mentioned critical theories, the lens from which this study has looked at films. Then, the second section enables the readers to familiarise themselves with the historical context of this study that extended from the thirties up

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<sup>48</sup> See Herman and Chomsky's work

to the fifties in order for them to better understand the analysis. It has reviewed the prominent historical landmark that ranged from the Great depression, to the Cold war going through the Second World War, the landslide victory of the Labour Party of 1945 as well as the implementation of the Welfare State, the Post-war Consensus, and the disintegration of the British Empire.

Finally, it has presented British cinema milestones throughout the three decades. In this last section, we have first learnt that British cinema was subject to a strong international competition which led the authorities to issue protectionist measures to levy the American ‘invasion’ of the silver screen. The Cinematograph Film Act gave rise to a cobra effect because of the apparition of what has come to be known as ‘Quota Quickies’. Secondly, we have seen how the government intervened with the production and the circulation of films whether directly, on their demand, or indirectly through the B.B.F.C which acted like a watchdog. It basically ensured that films should not bear a critical perspective toward any element of the Establishment, nor does it undermine moral values for instance. The last subsection tackled the then existing, chief film studios and their owners. This chapter has attempted all in all to get us acquainted with the general facts that help us broaden our understanding of the following points.

The second chapter, it has revealed the common trends that marked British cinema in the thirties. It first explores the apparition of direct party propaganda. It has showcased the relentless efforts of the Conservative Party in influencing and shaping the workers’ opinions to embrace the right-wing ideology using cinema vans after the growing popularity of socialism, the total enfranchisement of the masses, and the creeping of communism throughout the world. The Conservatives opted for this approach, because working-class voters found politics difficult to understand and this put them off attending formal party conferences. Labour, on the other hand, overlooked the effectiveness of cinema vans, however, missing thus the opportunity to gain potential voters. However, Cinema vans’ popularity gradually declined by the late thirties, ceding the way to a more subtle form of propaganda – features.

Thematically speaking, trends also comprised the co-existence of two major opposing cinematic movements. In the second section of chapter two, we have pointed at the proliferation of the escapist movement, and found out that the most important reason for its popularity was the deteriorating life conditions during the hungry thirties and the psychological need for people to unwind a little bit.

The case studied was a historical film, more specifically a biopic, the controversial yet popular Korda's comedy *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933). Results demonstrate striking historical inaccuracies. While it must be conceded that Henry VIII's representation was, the least one could say, a lampoon with his buffoon-like manners, other historical facts were either curtailed, such as his first marriage, the reasons behind his divorce with Ann Boleyn, or distorted, like when he annulled his marriage with his Anne of Cleve. The film made ridicule of him with his odd behaviour and familiar relations with his subjects in an attempt to make him look like one of the 'us' faction and gain the audience's sympathy. The historical distortion served to shadow the not-that-brilliant aspect of the Monarch's life. The close reading of the film also entailed Labour Party policies' criticism such as taxation and equally echoed Churchill's call for rearmament.

The second movement that was pinpointed in chapter two was the social-realist one. The film *Love on the Dole* (1936-41) put into the foreground topical Working Class problems such as extreme poverty, joblessness, or the unfair Means Test introduced by the Conservatives during the recession. Equally, that the protagonist gave up her moral values to survive the deterioration living conditions was judged as being extremely immoral by the BBFC, and cost the film the Board's veto for many years. Censorship was lifted only when the threat of the hungry thirties faded away by 1941, and was then released to serve the Government aim at reminding the people, in a way, what they are fighting for even though it pictured working-class people as victim of a corrupt system which is ruled by the upper class and promoting strong left-wing stances at times.

Now, taking into consideration the tailoring process of historical facts, censorship, and the lampooning of monarchs and under the chosen framework reading, one can draw the conclusions that our results are consistent with the theoretical standpoints, notably the cultural hegemony and the media filters.

Moving to the third chapter, because of the wartime context, films of the forties switched their focus from celebrities to ordinary people. Results show that the sudden change held the hope of getting the audience which mainly belongs the Working Class, to believe in the war and the just cause of Britain. The analysis of two famous war films, *In Which We Serve* (1943) and *Went the Day Well?* (1942) generated the following conclusions.

First, with the direct intervention of the Ministry of Information, studios were asked to produce films that (1) appeal to nationalism, union, and common people's heroism. (2) Consequently, class relations that had always structured the British society were de-emphasized, (3) women's social role and place was revisited into roles that which dominates the public sphere rather than the traditional private one. In *In Which We Serve*, Manichaeism was put away, and the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy seemed to have let the way to a strong feeling of togetherness reinforced with nationalist drives. For that, the film put much emphasis on ordinary people and their ordinary lives and their friendly relations with the hierarchy. The findings showed that the reason was to uplift the morale by giving a gilded image of commoners and their timely contribution in the war through hard-work and self-sacrifice.

*Went the Day Well?* On the other hand, came up with a different approach. It first demonized the enemy and reinforced stereotypes about the German people. In addition, it gave women a brand new social role, a modern one. Away from the patriarchal norms, they were attributed the role of the Guardian of the Home Front convince people into supporting the Government's decision to embark in another and were directly involved in fighting the Nazi invasion, a role that was hitherto forbidden by law reinforcement. However novel and liberal this representation might



be, the conservative drive crept into the screen as it also reinforced women's stereotypes such as gossiping.

Notwithstanding the above considerations, one must to acknowledge the fact that this striking thematic transfer should not be confused with an ideological change. Indeed, research has shown above that these themes lasted as long as the war did and faded away right after.

Put simply, and following the framework of this study, there seem to be no compelling reason not to argue that wartime films sought to blur ideological discrepancies and helped maintain the status quo and consensus, the evidence is that the same films often failed to be consistent within their leftwing ideology as they sometimes presented some contradictions.

The fourth and last chapter has examined two films from the fifties with special regard to deference. The first one, *The Happy Family* (1952) portrayed government relation with the people. If the thirties and forties were marked by glorifying the ruling class and hazing the class-based society respectively, this film came to destroy the precedent representation by depicting unconcealed decline of deference of the Working Class vis-à-vis the state. Furthermore, the historical data allowed us to conclude that if the ruling class seem to have fallen foul of their privileged image they enjoyed before. It was because the then government of the day was the Labour Party. In many instances, the film's hidden agenda indirectly criticized Atlee's program of erecting a costly Festival of Britain amidst severe post-war economic austerity. The film also pictured Labour Civil Servants as being uncanny. And most importantly, there was a growing fear of them gaining more and more sympathy with the Welfare program. Socialism kills the entrepreneur spirit, so, there was a need for producers to strike back and to promote Victorian values that the Lords succeeded in achieving.

At the surface of it, the film seemed to be pro-commoners and Working Class; however, just like *Went the Day Well*, there were again some ideological contradictions that betrayed the original right-winged standpoint.

In the second section, this chapter went to put under scrutiny the last film of our research – *I'm Alright Jack* (1959). The much critically acclaimed film is marked by its relative aesthetic development. Also, its openly satirical representation of relations aimed at throwing a cynical look the political and social aspects of the British history. The film was produced amidst increasing Trade Union prerogatives and the way they were projected was clearly under a critical viewpoint.

Strong anti-communist resentment as well as bitterness against demanding strikers was put under the lime light. The Trade Union proved to be not as much caring for the workers' rights as for their efficiency like the case of redundant workers. While it is true that the film was a sort of double edged sword in the sense that it attacked the upper class and the working class alike, the close reading of the film demonstrated the genuine end was more than just another attempt to criticise the Unions or the capitalists greed. The ideological stance is conveyed through middle class perspective, because the latter felt that they have been sandwiched between the two more and more powerful strata.

Returning to the hypothesis/question posed at the beginning of this research, it is now possible to state that, yes, cinematic productions are directly ideologically affected by their producers and other external factors such as the state's interference or their historical context. There are a plethora of manipulation techniques through which this influence such as omission, appeal to pathos or nationalism.

These findings come to confirm the theoretical assumptions that hold the fact that capital generate cultural hegemony in the sense that the concentration of media ownership amongst the upper classes serves as a non-negligible tool of massive manipulation.

The propaganda model is also relevant here with its five filters. The ownership played a role in conveying in an unflinching manner right wing tendencies. The audience also was taken into consideration; the content of media is tailored in a way that appeals to its specific demographics as was the case with escapism. The sourcing of some scenarios was directly recommended from figures that had nothing to do with cinema, notably political ones such as Churchill or the Ministry of Information, which again considerably helps achieving propaganda. The FLAK filter was also steadily followed as in the case of the BBFC's interference and censorship. Shocking and jeopardizing topics that may threaten the status quo were time after time discarded.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that there was a considerable thematic shift: from escapist cinema, to social realism, to reassurance cinema, to resistant cinema, and finally to satirical cinema. Taken together, it might appear to us that there was genuine standpoint evolution; nevertheless, if we scratch a little bit deeper, this evolution is but superficial as the dominant ideology did not change whatsoever and project the privileged class ideas solely as Gramsci reminds us in his works. The bottom line is this: the ideological manipulation was again and again a top-down approach and never bottom-up, in other words, it emerged from the Upper Class and it directly targeted the Worker Class with the aim to sustain the *status quo* and the existing power relations.

Alternatively, and with hindsight, although the current study is based on a small sample of films (six in total), it nevertheless demonstrated a certain evolution in some respects such as the use of more authentic accents rather than the Non Regional Pronunciation when necessary, or the introduction of the media in films as an active role in films of the fifties, or the moral lenience expressed toward the fifties compared to the rigid thirties. This evidence shows in a way that conservative thoughts were slowly traded with more permissive ones with the little help of the popular culture movement, which were more apparent in the sixties of the last century.

Additionally, the analysis of the aforementioned films undertaken here has extended our knowledge of British cinema in general and British culture in particular. Above all, it enabled us to look at British civilisation through a different perspective. The research could be said of being eye-opening because it discussed the way media can influence and persuade their audience.

Now that our study journey comes to an end, it is important, at this stage, to examine the possible recommendation for further, research. It would be interesting to conduct the same study under the light of different theoretical assumptions, particularly those that tackle the issue of gender or race, say, feminism or post-colonialism and compare the results with this panoramic study, sealing thus the ‘tripartite’ that constitutes the essence of Cultural Studies: class, gender, and race.

Another noteworthy recommendation is to compare these results with other materials such as radio talks, posters, and press releases and so on and so forth. Equally, more interesting results could be drawn if this study is also compared with the Hollywood industry or, why not, the Soviet cinema and asses the synthesis that would emerge from the three of them.

Lastly, examining British civilisation through cinema is an unquestionably fruitful area of research, and for this reason, it is highly advisable for future works to be conducted in this discipline in our department.

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*In Which We Serve*. (1942), 115mns, dir. Noël Coward and David Lean, producer: Noël Coward, script: Noël Coward, starring: Noël Coward, John Mills, Bernard Miles, and Celia Johnson, distributed by: British Lion Film (UK).

*Love on the Dole* (1936-41), 94 mns, dir. John Baxter, produced by John Baxter, based on Greenwood's novel, starring: Deborah Kerr, and Clifford Evans, distributed by Anglo-American Film Corporation (UK).

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*The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), 97 mns, dir. Alexander Korda, produced by Alexander Korda and Ludvico Toeplitz, script: Lajos Biro, starring: Charles Laughton and Merle Oberon, distributed by United Artists.

*Went the Day well?* (1942), 92 mns, dir. Cavalcanti, produced by Michael Balcon, based on the story of Graham Greene, starring: Leslie Banks, Mervyn Johns, Basil Sydney, C.V. France, Valerie Taylor, Thora Hird, and David Farrar, distributed by Ealing Studios.

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## **Le résumé :**

Avec la montée en puissance de l'influence des médias en général, et du cinéma en particulier, dans la vie quotidienne, cette thèse a tenté d'examiner la façon par laquelle le public serait idéologiquement manipulé par les films. Cette recherche est importante, car peu d'attention a été accordé à la manière dont le cinéma britannique servait à véhiculer une idéologie de droite à des fins politiques et ce pendant une période de temps relativement plus longue, tout particulièrement celles qui ont été marquées par des événements historiques fondamentaux.

Grâce à une étude textuelle et contextuelle, c'est-à-dire, une analyse qui se penche aussi bien sur le contenu que sur les circonstances concomitantes, ce travail a abordé ce sujet tant synchroniquement que diachroniquement en examinant six films délibérément échantillonnés. Etant donné que cette recherche est basée sur l'approche historiciste ainsi que les *Cultural Studies*, deux théories critiques appartenant à la tradition Marxiste ont été appliquées : l'hégémonie culturelle gramscienne ainsi que le modèle de propagande d'Herman et Chomsky. L'étude couvre une période de trois décennies qui comprend les années trente, quarante, et cinquante.

Les résultats sont en cohérence avec l'hypothèse mentionnée ci-dessus. Les conclusions tirées des données ont démontré que bien qu'il y ait un certain changement thématique qui pourrait faire croire à un éventuel changement idéologique, ce dernier n'est que superficielle et reste fortement droitiste dans le fond. Cela nous conduit à penser que cette tendance n'est qu'un outil de manipulation idéologique de la classe ouvrière le but de maintenir le statu quo déjà existant. En ce sens-là, même les hypothèses théoriques utilisées sont, à leurs tours, confirmées.

## الملخص

مع الارتفاع المحسوس لقوة وسائل الإعلام عامة و السينما خاصة على التأثير على الجمهور و حضورهما الدائم في الحياة اليومية، لقد حاولت هذه الأطروحة معالجة الطرق التي من خلالها يتم التلاعب الإيديولوجي للجمهور عبر الأفلام. هذا البحث مهم للغاية لأنه لم يتم إيلاء اهتمام كاف للبحث الإيديولوجي لغايات سياسية في السينما لفترة زمنية طويلة نسبيا، و خاصة تلك التي أصدرت وسط أحداث تاريخية محورية.

من خلال دراسة نصية و سياقية، يعني تحليل قائم على المحتوى و التاريخ، تطرق هذا العمل المسألة على مستوى متزامن و زمني من خلال دراسة ستة أفلام كعينات هادفة. إنها دراسة نوعية و تعتمد على التاريخ و الدراسات الثقافية كمقاربات، بنالي، يتكون الإطار النظري الذي تم تطبيقه من نظريتين نقديتين كلاهما تنتميان إلى المذهب الماركسي: الهيمنة الثقافية الفرماشية و النموذج الدعائي لهرمان و تشومسكي. التقرير يغطي نطاق ثلاثين سنة و الذي يضم الثلاثينيات، الأربعينيات و الخمسينيات.

كانت النتائج متسقة مع الفرضية المذكورة آنفا. وتشير النتائج إلى أن تلك الأفلام أكدت أن التحول الموضوعي البادي عبر الوقت ما هو إلا سطحي في حين أنهم واصلوا في إبداء ميل وضح تجاه الإيديولوجية المتحفة اليمينية بطريقة غير مباشرة، مما يؤدي بنا إلى الاعتقاد أن التلاعب الإيديولوجي يتم من الطبقة الحاكمة إلى الطبقة العاملة بهدف الحفاظ على الوضع الراهن. و بهذا، تم تأكيد الفرضيات النظرية كذلك.