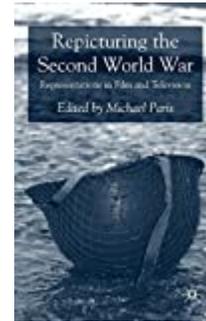**Michael Paris, ed.** *Repicturing the Second World War: Representations in Film and Television.* Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. x + 234 pp. $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-230-00257-9.

Reviewed by Wallace Eberhard (Journalism Department, University of Georgia)

The Film World and the Greatest Generation: The War That Never Ends

There is nothing unnatural about worldwide interest in a war that circled the globe and spanned six years, or, perhaps, a bit more if you consider the run-ups in China and other places. I grew up watching the Second World War in fiction films and in the newsreels in my dad's movie house in Niles, Michigan. The war touched–or punched–everyone. Our town lost a young soldier in the first few days. My big brother was sergeant of the guard for his unit on Oahu on December 7. Our dad stopped the Sunday matinee to report the Pearl Harbor attack, giving everyone a chance to leave with a rain check in hand. A telegram arrived two weeks later with the good news that his son was alive and well.

A torrent of war films followed shortly thereafter and has not stopped since. Since the war's end, there has been a parallel outpouring of popular and scholarly analysis in the realm of print. I am a cheerleader for Rick Atkinson's trilogy on the U.S. Army fighting its way from North Africa to the banks of the Elbe. Two of the three volumes are in print, a readable tribute to and critical analysis of those who directed and fought the war.

While Atkinson has a broad canvas of two-inch thick volumes with which to work, filmmakers bring us the war–or a slice of it–in two hours, give or take. The world's appetite for World War II films seems insatiable. New presentations are soon enough found on this or that cable channel or in reruns. On a recent weekend, for instance, I consumed all or parts of (or switched back and forth among) *Das Boot* (1981), *Letters from Iwo Jima* (2006), *Three Came Home* (1950), *The Pianist* (2002), and *The Longest Day* (1962), which is always showing somewhere.

Repicturing the Second World War is a collection of research essays, pulled together and edited by Michael Paris, a professor of modern history at the University of Central Lancashire. The war and popular culture are his primary research interests, and he has a solid record of writing about both print and film in wartime. Fourteen essays (one by Paris) plus an introduction by Paris comprise the book. Three authors are American scholars; most of the remaining are British, with a smattering of French writers. Without Paris's introductory essay, getting a grasp of the other contributions would be more difficult; most of us would be wandering in the filmic

wilderness. Paris's introduction gives a broader context to what follows; without it, the book is on less certain ground. Each chapter is enlightening but by nature isolationist in character. We hopscotch from one country or one film to another in some cases. Paris does not claim that he has edited *the* definitive research collection on changing views of the war through the camera's lens, but his book covers the essentials. His opening essay unifies sometimes disparate, though significant, writings. Like the world of history in print, the filmmaker's vision, viewpoint, standards, and perceptions of wartime realities have changed since the Germans surrendered around a conference table in Europe and the Japanese did the same on the deck of an aircraft carrier in the Pacific.

Many factors have kindled and rekindled filmmakers' changing visions of the war–the passage of time; the opening of archives; the anniversaries of such pivotal events as Pearl Harbor or the invasions on European soil and Pacific islands; and public admission of collaboration under the German rule and civil wrongdoing in the name of wartime security, as in the relocation of practically everyone of Japanese ancestry to miserable camps in the American West. In short, Paris notes, "In the years since 1945 the ways in which successive filmmakers have reinterpreted the war experience has not remained constant, for after 1945 the war was re-pictured from time to time as social and political attitudes changed" (p. 3). Added to that was the freeing up of film industries in occupied countries that were either heavily controlled (France) or enlisted 100 percent for national propaganda (Germany). And, in the Allied nations, filmmakers joined the war effort to bolster war morale, support those in uniform, and provide home front relief from worry and long days on the assembly lines. Those working in television, Paris reminds us, have had the problem of squeezing the panorama of battle to small-screen dimensions. But, in productions that serialized the experience of men at war, as in *Band of Brothers* (2001), there is an advantage of building character within the plot written by the war itself over many segments. And, there is the problem of national identity. Most citizens of the United States are familiar with the war films produced by the American film industry or starring Americans. Unless we seek out the work of European or Asian artists, we miss the introspection they offer and the international scope of the war. The insights of European scholars have renewed our personal interest in the World War II experience. Thanks to film services like Netflix, it is possible for us to embark on our own reappraisal of the many films named and described.

James Chapman of the University of Leicester provides context on *Foyle's War* (2001-8), a British series that has also made its way to Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Foyle is a British detective, a World War I veteran. But his detecting is done during the difficult wartime period when the United Kingdom stood nearly alone against the German onslaught. His investigations as a civil officer often take him into the world of the military and intelligence communities. Not so surprising, officials in these communities do not always get everything right, and often are reluctant to cooperate with a meddling, middle-aged investigator. And, even the typical Brit is not found to be entirely patriotic, embarking on pilfering from bombed out houses and otherwise acting badly. Thus, the traditional detective novel is set in a period where national survival is at stake.

Diane Afournado, a former professor at the University of Paris X, explores the subthemes woven into *Safe Conduct* (2002), a tale of survival under German occupation. That survival moved in many forms: maintaining a normal life under Nazi rule without capitulating and kowtowing to the occupiers, collaborating to ensure a better life, or acting normal while doing everything possible to offer resistance. Added to the mix was the lingering embarrassment in the failure of the French Army to present a more serious defense against German invaders. Afournado offers a lucid analysis of the period as background to the film.

An American film that escaped me entirely is also included in this collection. The American mistake of relocating Japanese Americans to rudimentary living behind barbed wire was personalized in *Come See the Paradise* (1990). Director Alan Parker uses the prewar marriage of an American of Japanese descent to an Irish American union organizer–played by Dennis Quaid–as the vehicle. Paris's essay notes that this film was the first to recount this sad episode. Although one or two other films, including *Go for Broke* (1951), about a famous Nisei infantry unit, tried to make amends by chronicling the heroism of Japanese Americans in uniform, the film industry had not given voice to the essential error. (Japanese who immigrated to other countries were known as Issei. Children born in their new country were known as Nisei.) Not many Americans objected at the time, though Paris recalls a letter written by Dwight D. Eisenhower, then beginning his climb to leadership in the army, to Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard in April 1942: " 'I feel most strongly that when the war is over ... we as Americans are going to regret the avoidable injustices that may have been done' " (p. 109). The film was well reviewed

but little watched, for whatever reason.

Although each essay takes off in its own direction, as a group, they begin to organize critical thinking about changing approaches to visualizing World War II. Those of us who spend time writing history–or small parts of it–know well the role of film in molding public perceptions. Film's version of historical reality is more likely to mold public understanding of reality than that version set in ink on paper. This is a book worth reading, though I advise you to recommend it to your university library for checking out. With a price tag of eighty-five dollars, the publisher has priced it well out of the reach of most potential readers. Did it really cost that much to publish this kind of scholarly monograph?

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