



The Silence of the Somme

Sound and Realism in British and Dutch Poems Mediating *The Battle of the Somme*¹

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Abstract: The place occupied in cultural memory by the First World War is chiefly determined by a handful of mainly English-speaking poems which portray the conflict as a senseless slaughter. During the war itself, opinion was strongly influenced by a film made for the propaganda arm of the British war effort: *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), which managed to elicit quite varying reactions. The violence of war had never before been brought into focus so sharply, yet the interpretations of this mediated reality were varied. Three poets wrote about, what of necessity, remained absent from this silent film: the noise of industrial warfare (imitated in some performances by live musicians) and the voice of the individual soldier. Jingoist Henry Newbolt saw the film as an ode to sacrifice, while his compatriot and Somme veteran C.H.B. Kitchin was chiefly struck by the fact that so many soldiers only lived on on celluloid. In neutral Holland Jacobus van Looy was confronted with his own search for excitement and half-hearted humanity.

Keywords: First World War Poetry, *The Battle of the Somme*, Henry Newbolt, Jacobus van Looy, C.H.B. Kitchin, Mediation, Sound of Silent Films

Salvo after salvo; crash after crash; and in the rare moments of stillness, in this nerve-shattering prelude to the Great Push, I could hear the sweet warblings of a lark as it rose higher and higher in the murky, misty sky.

Geoffrey Malins, director of *The Battle of the Somme*²

In the many studies from the last decades on poetry from the Great War, it is the combat poetry written by soldier poets that constitutes the central theme.³ As for the body of poetry written by those who stayed at home, it is mainly the female authors who have received attention.⁴ Anthologists and researchers automatically steer those who want to get to know what people 'really' experienced, thought [6] and felt during the war towards these two categories of poets. This article focuses on three very different poets who reacted in an age-old medium to the representation of war in a new medium which claimed authenticity and realism in a different way. The popular, even jingoistic, British poet Henry Newbolt, the Dutch and officially neutral painter-writer Jacobus van Looy, and the anti-war British soldier poet C.H.B. Kitchin all wrote about the famous war documentary *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), whether as a lyrical evocation of it or commentaries. Even though the poets were well aware that they were dealing

with an artistically mediated and explicitly framed 'reality', the British propaganda film did not fail to elicit strong emotional responses, however varied. In this respect, partly by being sensitive to the acoustic experience of this silent film, the poets seem especially attentive to what the film cannot or will not show.

Revising the Myth & the Poetry

Ever since the publication in 1975 of Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* it has become a commonplace, certainly in the Anglo-American world, to claim that the Great War has been mediated above all through literature. What Fussell had in mind here was not only the poems and memoirs in which the war was described and remembered, but more specifically the way this World War One literature (its literary procedures, particularly the use of irony) lastingly shaped both the experience and its remembrance.⁵ The uninterrupted stream of popular anthologies, academic studies and documentaries about the generation of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon reinforces the popular idea that the Great War in all its inexplicable futility can best be summarized the way Blackadder did so memorably in the BBC comedy *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989): 'the mud, the blood, the *endless* poetry'.⁶

In recent years revisionist historians have strongly criticized this literary approach to the Great War and the remembrance of it. Gary Sheffield for one, pointed out that literary reactions to the war were not only unrepresentative but also quite divorced from the complex (military-) historical reality.⁷ Particularly the presumed futility of the conflict did not square with the way most contemporaries experienced the tragedy. The countercultural movements of the 1960s and the traumas of Vietnam seem more defining of received popular opinion than the feelings and experiences of most soldiers and citizens from the first decades of the twentieth century, for whom 'honour', 'loyalty' and 'sacrifice' were certainly not empty phrases – the killing fields of Verdun, Ypres and the Somme notwithstanding. This criticism is not unfounded and is moreover substantiated by literary sources that have not, or have barely been canonized. From the 1980s on there have been various anthologies such as *Never Such Innocence*, *The Voices of Silence* (with the telling subtitle *The Alternative Book of First World War Poetry*) and *The Winter of the World*, in which the clichéd view of WWI poetry is more nuanced and even [7] radically altered.⁸ In *A War Imagined* (1990), Samuel Hynes analyzed the manner in which this 'Myth of the War' so contested by the revisionists could have emerged and what role not only poetry, but prose, painting, sculpture, and film could have played in it.⁹

A Comparative Approach

Indeed, the picture of the war becomes more nuanced when other art forms help sharpen the focus, and this is all the more true when continental European contributions are added to the British one, whether from engaged or neutral countries. For this shows that, despite the enormous losses on the Isonzo front, the Italian elite (whether followers of the symbolist 'master' D'Annunzio or the futurist iconoclast Marinetti) remained keen to fight to the bitter end. It shows that poets dreaming of their own nation, from Ireland to Estonia and from Flanders to Slovakia, only condemned the war insofar as they abhorred fighting for foreign masters. It shows that the well-worn British trajectory, which runs from the belligerent Rupert Brooke in 1914 to the protesting Sassoon and the merciful Owen to Isaac Rosenberg dreaming of change,¹⁰ absolutely does not apply to the rest of Europe. On the continent we find pacifists

in 1914 and revolutionary warmongers in 1919.¹¹ Admittedly, Anglo-American criticism of the last years has broken open the canon and studied 'ephemeral writings' and various memorial cultures alongside female authors.¹² Despite this, the comparative approach often championed by Jay Winters has not yet found an echo outside of his own work.¹³ The emphasis is still firmly placed on Anglo-Saxon perspectives and when other views are put forward they are merely juxtaposed. A truly interpretative comparison is hardly ever made.¹⁴ Apart from the national (and even occasionally nationalistic) research cultures, it is no doubt the paucity of translations with respect to primary sources that has hindered researchers. It is noticeable that comparative research has had more success recently in the domain of WWI music, (avant-garde) art and film.¹⁵

The Realism of War Films

This last genre especially has, increasingly in the twentieth century, been the mediator of experiences and views on war. In this context, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is often cited as the first milestone.¹⁶ Films such as *The Longest Day* (1962), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Das Boot* (1981), *Platoon* (1986), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *Letters From Iwo Jima* (2006) were to profoundly influence perceptions of the Second World War and Vietnam later on. As far as WWI is concerned, two battle scenes from two completely different films have acquired iconic status. Even today they surface in documentaries, and the 'stills' from them are used as often on book covers as the well-known war paintings of Paul Nash, [8] C.R.W. Nevinson or Wyndham Lewis.¹⁷ The first battle scene, from the Oscar-winning *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) by Lewis Milestone, no doubt borrowed some of its horrific scenes from King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925), but it was the added soundtrack that made all the difference. For the first time [it] 'transformed the movie theatre into a battlefield; spectators were overwhelmed by the gun shots, the rattling of machine-guns and the whistling of bullets', as Pierre Sorlin put it.¹⁸ Although this 'realistic' soundtrack was obviously lacking in the official British propaganda documentary, *The Battle of the Somme* of 1916, this film's impact was not any less significant.¹⁹ In 2005 it was taken up into UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, the first such British document, and a recent official echo of the overwhelming success of the film during the war itself. More than 20 million Britons saw it in the first two weeks after its premiere on 10 August 1916, and eventually more than half the British population was to see it.²⁰ Recommendations from both Lloyd George as Secretary of State for War and the King were the ultimate inducement and consecration. In other allied and neutral states, too, the film was a great success.²¹

The documentary film *The Battle of the Somme* shows the preparations for and the first shots of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916.²² It was the very first time that a war was brought into view so close-up: from the unseen artillery fire, the huge explosions and the resulting craters, the thousand bombs and grenades carried in and fired by the troops, sometimes provided with a friendly message (specially for the camera?) for the enemy, the soldiers crawling from their trenches, going *over the top*, and some being cut down immediately, to the large groups of German prisoners of war being carried off, some British wounded soldiers being cared for, and – something rarely repeated in a propaganda film – images of twisted and mangled corpses, British included.

Though it has since been shown that some of the most famous scenes were staged in a training camp behind the front,²³ *The Battle of the Somme* remains the most detailed and

authentic of all WWI documentaries. It seemed like the ‘real deal’ and it was received as such. The specialist magazine *Bioscope* concluded that ‘no other medium was more able to convey to the man at home the reality of modern warfare’²⁴ and the *Daily Express*, too, emphasized that ‘for sheer realism, there has perhaps never been anything to excel this wonderful film’.²⁵ In neutral Netherlands, too, the authenticity of the film was praised. It showed ‘reality’ according to the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, and *De Telegraaf* found the offensive ‘disturbing in its reality’.²⁶ Only a few soldiers with experience of the front voiced their reservations. Raymond Asquith, son of the then British premier, saw the film on the Somme on 7 September 1916, a week before he himself was killed. It all seemed staged to him, even though he noted that some scenes were ‘amazingly like what happens’.²⁷ The poet John Masefield saw the film in a military hospital in France and wasn’t entirely convinced by the frontline scenes either, but ‘in their general ruin and waste they were like the real thing’.²⁸ [9]

Watching *The Battle of the Somme* today in the restored edition of the Imperial War Museum (2008), realism is not the first aspect that springs to mind. Black and white has a distancing effect, just like the somewhat staccato rhythm of the image sequences so typical of early films, and the absence of sound. This held no problem for the contemporary viewer for whom this form of cinema was state of the art and the ruling codes of reality, which were very much determined by black and white photography, were not transgressed by this film.²⁹

The Sound of War in a Silent Film

It is in fact not necessary to experience the film as silent. Apart from the soundtrack specially composed for this edition by Laura Rossi, the DVD also offers the unique opportunity to choose as an accompanying soundtrack the musical medley compiled by J. Morton Hutcheson for the above-mentioned magazine *The Bioscope* on 17 August 1916, four days before the film’s general release.³⁰ Film programmers of the British Empire used this cue sheet and let their own orchestras – or just pianists in humbler establishments – study in the medley of light classics, contemporary hits and military marches, or, if money and time were an object, play them from the score or from memory.

One cannot really get any closer than this to a reconstruction of an ‘authentic’ contemporary performance. For present-day viewers it is an extraordinary and almost unsettling experience, as the dramatics of what we hear are so out of step with what we see. Today we are conditioned to expect films to provide both synchronized music and a real sound that is seamless with the action, neither of which are the case here. The tempi of the medley of 1916 have little or nothing in common with the rhythm of the montage. This anachronistic feeling is only strengthened by the present-day view of the Great Push – one of the most senseless massacres in history, or as Fussell called it ‘the Great Fuck Up’³¹, – which is utterly at odds with the triumphalism and ‘pomp’ of most of the suggested soundtrack. One could call this historical irony (‘O, if only the public of 1916 knew what we know now’) but it seems more correct to say that we know too much today to be able to experience this film like its original audience did. The ‘myth’ of the war (cf. supra) influences our perception.

Hutcheson’s chosen music was not seen as problematic in its day as far as we can tell. The reviewer of the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, for example, praised the ‘[f]itting marches, national airs and solemn melodies’.³² If one views the battle of the Somme not automatically, as we do today, as a Great Catastrophe, but rather, as was customary within the ruling *culture de guerre*, as the potentially pivotal moment in modern history – the clash, therefore, between two armies

representing two mutually exclusive views of civilization – one would certainly not think that expressions of musical patriotism and fighting spirit were inappropriate.³³ Furthermore, if one takes into account, above all, the fact that screenings of [10] that time were not held in the almost sacred silent space of the art house cinema, but were an integral part of an entertainment industry with very different ideas of decorum from those we expect today,³⁴ one will be even less surprised to find that a film screening could so seamlessly turn into a propaganda exercise. Occasionally Hutcheson made suggestions that added an extra symbolic charge. When a Scottish, kilt-wearing regiment marched past, he thought it fitting to opt for ‘The Wee MacGregor (Highland Patrol)’ march from 1905. When at the end of Part 4 German soldiers are being buried, he thought the aria ‘O rest in the Lord’ the most apt, the sacred aspect being emphasized by choice of instrument (‘played as organ or violin solo’). A more explicitly mimetic example is in Part 2 in a scene in which impressive mine explosions are shown (caption 29). Hutcheson made a very specific suggestion for this: ‘if drums of tymps are available they only should be used, starting a quiet roll [...] finishing with a crash and roll at explosion. If no drums in orchestra let this scene be viewed in silence’.³⁵ In this way the scene acquired the allure of a circus act in which the tension is brought to a climax, whether through an increasing drum roll or icy silence. It was also a rare occasion where an attempt was made to mimic the sound of the actual facts shown. One can recognize a striving for realism in it although the viewers did not really expect this. In The Netherlands, too, silence was sometimes prescribed, although for reasons of piety rather than drama. The Thalia Theater in Rotterdam showed great sections of the film without accompanying music ‘since no possible music is deemed suitable for it’.³⁶ In one advert for a showing in the Witte Bioscoop in Amsterdam, a recent review was extensively quoted which noted that during the ‘highpoint’ of the film, when the dead and wounded are shown, the public was ‘silent’, ‘proof of how deeply moved [it] is’.³⁷ When the film played in the Cinema Palace in Amsterdam a month earlier, the producer cast the name of the orchestral director Boris Lensky in almost as large a type as the title itself, *Het Grootte Engelsche Offensief* (as *The Battle of the Somme* is chiefly known in Dutch). Lensky actually played with an ‘EXTRA LARGE Orchestra’ for the occasion and added two additional numbers. Their titles (‘Funeral Glide’, his own composition, and the hymn ‘Nearer My God, to Thee’) evince the same respectful and almost sacred and funereal context.³⁸

Mediating *The Battle of the Somme* (1) – Newbolt

This sacred character also typifies the poem ‘The War Films’ by Henry Newbolt (1862-1938), published 14 October 1916 in *The Times* and inspired by *The Battle of the Somme*.

O living pictures of the dead,
O songs without a sound,
O fellowship whose phantom tread [11]
Hallows a phantom ground –
How in a gleam have these revealed
The faith we had not found.

We have sought God in a cloudy Heaven,
We have passed by God on earth:
His seven sins and his sorrows seven,

His wayworn mood and mirth,
Like a ragged cloak have hid from us
The secret of his birth.

Brother of men, when now I see
The lads go forth in line,
Thou knowest my heart is hungry in me
As for thy bread and wine;
Thou knowest my heart is bowed in me
To take their death for mine.³⁹

Though the soldiers the poet had actually seen on the screen might well be dead already, in the film they lived on as emblems of sacrifice and role models for those who came after. True patriot as he was, this war documentary strengthened Newbolt's feelings of respect for authority and his love for the ultimate sacrifice his compatriots made, their belief in life that led them to death. Seeing the film was probably a near-religious experience for him. In a letter to Lady Hylton he described it as 'a purification of the emotions', especially in those scenes showing soldiers in their near endless processions, marching to the battlefield while grinning to the camera (and hence the viewer), waving a helmet, rifle or spade.⁴⁰ He was especially struck by their sheer number. Photographs could not really show the intrinsically large scale of the war, which the film had suddenly made concrete. It 'reduces the ego to its right proportions', he noted as an aside, perhaps a veiled reference to the realization of how insignificant his own contribution to the war actually was. He had been knighted a few months earlier, principally because of the propagandistic effect of his verse, always already loved in English private schools, which had been functioning since August 1914 as patriotic hymns everywhere in the Empire.⁴¹ What he really envied these boys was the complete feeling of fellowship which bound them, as in communion, One in Christ, One as Christ, One in death. 'If only I could get that desire of fellowship into a few verses it would be a new poem and an immortal one', he dreamed. *The Battle of the Somme* had given him 'a new vision of love' – 'the love of man in the mass that we always admit to be a main part of Christianity, but never feel ourselves.'⁴² With this film, the schoolfriend of Field-Marshal Haigh, personal friend of cabinet minister Edward Grey, and dinner partner of Prime Minister Asquith was confronted with his [12] own irrelevance, loneliness and the shortcomings of his faith.⁴³ His war effort consisted of the production of propaganda. He was faced with endless rows of boys who, like Christ, gave their lives so his could be saved.

The poem seems very much the product of a mimetic desire in this case: evoking and mimicking the 'fellowship' that eluded him. Such deep ties of fellowship – the almost proverbial Band of Brothers – have been observed before in the context of regiments. Yet in Newbolt's case, specifically his interpretation of the screened images, it concerns *a projection*. Moreover, in his choice of imagery he regularly thematizes the mediated nature of his experience. He is watching 'living *pictures* of the dead', describes the tread with which 'fellowship' walks as 'phantom', and even the ground hallowed by this tread is 'phantom', – these are all images he sees, insights gained through the projection of a light ('in a gleam') on a canvas. The battle and the war are all too real, but what he experiences in the cinema are phantoms who – 'O songs without a sound' – in this silent film are above all mute.

Mediating *The Battle of the Somme* in Poetry (2) – Van Looy

The mediated aspect and the sound of the cinematic experience are also the main themes in a long Dutch poem on *The Battle of the Somme*, written at the end of 1916 by a contemporary of Newbolt's, someone better known as a prose writer and painter, Jacobus van Looy (1855-1930).⁴⁴ Here, too, the person speaking seems moved to his core, but in an entirely different way to Newbolt.

The viewing context was of course already very different from Newbolt's England. Holland was neutral during the war, though this did not mean it could just sit back and wait for the fighting to end. The army was mobilized, social unrest increased (certainly among the armed forces too) and rations and political tensions kept both government and people on edge.⁴⁵ The text in question is called 'The tale of the provincial', a title with an internal rhyme in Dutch which is misleading to the extent that, though it has a very basic storyline, it is not, like most stories of the time, written in prose. It is a poem of four hundred and thirty-two verses, all rhyming couplets, sometimes as ingenious as cabaret, at other times so forced and clumsy that it must be intentional. The story, as mentioned, is simple: a provincial gentleman frequents a cinema in the city. Which film he sees remains unclear for a long time, but the emphasis on the presence of the 'mobilized' everywhere [v. 17, 62, and 75] indicates that the action takes place in war-time. Their presence seems to unsettle the narrator – is he perhaps a deserter or a fugitive? – and he is relieved that no one seems to know or recognize him [v. 64, 270].

It could be that his disquiet is related to the somewhat dubious character and image of the place he visits (a cinema) and the film he wants to see, for he is silent about the fact he wants to see a film for a remarkably long time. As he himself says, the man visits a 'theatre' because of a 'large orchestra' which was [13] going to perform there for the last time [1-8]. It is strange that he then indicates the hope 'that it would not be as bad as all that/ would not be too much/ like what he had read about it...' [9-12]. What orchestra could have such a frightening effect on the listener? The concert-goer rather ostentatiously tries to mask the fact that thrill-seeking, and not melomania, drives him. If he really did not want to experience what the paper described he would have stayed away, but the siren call is stronger. It is a form of attraction which, in conformity with the reputation of the cinema, is in part erotic,⁴⁶ but also related to the film he is going to see, a war film hyped to the maximum in Holland.

The Battle of the Somme was the product of the British Propaganda Service (for whom Newbolt worked). The film was shot by a cameraman who, as lieutenant, was more than embedded in the British army. Yet its effect on viewers was far from uniform. For Van Looy, it seems that the film contained a truth perhaps not intended by its British makers. Strikingly modern in this poem of Van Looy's is the manner in which meta-passages are inserted into the stream of consciousness which convey the narrator's doubt about whether he can tell the story correctly ('I cannot relate it all the way I want' v. 189; 'I cannot describe it' v. 290) and hence its truth value. Even more intriguing are the many details with which he indicates that what he sees has been mediated. He explicitly mentions the projection mechanism in the cinema at the start and end (apparently the orchestra was not performing then: 'there was a little wheel, I can still hear it snort' v. 59; variant on v. 383;) and he routinely suggests that he does not really witness any of it, except via a screen, or as he says no less than fourteen times, a 'board'.⁴⁷ Not only the war images but also the subtitles are shown on this board. The poet describes all this as if he has seen this phenomenon for the first time (which is far from impossible since many intellectuals only cast aside their prejudices regarding the lowly medium of film when seeing

the *The Battle of the Somme*⁴⁸) and as if the print he saw was not of great quality or very professionally screened:

Repeatedly words would fill the board
Backwards and often the last words fell short
It came to seem like a letter censured
[v. 109-111]⁴⁹

These words and letters falling off the screen are used here, by means of the simile employed – a censured letter – as metaphors to point to what must remain necessarily hidden and unshown, even in such an ostensibly realistic film. Though the film shows real soldiers and corpses, it is telling that Van Looy calls a wounded Brit being tended at length around the forty-ninth minute ‘an image’ [v. 292]. The mediated aspect of the experience is also emphasized by the attention the narrator gives to the musical accompaniment which is being played live. No doubt it fits nicely into his story – was it not the reason for going to the theatre [14] in the first place? – but it does also time and again reinforce the essentially artificial aspect of the whole show. This is most true when the sound bears no relation to the image shown. During the scene in which a giant shell is being fired, the spectator remarks ‘how strange not to hear the sound of it’ [v. 176]. Apparently, the Dutch orchestra is not using Hutcheson's cue sheet for caption 29 (cf. supra). The ear-splitting noise made by the players at other times – generating no less ‘life’ than the Concertgebouw orchestra, he finds [v. 117-118] – makes him think of a discussion he once had in Paris about Wagner [v. 120-125], and another description of the music played [v. 129-132] is immediately followed by a verse emphasizing his distance from the whole thing (‘for a long time it all seemed to elude me’ [v. 133]). The live music turns the film show into a concert in which the viewer can lose himself in reverie.

Seen in this light ‘The tale of the provincial’ almost seems a meditation on the unbridgeable gap between signifier and signified and the alienation such a realization can provoke in the viewer. This latter is specially emphasized in two passages in which certain jaded viewers show their disillusionment with the hype of the film:

One said it was all pretence, he was disappointed
that he was disappointed,
To which another, hearing, said:
‘you get what you pay for you know’ [v. 265-268]⁵⁰

The extreme irony of the story dictates that this exchange occurs right after the absolute highpoint of the film: the scene that has become a classic and is used in all WWI documentaries, in which at the onset of the attack, a few soldiers crawl from their trenches, go over the top and one immediately crumples down, ‘like an empty coat’, as Van Looy describes it plastically [v. 259]. In recent years, however, irony of ironies, it has come to light that exactly this scene, for technical and safety reasons, was indeed ‘pretence’ (cf. supra & note 23). The first person narrator in the poem experienced this very differently. In the lines ‘I could not get round it.../I had come to watch after all...’ [v. 260-261], he describes the ambiguity with which he has experienced all this. Doubtless this notorious scene had drawn him to the cinema: seeing someone actually die had never been shown onscreen before.⁵¹ He did not want to miss this event, though, at the same time, he found it unwatchable. Perhaps the other viewers whom the

poet called 'clumsy oafs' [v. 393], also felt this and that is why they had to bluster away their emotions.

The fact remains that *The Battle of the Somme*, despite the shaky screening and the strong awareness that the film could not show everything and certainly not let everything be heard, made an overwhelming impression on the narrator in the poem. 'I kept myself together' he writes after describing the tears of everyone [15] who had been a victim of the war directly or indirectly, 'feigning, that no one should notice...' [v. 369-370]. It is mere dissimulation that at the end of the show he is 'cold as ice'. Leaving for home he is at first relieved to be in the dark after the excess of stimuli. How fortunate is the inhabitant of the neutral Netherlands: while Europe burns – something he just saw, more clearly than ever – he can calm down in a city where the coal rationing announced by the council has ensured the lights are out that day [v. 390-392]. The man experiences a very new feeling of alienation. However much he knows that what he saw was only a representation of reality, he nonetheless feels as if the film has become his reality and the man walking home afterwards unreal: 'as if I walked within a living creature/...as if what I saw was life, and this but a dream' [v. 395/400]. Somewhat later he thaws and – again, how fortunate the Dutchman – enjoys 'warmth again as wealth' [v. 409] and thinks of 'Belgium, fighting to be Free/ [...] / While we did not stop being Free' [v. 415/418]. This feeling of peace and freedom is nevertheless structurally disturbed. In the night the atmosphere of the film imposes itself again and he dreams of how he 'buried a man in a garden by himself' [v. 420], and, as if that was not unsettling enough, he realizes 'that he / himself was the dead man' [v. 422-423]. The film of the war once more unfurls in his mind and to his complete horror he realizes that he neither 'cares nor suffers' [v. 431] from the fact that he is burying himself. The man, who four hundred lines earlier had come excitedly to the cinema to see under the cover of the noise of the orchestra how people are shot on screen, thus realizes in a dream that he has lost faith in humanity and no longer cares if he dies himself. A film he experienced as not-really-real leaves him broken.

The Medium's Different Messages

The Battle of the Somme seems to have affected both the British and the Dutch poet profoundly, in both the same and yet also fundamentally different way. Both poems end with a reference to the death of the author, but where Newbolt honours the soldiers ready to die in his place, the provincial in Van Looy's poem seems to have lost a crucial part of himself in the screening. For Newbolt the film functions as a confirmation of his Christian faith and love of his neighbour. Van Looy can in no way count on metaphysical compensation for his own breakdown: he loses himself because he has felt his faith in humanity and life slip away.

Film itself was going to be used much more and in increasingly sophisticated ways for propaganda in the course of the twentieth century. *The Battle of the Somme* had shown convincingly that cinematic images could have hitherto unimagined effects. These effects were certainly not, however, unambiguous. Both artistically gifted viewers clearly indicated that they only saw 'images' of what had really happened in France. It was in the filling-in of the image that their own position and personality unavoidably played a noticeable role. Newbolt did not need to be [16] convinced of the heroism of an army he had always praised in his correspondence. He was not fascinated by the quantities of ammunition shown (and spent) or the relatively humane manner in which prisoners of war were treated in the film. The lengthy columns of marching soldiers provoked in him a novel feeling of love, the contradictions of

which he clearly did not register. His love of his fellow man was reserved for his own 'boys'. That these *tommies* – according to an anecdote he recounted in the same breath as his experience of the film and which had contributed in equal measure to this 'new vision of love' – would sometimes refuse the surrender of German troops, out of revenge (and hence rather shoot them than take them prisoner), seemed to him not to contradict his lauded Christian love as these acts of violence were themselves motivated by brotherly love.⁵²

Van Looy, too, made the film very much his own but was, in the neutral Netherlands, not bound to the Manichean worldview of Newbolt. Evil was not just located in the enemy to be fought in every possible way, but in man himself, and so too in the outsider that the provincial in a neutral country was in every respect. These were interpretations which the poets had in both cases projected onto the mute faces of the soldiers they saw march, wait, shoot and die on the screen.

Aftershock – Mediating *The Battle of the Somme* (3) by an eyewitness – Kitchin

The Battle of the Somme also functioned at the same time in a very particular propaganda war. This is treated in a third poem inspired by the film, written by someone who himself fought at the Somme, the volunteer C.H.B. Kitchin (1895-1967). Clifford Kitchin, later known as a writer of novels and detective stories, served as lieutenant with the 8th Royal Warwickshire Regiment.⁵³ This regiment was one of the hardest hit of the whole British army during this devastating battle.⁵⁴ In July 1916 no less than 970 soldiers of this regiment perished (an unheard-of number, during the other war months the number of casualties varied from 52 in November 1914 to 506 in October 1917).⁵⁵ No less than 588 of these 970 victims fell on the very first day, the day at the heart of the film.⁵⁶ No more than 800 soldiers went over the top that day and 588 of them died.⁵⁷ Lance Corporal Williamson testified to this the next day: 'I discovered there were no 8/Warwick officers or HQ in the trenches... At 11.00 am I found them and was just in time for a roll call. I cannot describe my feeling when I discovered that only forty-five soldiers answered their names out of over 600 men of the battalion.'⁵⁸ Given these facts it is little wonder that Kitchin asked himself questions on seeing this film.

Somme Film 1916

There is no cause, sweet wanderers in the dark,
For you to cry aloud from cypress trees [17]
To a forgetful world; since you are seen
Of all twice nightly at the cinema,
While the munition makers clap their hands.⁵⁹

Cypress trees have been associated with death and immortality since antiquity⁶⁰ and since the French revolution also with fallen soldiers.⁶¹ WWI cemeteries too are often planted with cypress trees.⁶² Kitchin contrasts this age-old way of representing with a very modern one: the roving souls of his dead comrades who have climbed the trees in order to cry their grievances are confronted with scenes from the film in which they march smiling to battle. He notes cynically that these soldiers need not feel forgotten as cinema has given them eternal life. The communion with the dead, which Newbolt dreamed of and Van Looy feared, Kitchin managed to avoid altogether. He was speaking on behalf of those who no longer could speak themselves.

The final line of the poem refers to a question that had caused uproar in 1915 in Great Britain when it was suggested an attack in Neuve Chapelle had failed for want of shells. A special Minister of Munitions was called into being. Lloyd George had taken this task upon himself when, nine days into the Battle of the Somme, he was appointed Secretary of State for War. The first part of *The Battle of the Somme* can be seen as public evidence that the Shell Crisis was completely resolved. Minute-long scenes show the supply and handling of enormous quantities of ammunition. The message for the viewers was clear, and for the thousands of domestic workers active in this sector, it was made very explicit in caption 8 so that their crucial importance to the war effort was confirmed: 'Along the entire front the munition "dumps" are receiving vast supplies of shells thanks to the British munition workers'.⁶³ Lloyd George went one step further. By officially endorsing the film from his position he hoped to stimulate the ammunition workers to even greater productivity.⁶⁴

Clifford Kitchin's sarcastic poem which appeared in 1919 made clear who was the ultimate winner of the battle of the Somme: the ammunition makers. Hutcheson's soundtrack suggestion for *The Battle of the Somme* also acquires a cynical undertone in this context: the drum roll that is supposed to accompany the great explosion during screening becomes like the climax of an advertising spot for the war industry. In the meantime, the cries of desperate soldiers were not heard. Mortars drowned them on the battlefield and the silent film did not record them. Eventually it was poets who would give them a voice.

Illusory War Films

In a letter to his mother dated 2 March 1917, Wilfred Owen referred to the 'illusory War Films' she had gone to see⁶⁵ – no doubt *The Battle of the Somme* or the sequel *The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks* about the last phase in the [18] battle of the Somme, made by the same team and released in January 1917.⁶⁶ The poet did not deny the film its share of reality: 'they must hint at the truth, and if done anywhere on this Front, would not be quite devoid of realism.'⁶⁷ This sobering interpretation of Owen's is telling: in no way can film capture the whole of reality but they can 'hint at the truth', be it a quiet, black and white shadow of it. Newbolt, Van Looy and Kitchin also fully realized this, albeit in different ways. Where Newbolt saw a metaphysical truth in the fellowship he thought to detect on the screen, Van Looy saw above all the gaping, even existential darkness behind the screen and Kitchin the cynical truth masked by the images on the screen.

The last part of *The Battle of the Ancre* shows the following poem as caption:

Keep the home fires burning,
Though your hearts are yearning.
Turn the dark clouds inside out,
Till the boys come home.

This was a version, shortened for the occasion, of the ultra-popular British patriotic song 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'.⁶⁸ The song was from 1915 and was sung amongst others by New Armies who would go into battle at the Somme. Lyricism was used here to evoke homesickness and to strengthen the bond between soldiers and the home front. Unwittingly the use of this popular refrain as caption also stressed the unavoidable truth of war: only the text appeared on the black and white screen, silent. Most of the singers never made it back home.

Notes

1. With thanks to Jan Baeke, Karel Dibbets, Blayne Haggart, Frank Kessler, Roger Smither and Dan Todman for their bibliographical assistance and to Imke de Gier for the English translation.
2. Geoffrey H. Malins, *How I Filmed the War. A Record of the Extraordinary Experiences of the Man who Filmed the Great Somme Battles etc.* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1920), p. 127.
3. James Campbell, 'Combat Gnosticism: The Ideology of First World War Poetry Criticism', in: *New Literary History*, 30:1 (1999), pp. 203-215.
4. Joanna Scutts, 'Contemporary Approaches to the Literature of the First World War. A Critical Survey', in *Literature Compass*, 3:4 (2006), pp. 916-917.
5. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). Chapter 5 of this book is called 'Oh What a Literary War' (an allusion, moreover, to the famous WWI musical and film *Oh What A Lovely War* from, respectively, 1963 and 1969; 'Oh! What a Lovely War', written by Hermann Darewski, was in its turn one of the greatest hits of 1917).
6. Quoted in Dan Todman, *The Great War. Myth and Memory* (New York/London: Hambledon & London, 2005), p.153. [19]
7. Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory. The First World War. Myths and Realities* (London: Review, 2002).
8. *Never such Innocence. A New Anthology of Great War Verse*, ed. by Martin Stephen (London: Buchan & Enright, 1988); *Voices of Silence. The Alternative Book of First World War Poetry*, ed. by Vivien Noakes (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2006); *The Winter of the World. Poems of the Great War*, ed. by Dominic Hibberd and John Onions (London: Constable, 2007).
9. Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined. The First World War and English Culture* (London: Pimlico, 1992). A summary of what Hynes sees as the 'Myth of the War' can be found on p. x. Unlike Sheffield, who clearly believes in a 'forgotten truth' concerning the war, Hynes aims to understand the genesis of the myth rather than its refutation. Scutts, 'Contemporary Approaches', p. 915.
10. The most explicit articulation of this trajectory can be found in the Introduction of Jon Silkin, *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 12-77, often reprinted.
11. See Geert Buelens, *Europa Europa! Over de dichters van de Grote Oorlog* (Amsterdam: Ambo; Antwerp: Manteau, 2008) and the accompanying anthology *Het lijf in slijk geplant. Gedichten uit de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (idem) in which more than 200 poems from thirty languages are presented side by side with the original.
12. For a recent overview of the literature see J. Scutts, 'Contemporary Approaches', pp. 914-923. For non-British memorial cultures: Annette Becker, 'Der Kult der Erinnerung nach dem Grossen Krieg. Kriegdenkmäler in Frankreich', in *Der politische Totenkult: Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne*, ed. by Reinhart Koselleck and Michael Jeismann (München: Fink, 1994), pp. 315-324 and Gerd Krumeich, 'Verdun: ein Ort gemeinsamer Erinnerung?', in *Franzosen und Deutsche. Orte der gemeinsamen Geschichte*, ed. by Horst Möller and Jacques Morizet (München: C.H. Beck, 1996), pp. 162-184.
13. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre. Un essai d'historiographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), p. 46. This comparative view almost exclusively concerns the three main European powers, Great Britain, France and Germany. The same is true of the exemplary study of Elizabeth Marsland, *The Nation's Cause. French, English and*

German poetry of the First World War (London: Routledge, 1991), in which some attention is paid to poetry from Belgium in French.

14. A typical example is *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, ed. by Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). This volume contains twelve essays, eight of which are on Anglo-American topics, one on French, one on German literature. Only one contribution – Marjorie Perloff's essay on the European avant-garde – looks at war literature from a comparative point of view. A profoundly documented but equally non-comparative survey is offered by *European Culture in the Great War. The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918*, ed. by Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
15. Glenn Watkins, *Proof through the Night. Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth. Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Javier Arnaldo, *¡1914! : la vanguardia y la Gran Guerra* (Madrid: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza; Fundación Caja Madrid, 2008); *Film and the First World War*, ed. by Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (Amsterdam: Amsterdam [20] University Press, 1995) and *The First World War and Popular Cinema. 1914 to the Present*, ed. by Michael Paris (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000). Laura Marcus also offers an interesting comparative perspective, 'The Great War in twentieth-century cinema', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, ed. by Vincent Sherry, pp. 280-301. True goldmines for literary researchers are *The Lost Voices of World War I. An International Anthology of Writers, Poets & Playwrights*, ed. by Tim Cross (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989) and *Lines of Fire. Women Writers of World War I*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet (New York: Plume, 1999).
16. Pierre Sorlin, 'Cinema and the Memory of the Great War', in *The First World War and Popular Cinema. 1914 to the Present*, p. 6.
17. Modris Eksteins, 'The Cultural Impact of the Great War', in *Film and the First World War*, p. 209. See also Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 125. A long list of German, British, French, Italian, Russian (Soviet), American, Canadian and Australian WWI films from 1914 to 1943 can be found in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, ed. by Hirschfeld, Gerhard, Gerd Krumeich and Irina Renz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003), pp. 481-483.
18. Sorlin, 'Cinema and the Memory of the Great War', p. 18.
19. *The Battle of the Somme* was filmed at the end of June and beginning of July 1916 in France by Geoffrey H. Malins and J.B. McDowell, edited by Malins and Charles and produced and distributed by William F. Jury. The film was released on DVD at the beginning of November 2008 by the Imperial War Museum. Commentary by Roger Smither of the Imperial War Museum was added. A detailed 'Viewing Guide' can be found on the site of IWM:
<[http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/100/Somme% 20DVD/documents/viewing_guide.pdf](http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/100/Somme%20DVD/documents/viewing_guide.pdf).>
A shot-by-shot analysis of the film can be found in the monograph of Alastair H. Fraser, Andrew Robertshaw and Steve Roberts, *Ghosts on The Somme. Filming the Battle, June-July 1916* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2009). A general analysis and short history of its reception is given by Hynes, *A War Imagined*, pp. 120-126.
20. A computation of Nicholas Hiley, quoted in Nicholas Reeves, 'Through the Eye of the Camera: Contemporary Cinema Audiences and their "Experience" of War in the film *Battle of the Somme*', in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. by Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (London: Pen & Sword, 1996), p. 784. Reeves mentions amongst other things how in Glasgow and Edinburgh the film was shown in a dozen cinemas, from eleven o'clock in the morning to half past ten

in the evening. In London the police were required to lead the queuing crowds to the right lanes (p. 783).

21. The film was shown in France, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Greece, Romania, China, Iceland and Peru. One copy was allegedly even shown in Germany (S.D. Badsey, 'Battle of the Somme: British War Propaganda' in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 3:2 (1983), p. 111.
22. The 'Viewing Guide' (see footnote 19) claims the images were shot between 26 June and 8 July.
23. It concerns specifically the scene in which some soldiers go 'over the top' and where some seem to be gunned down. See on this issue the standard article of Roger Smither "'A Wonderful Idea of the Fighting": the question of fakes in "The Battle of the Somme"', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 13:2 (1993), pp. 149-168. The author emphasizes that the vast majority of scenes are definitely authentic and that [21] this rehearsed scene could only be played this way because it was technically impossible in 1916 to come so close with a very heavy camera to the highly lethal moment in which soldiers came out of their trenches. A more detailed analysis can be found in Chapter 10 ('The Fake Footage') of Fraser, Robertshaw and Roberts, *Ghosts on The Somme*, pp. 163-171.
24. Quoted in Reeves, 'Through the Eye of the Camera', p. 784.
25. Quoted in Reeves, 'Through the Eye of the Camera', p. 786. The Leeds Mercury also praised the 'most realistic fashion' in which 'the grim and glorious incidents' were shown and the Yorkshire Evening Press too found it 'all so real' (idem).
26. The originals read: 'de werkelijkheid' for the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant and 'ontzettend van realiteit' for the De Telegraaf. These and other examples are taken from Conny Kristel, 'Propagandaslag. Nederlandse reacties op de Britse film "Battle of the Somme" (1916)', in *Wankel evenwicht. Neutraal Nederland en de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, ed. by Maarten Kraaijestein and Paul Schulten (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2007), p. 350.
27. Quoted in Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 126.
28. Ibid.
29. Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 17-18. To put this point in perspective the following reaction of poet Henry Newbolt on *The Battle of the Somme* is relevant. In a letter to Lady Hylton dated 16 September 1916, he immediately acknowledged in the first sentence he ever wrote about the film how technically limited and hence, unavoidably, unrealistic 'the Somme films' seemed to him: 'Of course it was bad, as they so often are, – taken too fast, so that an ordinary march becomes a double quick, and a running pace becomes a Walpurgisnacht revel.' In *The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry Newbolt*, ed. by Margaret Newbolt (London: Faber & Faber, [1942]), p. 230. In the contemporary press, too, there was one statement relativizing the reality level of the film. This quote from the Manchester Guardian of 1 September 1916 was translated by NRC in the Netherlands and printed on 6 September: 'I went with one of my friends, a learned man who was lightly wounded in the offensive, to see the official films of the battle of the Somme. "Now", I ventured when we exited, "that is really how it was, yes?" – "Yes", he answered hesitantly, "it seems like it, the way a silhouette looks like the person representing it, or like a dream seems like something that really happened. So much is lacking, – the unbearable noise, the stench, the excitement and man-to-man combat. One can see enough to recognize the justness of General Sherman's words that war is hell, but the hell depicted here is as much like the reality of hell as Homer's hell is like Dante's.'"

30. See Toby Haggith, 'Reconstructing the musical arrangement of The Battle of the Somme' in *Film History*, 14 (2002), pp. 11-24 and Toby Haggith, 'The Revival of the 1916 Musical Medley' in the DVD booklet of *The Battle of the Somme* (Imperial War Museum, 2008), pp. 21-25. Generally useful for the practice of musical suggestion is Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, pp. 265-269.
31. Fussell, *The Great War*, p. 12.
32. Quoted in Haggith, 'Reconstructing the musical arrangement of The Battle of the Somme', p. 13.
33. Hutcheson himself is explicit on this point, as in his note on the march that closes the program: 'I have purposely introduced this march at the close of the film, as it introduces [22] the Anthems – or a few bars of same – and I think the compliment can be appropriately paid at this point to the work of our Allies' (facsimile of Bioscope 'Music in the Cinema' article, in Haggith, 'Reconstructing the musical arrangement of The Battle of the Somme', p. 12).
34. Haggith mentions an extreme, but also symptomatic example from a performance in Dublin on 11 December 1916 in which Part 5 from *The Battle of the Somme* turned out to be part of a 'variety program which included the singing comedienne Miss Ella Shields; the double whirlwind, performed by the "Mandos", a lady and gentleman gymnastic act; Femina Quartetta, a musical ensemble; and Archie O'Neill the one-legged dancer' (p. 13). It is unthinkable that this latter, in the context of the war film, was meant as ironic commentary. Hutcheson's strongly moralizing introduction to his own Medley proposal also shows the force of this tradition of incorporating films into entertainment spectacles: '[the musicians] must realize the seriousness and awfulness of the scenes depicted most realistically, and even where the scenes are showing the brighter side of events in this Great Push the "accompaniment" must not be too bright. We don't want to hear "Sunshine of Your Smile" played in any part of this film. The pictures themselves will impress the public, as nothing else has done, or can possibly do, and the "accompaniment" must be treated with all respect and seriousness, having regard to the tragic situations depicted.' (Facsimile of Bioscope article, in Haggith, 'Reconstructing', p. 12.) In The Netherlands the cinema industry took a similar view. It was better for performances to be run 'without extra numbers', said the *De Bioscoop-Courant*, 'out of respect for the unfortunates thus being sacrificed for their country and also for your public, that their understanding of the tragedy being played out before them can stay with them a long time!' (quoted in Kristel, 'Propagandaslag', p. 353).
35. Facsimile of Bioscope article, in Haggith, 'Reconstructing the musical arrangement of The Battle of the Somme', p. 12.
36. The original reads: 'aangezien geen enkele muziek daarvoor gepast werd geacht' (quoted in Kristel, 'Propagandaslag', p. 351).
37. The original reads: 'het bewijs hoe diep [het publiek] onder den indruk is' (advertisement in the Catholic paper *Het Centrum*, 4 November 1916). A 'White Cinema' was supposed to show films suitable for the whole family; they had their own board of censors. Frank van der Maden, 'De komst van de film', in *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse film en bioscoop tot 1940*, ed. by Karel Dibbets and Frank van der Maden (Weesp: Het Wereldvenster, 1986), p. 51.
38. Advertisement printed in Kristel, 'Propagandaslag', p. 349. In a later advert (*Het Centrum*, 21 October 1916) Lensky's name is still printed in large and bold type under the line: 'In order not to disappoint the thousands who are turned away each day we have decided to extend the run of "The Great English Offensive" by a few days'.
39. In Hibberd and Onions, *Winter of the World. Poems of the Great War*, p. 129.

40. Newbolt, *The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry*, p. 230.
41. Cecil D. Eby, *The Road to Armageddon. The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), pp. 98-108.
42. Newbolt, *The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry*, p. 231.
43. Regarding Newbolt and Haig, see Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 26 and also Newbolt, *Later Life and Letters*, pp. 292-293 and p. 354; for the friendship with Grey [23] and his war dinner with Asquith, see Newbolt, *Later Life and Letters*, pp. 227-229 and pp. 194-195.
44. Jacobus van Looy, 'Nieuwe bijlagen. XXV', in *De Nieuwe Gids*, 1917, pp. 361-376. Also in Van Looy, 'Het verhaal van den provinciaal', in: *De wonderlijke avonturen van Zebedeus, nieuwe bijlagen* (Amsterdam: S.L. van Looy, 1925), 149-161 and in Jac. van Looy, *De Ar. Het verhaal van den provinciaal. De vischvrouw* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1981), 31-45. The poem is also found in its entirety in *Het lijf in slijk geplant. Gedichten uit de Eerste Wereldoorlog*, ed. by Geert Buelens (Amsterdam: Ambo, 2008), pp. 378-388. My quotes from the poem are taken from this edition. It can be found online at: <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/looy001wond02_01/looy001wond02_01_0017.php#17>
45. On Dutch neutrality: Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).
46. A whole range of motives point in this direction, such as Venus/Diana [v. 24], the glaring absence of the rhyme word 'tits' ('tieten') [v. 28], the description of the beech trees [v. 147-150], the woman touching him with her knee during the performance [v. 126] and looking at him in the interval [v. 229].
47. Board-references in verses 60, 85, 90, 99, 186, 217, 224, 272, 285, 316, 354, 361, 374 and 387.
48. Compare: 'The film succeeded in attracting middle-class customers, many of whom may never have been to a cinema before. Thus one correspondent commented that the audience which he saw in the Southport Palladium included "several of the leading citizens in the district who are more usually to be found at performances of legitimate drama of the 'intellectual' type"' (Nicholas Reeves, 'Cinema, Spectatorship and Propaganda: Battle of the Somme (1916) and its Contemporary Audience', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 17:1 (1997), p. 15.
49. The original reads: 'Er kwamen telkens woorden op het bord/In spiegelschrift en dikwijls schoot de laatste zin te kort,/Het leek bijwijlen een gecensureerde brief' [v. 109-111]. One variant further in the poem: 'The space of the board/ was much too short' [v. 285-286]. The other reference to the shaky nature of the print cleverly allows the screen to be impressed by what it is showing 'the board seemed scared; lightning struck and it jumped' [v. 99]. In another he allows the quality of the reel to color the event: 'And I saw them jump from their grainy ditches' [v. 257] or: 'Ver in het spikkelig licht ze delfden 'n gracht' 'far into the speckled light they dug a trench' [v. 314]. And when describing soldiers filling a grave the screen itself threatens to be consumed in the apocalypse: 'Toen alles op het trillend bord verzwond' 'when everything on the shaking screen vanished' [v. 316]. And there are other instances where feelings are projected onto the technical failings of the reel: 'Er schoten telkens schichten / Den warrel door der wiebelende gezichten:/De vuurge scheuten in het bord./Als met tranen overstort.' 'Flashes struck again and again/ the wavering faces with confusion: the fiery arrows on the board, as if with tears overrun' [v. 359-362].
50. The original reads: 'De een zei: 't was kemedie, dat 't hem tegenviel,/Dat 't hem tegenviel,/En de andre hooren deed:/'Och, alle waar is naar zijn geld, je weet' [v. 265-268]. There is an echo of this

later: 'Maar achter mij sprak weer de knorge stem:/Dat 't hem tegenviel hem;/En de andre ontevreeën: "Dat je je geld wel beter kon besteeën.'" 'behind [24] me once again the churlish voice/that he was disappointed;/And the other dissatisfied: "he could have spent his money better"' [v. 301-304].

51. The famous historian Pieter Geyl, NRC correspondent in London at the time, discussed the scene in detail (25 August 1916) saying also: 'The attack is without doubt one of the most suspenseful scenes ever filmed: death was brought to the screen and few can remain unmoved in the safety of their chairs'. Geyl had just returned from a visit to the Western Front and emphasized to his readers that the film showed the war 'more or less how it is.' Compare: Kristel 2007, pp. 346-347.
52. '... that our men now often refused to accept a German surrender at close quarters, when they had been killing our men up to the last five yards.' Then Newbolt quotes a corporal who had told him this and who immediately added why he perfectly understood this kind of behaviour: "chaps you love like your own brother – you know, sir, you do love 'em like that out there..." Newbolt, *The Later Life and Letters of Sir Henry*, p. 231.
53. Biographical information can be found at: <<http://web.archive.org/web/20070928014416/http://www.knittingcircle.org.uk/cliffordkitchin.html>>
54. For the vicissitudes of this regiment on the Somme, see Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme*. 1 July 1916, London: Penguin, 2001 (1971), pp. 319, 330; and Robert David Williams, *A Social and Military History of the 1/8th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment in the Great War* (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 1999), pp. 63-70. Online it can be found at: <<http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/13/1/Williams00MPhil.pdf>>
55. Williams, *A Social and Military History*, p. 141.
56. Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme*, p. 330.
57. Williams, *A Social and Military History*, p. 69.
58. Williams, *A Social and Military History*, p. 68.
59. In Hibberd and Onions, *The Winter of the World. Poems of the Great War*, p. 130.
60. Douglas Keister, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2004), pp. 60-61.
61. Joseph Clarke, 'Cenotaphs and Cypress Trees. Commemorating the Citizen-Soldier in the Year II', in *French History*, 22:2 (2008), pp. 217-240.
62. Paul Gough, 'Memorial gardens as dramaturgical space' in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3: 4 (1998), p. 212.
63. For the ammunition crisis and the subsequent propaganda coup see Stuart Sillars, *Art and survival in First World War Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), pp. 58-61.
64. Reeves, 'Cinema, Spectatorship and Propaganda', p. 20.
65. Wilfred Owen, *Collected Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 440.
66. Film from the Imperial War Museum Archive, in five parts with French captions can be seen via: <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x3h4zt_la-bataille-de-lancre-1_politics>
67. Owen, *Collected Letters*, p. 440.

68. John Brophy and Eric Partridge, *The Long Trail. Soldiers' Songs and Slang, 1914-18* (Freeport, N.Y: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), p. 171. [25]

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