

# *King and Country: Remembering a Chthonic Tragedy at Passchendaele, 1917*

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Squire nagged and bullied till I went to fight, / (Under Lord Derby's Scheme). I died in hell— / (They called it Passchendaele).<sup>1</sup> —Siegfried Sassoon

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## Prologue: British Commemorations of the Great War in the 1960s

In *Awake in the Dark*, Roger Ebert makes a case to include the Seventh Art as part of the Pulitzer Prize awards: "It's time for America's most important honor in the arts to be extended to America's most important contribution to the arts."<sup>2</sup> The dawn of that contribution began during the First World War, and subsequently a large number of films about the war were produced in the ensuing years. However, after 1945, not only did the number of Great War films wither, but also directors "[...] became almost obsessed with the Second World War—the nation's last great triumph. 1914-1918, often seen as the beginning of national decline, was painful to recall and, thus, ignored by British cinema."<sup>3</sup>

In August 1963, for the occasion of the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the First World War, the BBC decided to produce a massive twenty-six episode series, *The Great War*, each one lasting forty minutes. In *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain*, Emma Hanna writes that, starting with the first episode

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<sup>1</sup> The first verses of his poem, "Memorial Tablet (Great War)," written in 1918 and published in his collection, *Picture-Show* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1920), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Ebert, *Awake in the Dark: The Best of Roger Ebert* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 370.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Paris, *The First World War and Popular Cinema* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 66.

broadcasted on the evening of 30 May 1964, the audience ratings scored an average rating index of eighty out of one hundred for all twenty-six episodes, rivaling two popular documentary series on the Second World War—*Valiant Years* (1961) and *War in the Air* (1954)—and bestowing “[...] to British television an enduring historical and technological legacy.”<sup>4</sup> This epic documentary’s seminal influence—a marriage of the best of journalism, film-making, and historical verity—forever changed the way war documentaries would be made; for example, the motif of *The Great War* is omnipresent in Ken Burns and Lynn Novick’s 2017 PBS’s eighteen-hour, ten-episode series *The Vietnam War*.

Despite its impressive scale, importance, and popularity, the landmark documentary did not change the way the majority of Britons thought about the First World War.<sup>5</sup> Actually, in that decade, only a hand-full of Great War films were released, namely *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *King and Country* (1964), *The Blue Max* (1966), and *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969), and according to Andrew Kelly, “[...] of the few films released after 1945, *King and Country* was the last of the great films to be made about the First World War.”<sup>6</sup> On that basis and with the centennial commemoration of the 1917 Battle of Passchendaele, *King and Country*—with its chthonic setting and portrayal of shot at dawn—is the subject of this essay.

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<sup>4</sup> Emma Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Kelly, *Cinema and the Great War* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 181.

*Cinéaste* Joseph Losey, auteur James Lansdale Hodson, playwright John Wilson, and  
Passchendaele 1917

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Wyatt, we do not deal with justice here, but with the law.<sup>7</sup>

—Lieutenant Seymour

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Fifty years after the onset of the war to end all wars, Hollywood's blacklisted and expatriate film director Joseph Losey shocked moviegoers with his award-winning, black-and-white anti-war film noir, *King and Country*. He was inspired by John Wilson's *Hamp: A Play in Three Acts* (1964), based on an episode of the novel *Return to the Wood* (1955) by James Lansdale Hodson—a novelist, playwright, and soldier who served in the First World War and worked as a correspondent at the beginning of the Second World War; he was undoubtedly familiar with A. P. Herbert's *The Secret Battle* (1919), the first book to accurately discuss shell shock and "shot-at-dawn" courts-martial during the Great War. Herbert's main character Harry Penrose—although bearing striking resemblance to Herbert himself—was inspired by the tragic case of twenty-one-year-old Sub-Lieutenant Edwin Dyett who was court-martialed and executed for desertion and cowardice at the attack on Beaucourt in November 1916. After reading the novel, Winston Churchill applauded it, expressing the following sympathy about Herbert's protagonist: "The hero-victim is never anything but modest and dutiful: he always tries his best to do his bit. It is only the cruelty of chance which finally puts his life and his honour in the hands of the two men whose vanity he has offended. He had much to give. He gave it all. But a blind Fate declared it was not enough. [. . .] It is a soldier's tale cut in stone to melt all hearts (vii-viii)."<sup>8</sup> Little did Churchill know then that, even though stories such as Edwin Dyett's caused many tears

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<sup>7</sup> *Billy Budd*, directed by Peter Ustinov (Allied Artists Pictures, 1962).

<sup>8</sup> Winston Churchill, forward to *The Secret Battle* by Alan Patrick Herbert (London: Frontline Books, 2009), vii-viii.

to be shed, it would take almost a century before the British Empire would finally recognize soldiers like him and carve their names in stone; for this acknowledgment to happen, it took more than war-traumatized novelists' stories such as Herbert's and Hodson's—it also took film directors such as Kubrick and Losey to limelight them on the silver screen.

Hodson's novel is a story in which the first-person narrator William Hargreaves—a lawyer from Chesterford—writes his testament thirty-eight years after the end of the Great War. In the opening paragraph, he describes himself as

[...] a man who, not being a soldier, yet found himself, as did legions more, turned into one whose profession or trade it was to kill others and who has done so; a man whose generation, coming to manhood just before, or during the First World War, has been troubled and torn over a period of thirty or forty years by the dilemma of its time—whether war can ever be just and right—and is still torn and riven.<sup>9</sup>

Hodson's introduction almost mirrors Herbert's: "I am going to write down some of the history of Harry Penrose, because I do not think full justice has been done to him, and because there may be many other young men of his kind who flung themselves into this war at the beginning of it, and have gone out of it after many sufferings with the unjust and ignorant condemnation of their fellows."<sup>10</sup> Similar to Hodson and Herbert's introduction, Wilson's also briefly explains that the play's plot focuses on a specific episode of chapter two of Hodson's novel where a private accused of desertion is executed for the sake of example: "[...] a group of men who, required to implement a law they believe to be in principle necessary and just, experience its

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<sup>9</sup> James Lansdale Hodson, *Return to the Wood* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1955), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert, *The Secret Battle*, 7.

working in practice as horrifyingly wrong.”<sup>11</sup> But, as they enforce it on one of their own, they gradually realize that it is “horrifyingly wrong”<sup>12</sup>; that particular law is the military’s right to administer the death penalty to deserters and cowards—specifically to shoot them at dawn—for the purpose of maintaining morale. As Private Arthur Hamp’s inevitable execution approaches, his comrades and attorney not only gradually comprehend his unthinkable and unimaginable death but also fully grasp their own culpability as well and are faced with this moral dilemma: either to execute Hamp in the name of the law or to exonerate him in the name of justice; however, they know the court-martial must happen, but, when they do execute him, “they know they are taking part in an act of ritual murder.”<sup>13</sup> Even though they understand he has been rightly proven culpable, “[...] they will not be able to forget his innocence.”<sup>14</sup> Wilson was a Fleet Air Arm pilot in the Pacific during the Second World War and had a lifelong obsession with the story of Private Hamp, rewriting it twice.<sup>15</sup> After its first performance at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle on 11 August 1964, it was a success: “One of the finest plays to emerge from the First World War,” wrote *The Times*, and “[A] strong bid for sentiment and even tear-jerking is worth much more in the theatre than it is fashionable to admit,” wrote Philip Hope-Wallace of *The Guardian*.<sup>16</sup>

Very similar to Wilson’s play and Hodson’s novel, Losey’s film also portrays the imprisonment and execution of Private Hamp, a twenty-three-year-old Englishman arrested near

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<sup>11</sup> John Wilson, *Hamp: A Play in Three Acts* (London and New York: Evans Plays, 1964), introduction.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Claire Black, “Theatre of War: For King and Country,” *The Scotsman*, 30 March 2009, accessed 28 February 2018, <https://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/theatre-of-war-for-king-and-country-1-1032118>.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Hope-Wallace of *The Guardian* in *Hamp: A Play in Three Acts* by John Wilson, 75.

Calais for desertion after fighting for his king and country in the frontline trenches since the war's outbreak. The initially unsympathetic Captain Hargreaves follows his superiors' orders to ignore the fact that Hamp was suffering from shell shock. Because of an unfortunate childhood, an unsatisfying job as a cobbler, and an unhappy marriage, Hamp, believing his civilian life cannot get any worse, enlists in the army on a dare from his mother-in-law and wife. Once on the Western Front, he not only stoically accepts the deaths of his closest army buddies and his entire battalion but also the news of his wife's infidelity. Finally, two incidents cause him to leave his unit: the first is his best friend's body, when hit by a shell, exploding into pieces and covering his entire uniform; and the second is his near-death drowning in a mud-filled shell hole. After listening to Hamp's abysmal history, Hargreaves—now touched by his client's child-like honesty—fervently delivers a heartfelt appeal for justice, insisting repeatedly that Hamp was not responsible for his actions. Solicitor Hargreaves, also referred to as the "soldier's friend," hopes to convince the members of the court of the mitigating circumstances that prompted his client to walk away from the front so that he will be charged guilty of AWOL, not desertion, and saved from the firing squad. Great War *cinéphiles*, particularly admirers of Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (1957), may anticipate a grim dénouement, but Losey creates—even for avid bibliophiles who read *The Secret Battle* and *Return to the Wood* or the enthusiastic theater patrons who saw *Hamp*—a shockingly unexpected finale. Unmoved by Hargreaves's eloquent plea for justice, the members of the court first deliver a guilty verdict and then reject his request for leniency not only because the battalion is returning to the frontline the next morning but also because they wish to make an example of him in order to maintain military discipline. On the eve of his execution, Hamp—blindfolded, rum soused, and wobbly from playing blindman's buff with his fellow comrades—collapses in a priest's arms and takes communion. Although his battalion

executes him at dawn, the army sends the pro-forma condolence letter for soldiers killed in action to his family.

After the film's 5 September 1964 release, Isabel Quigly praised Losey for making his *chef d'œuvre* in only seventeen days: this "dense, rich film is clearly [...] Losey's masterpiece—wholly different in style from *The Servant* [1963], yet as recognisably his. [...] Nothing is fumbled, repeated or overstressed, yet each scene has layers of meaning; it provokes arguments about the human condition and about rats, mud and mutiny."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the purpose of the essay is to analyze award-winning *cinéaste* Losey's interpretation of Wilson's successful play *Hamp* into a *sine qua non* of Great War motion pictures. It focuses on the pivotal scenes marking the incipient transformation of obdurate court-appointed attorney Captain Hargreaves as a character in development defending shell-shocked private Hamp, who, after three years at the front walked away from the guns at Passchendaele, and as a result is accused of desertion.

### Shot at Dawn

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La justice militaire est à la justice ce que la musique militaire est à la musique.<sup>18</sup>

—Georges Clémenceau

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Shot at dawn is the military's expedient court-martialing and almost immediate execution of one of their own by and /or before his comrades to instill fear and to maintain military discipline. Offences ranged from crimes as serious as murder to as light as sleeping on duty, but most often involved desertion and cowardice; others included espionage, mutiny, and striking a

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<sup>17</sup> Isabel Quigly, "Mr. Losey's Masterpiece," *The Spectator Archive*, 4 December 1964, accessed 18 April 2016, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/4th-december-1964/17/mr-loseys-masterpiece>.

<sup>18</sup> "Military justice is to justice what military music is to music." Georges Clémenceau, *Correspondance: 1858-1929* (Paris: Robert Lafont, 2008), 22.

superior officer. The injudicious system was widely inconsistent both in judgment and in procedure. Seven years prior to *King and Country's* première was Kubrick's controversial *Paths of Glory*, based on the abysmal story of *les caporaux de Souain*, which was not released in French theaters until 1975—the first film to portray shot at dawn on the silver screen. In the *Saturday Review*, Hollis Alpert applauded it, saying that “[it was] unquestionably the finest American film of the year. It is so searing in its intensity that it will probably take its place, in years to come, as one of the screen’s most extraordinary achievements.”<sup>19</sup> Losey’s 1964 film is, thus, the second film to treat the bleak topic. A day after its feature at the 23 September 1964 New York Film Festival at Philharmonic Hall, Eugene Archer praised it for its shock effect of *exécution pour l'exemple*: “*King and Country* is an uncompromising film. Some of its scenes are so strong they shock. Those who can take it will find it a shattering experience.”<sup>20</sup> Between August 1914 and 31 March 1920, 3,080 men were sentenced to death in British army courts-martial, and, of them, 346 were executed. The victims’ families also carried the shame of being labeled cowards. In addition to the relatives’ emotional suffering was the long-lasting psychological pain that those in the firing squads also endured as a result of shooting their comrades found guilty.

Of the allied forces, Britain adamantly withheld pardons for men executed during World War I with Prime Minister John Major stressing to the House of Commons that pardoning those charged guilty would be an affront to those who died nobly for king and country, but in 2006 Defense Secretary Des Browne overturned this decision, claiming that he did not want “to

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<sup>19</sup> Kirk Douglas, *The Ragman's Son* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 282.

<sup>20</sup> Eugene Archer, “Attack on War Seen at Philharmonic Hall: Tom Courtenay Excels in Role of Private,” *The New York Times*, 24 September 1964, accessed 13 July 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/09/24/archives/attack-on-war-seen-at-philharmonic-hall-tom-courtenay-excels-in.html>.

second guess the decisions made by commanders in the field, who were doing their best to apply the rules and standards of the time," but that "it is better to acknowledge that injustices were clearly done in some cases, even if we cannot say which—and to acknowledge that all these men were victims of war."<sup>21</sup> In 2007, Parliament passed the Armed Forces Act 2006 allowing the posthumous mass pardon of British Empire soldiers.

### Setting: Passchendaele or "The Slough of Despond"

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But the Flanders mud, as you know, is not a new invention. It has a name in history—it has defeated other armies before this one.<sup>22</sup> —General Douglas Haig

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Despite the allied offensives raging throughout the spring in Champagne and Artois in spring 1917 and the millions of tons of earth blown into the air and all the bloodletting, the map of the Western Front had changed little. After the Nivelle Offensive failure, the first phase of the British Flanders Offensive began on 7 June with the explosion of the Messines Ridge, and the second, after some delay, on 31 July with the Third Battle of Ypres, simply known as Passchendaele. In spite of the late start and the very reluctant approval by Lloyd George, Douglas Haig staunchly insisted for an offensive to capture the Passchendaele Ridge. Thus, "[f]or the British army, Ypres [was to] become what Verdun became to the French, a symbol of absolute determination, of fatal endurance."<sup>23</sup> With a defeated tone and a thick Cockney accent, Hamp pronounces "Passchendaele" as "Passion Dale," evoking The Valley of the Shadow of Death in Psalm 23 with

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<sup>21</sup> Ben Fenton, "Pardoned: the 306 soldiers shot at dawn for 'cowardice'," *The Telegraph*, 16 August 2006, accessed 6 June 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatfeedback/4201091/Pardoned-the-306-soldiers-shot-at-dawn-for-cowardice.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Leon Wolff, *In Flanders Fields: The 1917 Campaign* (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 280.

<sup>23</sup> "Surely We Have Perished," *The Great War*, episode 17 of 26, BBC, 1964, accessed 8 June 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0bx2lPuJnU>.

Passchen suggesting pain, and daele valley; for him and hundreds of thousands of other infantrymen, this battlefield is a literal valley of suffering of biblical proportions and reminiscent of the "Slough of Despond" in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>24</sup>

By October, with the heaviest rains in thirty years and the perpetual shelling destroying the natural drainage system, the reclaimed agricultural marshland is now a muddy quagmire. Already in August, Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Boraston, a member of Haig's staff at GHQ, vividly describes the execrable weather conditions in the following passage: "In [August] 1917, there were 17 wet days; [...] the frequency of the rain was not so outstanding a feature as were its intensity and the dull conditions which prevented the ground from drying even when no rain was falling."<sup>25</sup> Haig himself characterized the heavily bogged battleground as deadly in the following lines:

The low-lying clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden with rain turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed into long stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined tracks. [...] To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning and in the course of the subsequent fighting on several occasions both men and pack animals were lost in this way.<sup>26</sup>

During that month, a total of 127 millimeters of rain fell in Flanders, twice the normal average.<sup>27</sup>

Because the Germans occupied the high ridges, Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria considered, however, the rain as his ally, as indicated in his diary entry 48 of 12 October 1917: "The weather

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<sup>24</sup> Alun Munslow and Robert A. Rosenstone, *Experiments in Rethinking History* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 91.

<sup>25</sup> George A. B. Dewar, *Sir Douglas Haig's Command 1915-1918*, vol. 1, (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1922), 369.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas Haig, *Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches*, ed. J. H. Boraston (London: Dent, 1919), 116-117.

<sup>27</sup> Robin Pryor and Trevor Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 97.

has taken a sudden turn. Happily it has turned to rain, which is our most effective ally.”<sup>28</sup> Of the over half a million soldiers who died, many simply drowned in mud holes. British gunner John Palmer elaborates on the mire’s omnipresence as well as the horrible mental and physical fatigue it caused:

[...] it was mud, mud, everywhere: mud in the trenches, mud in front of the trenches, behind the trenches. Every shell hole was a sea of filthy oozing mud. I was tired of seeing infantry sinking back in that morass, never to come out alive again. I was tired of the carnage, of all the sacrifice that we had there just to gain twenty-five yards. And there were many days when actually I don’t remember this; I don’t remember because I was so damned tired. The fatigue in the mud was something terrible. It did get to you, and you reached a point when there was no beyond; you just could not go any further. And that’s the point I’d reached.<sup>29</sup>

That was the point Hamp had reached, and when asked why he had walked away from the guns, his reply was simply, “Passchendaele worse than anything.” (14:10).<sup>30</sup>

For many, Passchendaele has become synonymous with a completely senseless attack; two years after the war, Philip Gibbs, correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle* on the Western Front, observed that Passchendaele marked the lowest point in the morale of the British troops: “For the first time, the British Army lost its spirit of optimism, and there was a sense of deadly depression among many officers and men with whom I came in touch. They saw no ending of

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<sup>28</sup> Jack Sheldon, *The German Army at Passchendaele* (Barnsley: Pen and Sward Military, 2007), 231.

<sup>29</sup> “Podcast 31: Passchendaele,” *Imperial War Museums*, accessed 8 June 2017, <http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/podcasts/voices-of-the-first-world-war/podcast-31-passchendaele>.

<sup>30</sup> All the time stamps are from *King and Country*, directed by Joseph Losey (1964; Tulsa, OK: VCI Entertainment, 2014), DVD.

the war, and nothing except continuous slaughter, such as that in Flanders.”<sup>31</sup> Frank Hurley’s E01220 photograph (29 October 1917), the film’s official poster, needs no tagline. Three and a half years into *la der des ders*, the five war-fatigued Australian soldiers—Cpl. Reid of South Grafton, Lt. Anthony Devine, Sgt. Clive Stewart Smith, and two others, all members of a field artillery unit<sup>32</sup>—standing on a duckboard track in the ruins of Château Wood illustrate Gibbs’s commentary and the eschatological conditions surrounding the trial of Private Hamp in October 1917.

### ***Mise-en-scène: from page to stage screen and casting***

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*King and Country*, written by my late father, John Wilson, received praise both in its stage version [...] and in Joseph Losey’s Bafta-winning film adaptation for the emotional and psychological authenticity with which it dramatises its central human conflict, against the all-pervading backdrop of what prime minister David Lloyd George would later describe as one of the most gigantic, tenacious, grim, futile and bloody fights ever waged in the history of war.<sup>33</sup> —Sue Wilson

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While at the New York première of *The Servant* which garnished multiple international awards, Losey gave Dirk Bogarde a small television playscript entitled *Hamp* (1959), and because Bogarde had served in the Second World War and his father in the First, he was very interested in the subject, keen about the prospective project, and advised Losey to visit the Imperial War Museum and to read John Harris’s *Covenant with Death* (1961)—a novel chronicling three Sheffield boys who enlisted for king and country in 1914 and fought for each other at the Battle

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<sup>31</sup> Philip Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told: A War Observer’s Illumination Bomb* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 485.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Liddle, *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), plate 36, 195-196.

<sup>33</sup> Sue Wilson, “Theatre of War: For King and Country,” by Claire Black in *The Scotsman*, 30 March 2009.

of la Somme. Afterwards, Losey then gave the teleplay to his screenwriter Evan Jones (*Eva*, 1962, and *These Are the Damned*, 1963) who scripted a first draft entitled "Glory Hole" which did not thrill Great War specialist Bogarde; thus, Jones revisited the original source and incorporated a comic Greek chorus of Tommies not only to contrast the privates' trench life with that of officers' but also to comment on Hamp's plight. The inclusion of the chorus received mixed reviews, and Losey himself was uncertain about using it but included it, nonetheless, because he wanted to adhere the classical rules as much as possible. A writer himself, Bogarde also enhanced parts of the script, such as the scene in which Hargreaves interrogates Hamp about his motives for walking away from the front, to which he replies that he had been blown into a deep shell hole where he believed he would have drowned as he had seen happen to others in his battalion. In Bogarde's copy of the script is the following addition in his own handwriting: "I saw it happen to a bloke once before—He just slipped off the duckboard—wasn't pushed, just fell—into a hole, he went bobbing up and down in the mud like a boiling egg in water—with his pack and everything you know."<sup>34</sup> Although his name does not appear as a scriptwriter in the film, Losey did give him due recognition in later interviews.

The eternal conflict between good and evil and social classes—including military rank—is a recurrent leitmotif in Losey's work, and the court-martial of Private Hamp exemplifies this theme perhaps better than any of his other films. Besides Hamp (Tom Courtenay) and Hargreaves (Dirk Bogarde), the cast includes the following: battalion commander Lieutenant Webb (Barry Foster) who, for selfish reasons, hopes the boy gets off and is willing to perjure himself to assure a not guilty verdict; antediluvian Medical Officer Midgley (Leo McKern) who,

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<sup>34</sup> John Coldstream, *Dirk Bogarde: The Authorised Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), 303.

untrained in psychiatric trauma, routinely prescribes laxatives to remedy shell shock and war fatigue; the heartless pragmatic Colonel (Peter Copley) who, serving as President and jury of the court, finds Hamp guilty; accusing officer Captain Midgley (James Villiers) who, fervently believing in adhering to military law, finds Hargreaves amateurish in his plea for justice; Lieutenant Prescott (Barry Justice) who, as legal specialist, reminds all court members of Britain's military law; and Private Jack Sparrow (Jeremy Spencer) who, as *porte-parole* of the Greek chorus, comments on Hamp's predicament. Although not actors, photographs from the Imperial War Museum, such as that of a dead soldier in a Flanders' field, play a significant role in Losey's art as his lens transforms, for example, Ernest Brooks' 1916 print of the uniformed, skeletal corpse disintegrating in the Ypres Salient to become Hamp playing the harmonica in his cell, gradually revealing throughout the film, layer by layer, the tragic history of this guileless soldier.

Produced by Daniel Angel for British Home Entertainment Productions as a television film on a sparing 86,000-pound budget and a curt timetable of ten days of reading rehearsals and eighteen days of shooting, *King and Country*—Losey's last black-and-white film—gave him particular satisfaction: "When I made *King and Country*, I thought that for once I'd made an absolutely simple picture, according to all the classical rules [...]."<sup>35</sup> Similar to Reginald Rose's *12 Angry Men* (1957) in which ninety-three minutes of the ninety-six-minute film transpire in an oppressively enclosed jury room where juror number eight (Henry Fonda as Davis)—the first dissenter of not guilty—plants the seed of reasonable doubt, eighty-three of Losey's eighty-eight-minute film also occur in a claustrophobic environment. Production designer Richard McDonald masterfully transformed Shepperton Studios into Passchendaele dugouts and billets—bogged in ubiquitous mud fueled by incessant rain and littered with live rats, a mule's

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<sup>35</sup> Gordon Gow, "Weapons," *Films and Filming*, vol. 17, issue 3, October 1971, 41.

carcass, and a rotting dead horse—where Hargreaves attempts to do the same as Davis: convince the court of his client's innocence. In an interview with Michel Ciment, Losey vividly recalls the grueling filming conditions:

That was a monstrous film to shoot because the stage was deep in mud, we brought these rats in, they got loose and the place really stunk like the trenches. We were working under artificial rain in mackintoshes and boots, and by the time we were finished with our eighteen days in that place, we really felt as though we'd been in the trenches.<sup>36</sup>

The film crew worked arduously—so much so that they filmed an astounding twelve minutes of the movie in one day, and Bogarde believes this film represents some of his best acting.<sup>37</sup>

Actors' performances can either bolster a film's credibility or diminish it, and role casting is an art itself within the Seventh Art; choosing roles based mainly on prominent names, for example, does not always result in a great or even good movie, as film critic Donald Spoto indicates in the following castings of acclaimed actors:

Kirk Douglas in *The Juggler* [1953] a dimple-chinned toughie who is incredible as a German refugee in Israel. [...] And the three leading players in *The Pride and the Passion* [1957], since it's impossible to accept Frank Sinatra as a Spanish peasant, Cary Grant as an arid professional soldier, and Sophia Lauren as an Iberian Ava Gardner. And Burt Lancaster in *Judgment at Nuremberg* [1961], because he doesn't seem to know the difference between spiritual anguish and being in a sulk.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph Losey and Michel Ciment, *Conversations with Losey* (London: Methuen 1985), 247.

<sup>37</sup> Coldstream, *Dirk Bogarde*, 302.

<sup>38</sup> Donald Spoto, *Stanley Kramer Film Maker* (New York, N.Y.: G.P. Putnam's, 1998), 19.

On the other hand, Michael Anderegg applauds Alec Guinness's performance as Colonel Nicholson in David Lean's *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), describing his role as the "archetypal Lean protagonist, [...] the stiff-upper-lip British soldier, [...] the fanatic who attempts to impose his inflexible sense of destiny on the world around him."<sup>39</sup> He also lauds the artist as "self-effacing an actor, so capable in his best performances of getting inside the skin of the character he plays, that we cannot easily separate the two. The actor is completely absorbed by the character."<sup>40</sup> Guinness owns the role of Nicholson. For *King and Country*, with its long takes and facial close-ups, finding talented actors such as Guinness became particularly critical, as Losey explained to Michel Ciment: "I was very limited to what I could do, so I concentrated as much as I could on the acting, on lines, on getting a feeling of claustrophobia, getting a real sense and smell of war without guns being fired, excepting . . . the distant guns that are heard."<sup>41</sup> A popular heart-throb and matinée idol in the fifties, Bogarde was also regarded as an accomplished and clever actor by most critics, such as Sheridan Morley who lauds him as a "thinking" actor: "[. . .] if you were looking for his [Bogarde's] only true rival as postwar British film star, then you would, I think, look to James Mason. [. . .] both knew something special about the camera that it had to see you *think* as well as act."<sup>42</sup> Bogarde's father served at la Somme, Passchendaele, and Caporetto, and the young Dirk, growing up in post-Treaty of Versailles Britain, vividly remembers how the war had affected his dad: "[. . .] what he witnessed in the mud and the noise and the terror made it impossible for him in later years to remain in the kitchen while eggs or potatoes were boiling"<sup>43</sup>—an indelible childhood imagery that he included as a

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<sup>39</sup> Michael A. Anderegg, *David Lean* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 95.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Losey and Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 244.

<sup>42</sup> Sheridan Morley, *Dirk Bogarde: Rank Outsider* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 8.

<sup>43</sup> John Coldstream, *Dirk Bogarde: the Authorised Biography*, 31.

metaphor in the script. In his autobiography, he also recalls that “[his dad] suffered from catarrh, and also from nightmares which his experiences [. . .] from la Somme and Passchendaele had engendered.”<sup>44</sup> In an interview for *Woman* magazine in 1961, Bogarde recollects his fixation with the Great War as an eighteen-year-old: “For long months, I turned his [my father’s] study into a battlefield, literally. I had become obsessed with the First World War. [. . .] I felt the squalor, the violence and destruction of that trench warfare, fought before I was born, so vividly that the only way I could express it was by painting it.”<sup>45</sup> One of his drawings is on display at the Imperial War Museum. Serving in the army for six years in the Second World War profoundly marked him as well, particularly being one of the first witnesses of the horrors of Belsen: “I realised I was looking at Dante’s inferno.”<sup>46</sup> In 1964, there could not be a better-suited Hargreaves than Bogarde. He owns the role; he is Losey’s archetypal protagonist. The director unhesitantly stated that, “*King and Country* was the best of both of us. [. . .] Dirk is a thinking actor, a skilled one, and an honest one. [. . .] He is generous (Tom Courtenay’s fine performance in *King and Country* could not have been possible without Dirk’s generosity).”<sup>47</sup> Lean and Guinness collaborated in six films, Losey and Bogarde in five; both contributed to the two directors’ most critically acclaimed motion pictures.

As a newcomer to the screen in the early 1960s, Tom Courtenay formed part of the “kitchen sink” realism, a movement characterized by working-class, “angry young men” protagonists disenchanted with the social order and, as a result, possessed the social

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<sup>44</sup> *Dirk Bogarde: The Complete Autobiography* (London: The Octopus Group Limited, 1988), 563.

<sup>45</sup> Dirk Bogarde, “My Life Story,” *Woman*, 25 February 1961, 14 and 18.

<sup>46</sup> “Sir Dirk Bogarde,” *The Telegraph*, obituary, 10 May 1999, accessed 29 July 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/7606375/Sir-Dirk-Bogarde.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Losey, introduction to *The Films of Dirk Bogarde* by Margaret Hinxman and Susan D’Arcy (London: Literary Services & Production, 1974), 2.

background as well as the physical attributes demanded for the role of Hamp: Courtenay's father "[...] chipped paint off fisher-trawlers in the Hull dockyards";<sup>48</sup> and, as Tony Richardson who casted Courtenay in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) told Thomas Wiseman, "He has a very interesting face with a good set of broken teeth. He could have a great future, I feel, provided that he doesn't get his teeth fixed, as some fools are already trying to get him to do."<sup>49</sup> Many critics regard Sir Tom Courtenay as a brilliant actor, and in his role as Private Hamp, he delivered an exceptional performance (best acting at the 1965 Venice Film Festival).

### The Opening Sequence

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A Royal Fellowship of Death

—William Shakespeare's *Henry V* (4.8.91)<sup>50</sup>

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In one of the most haunting opening sequences of any war film, the first five minutes of Losey's *King and Country* are filled with symbolism, illustrating the essence of the whole movie, not only the macabre court-martial case of Private Hamp but also the all-encompassing historical setting of the Passchendaele nightmare. The tone is set from the moment the reels roll: the audience's eyes are fixated on the Quadriga atop the Wellington Arch with the four-horses-abreast chariot driven by a carefree, naked boy, and Nike—the winged goddess of victory—spiraling above them against a gray sky, echoing the ephemeral pyrrhic November 1917 victory. With a jump cut to a worm's eye view of the mournful Royal Artillery War Memorial, we hear a soft dirge by Larry

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<sup>48</sup> Alexander Walker, *Hollywood, England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), 126.

<sup>49</sup> Tony Richardson, interviewed by Thomas Wiseman, *Evening Standard*, April 1961, in Alexander Walker, *Hollywood, England*, p. 64.

<sup>50</sup> Upon discovering the 126 French noblemen who died in the Battle of Agincourt, King Henry V summarizes with this line followed by the question, "Where is the number of our English dead?" (4.8.92). *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition: The Complete Works* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 1595.

Adler—one of America’s greatest harmonica players/composers, also black-listed—as the lens pans with a reverse zoom on the horizontal bronze statue of the fallen artilleryman. By personifying the camera lens as a silent pedestrian and the monument as the flashback narrator, Losey effectively uses a technique reminiscent of the cinema of attractions, which “[...] solicits a highly conscious awareness of the film image engaging the viewer’s curiosity.”<sup>51</sup> As James Leahy observes:

Losey takes his camera in really close to the Royal Artillery war memorial, making the spectator see something essentially very different from the reminder of past glory that registers on the consciousness when one walks casually past the memorial: the usually unnoticed detail of the memorial evokes with overwhelming power the grimness, death, exhaustion that war involves.<sup>52</sup>

Draped with his greatcoat and resembling Giuseppe Sanmartino’s unsettling realistic *Christo velato* (1753), it is one of four comprising The Royal Artillery Memorial sculpted of Portland marble in 1925 in memory of the fallen artillerymen by Charles Sargeant Jagger who fought at Gallipoli and on the Western Front where he was gassed and wounded. When commissioned to do the memorial, he told the *Daily Express* that the “experience in the trenches persuaded me of the necessity for frankness and truth.”<sup>53</sup> The lens first focuses on the fallen soldier’s boots and then retracts to show the entire left side of his body and the uppercase inscription beneath, “A ROYAL FELLOWSHIP” from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*; however, this artilleryman’s camaraderie

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<sup>51</sup> Tom Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator,” in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, edited by Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 121.

<sup>52</sup> James Leahy, *The Cinema of Joseph Losey* (London: A Zwemmer Ltd., 1967), 137.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Holmes, *Shots from the Front: The British Soldier 1914-18* (London: Harper Press, 2010), 232.

rightly belongs neither to the royals nor to the commanding officers but to the English commoners who, like Hamp, volunteered to defend king and country.

The camera then tilts slowly up the plinth, pausing on the artilleryman's helmet resting on his cloak-covered body and the continuation of Shakespeare's line: "OF DEATH." Instead of giving credit to his rank and file, Shakespeare's Henry V acknowledges God for the miraculous victory: "Oh God! thy arm was here, / And not to us but by thy arm alone / Ascribe we all! [...] Take it, God, / For it is none but thine" (4.8.98-105).<sup>54</sup> That Jagger's memorial honors the fallen artillerymen, not the generals, and that Losey's opening sequence zooms in on Shakespeare's line suggest an ironic message contradicting Henry V's declaration: in the separation of class, the commoner who does not have blue blood running in his veins is often more noble than his commanders. Losey craftily employs low-angle reverse shots, often used to place persons or objects in adversarial rapports, to prepare the viewer for the ensuing irony. Conceived late in the creation, the controversial fallen artilleryman "meant much to Jagger, who believed that a memorial should tell the public about the horror and terror of war, and he paid for this part of the work himself."<sup>55</sup> Next, the Assyrian-style reliefs narrate struggling soldiers fighting, falling, and dying on the Western Front—emblematic of the artillery barrages of the three Battles of Ypres. When the lens retracts and points upward, it pauses on the second bronze—the driver—holding out his arms like Christ the redeemer; then, when it finally reaches the still controversial, carved-in-stone, mammoth, full-size BL 9.2-inch Mk I howitzer atop the four artillerymen, we hear the first sounds of war: the firing of machine guns. The memorial's main inscription on the west and east faces reads, "IN PROUD REMEMBRANCE OF THE FORTY NINE THOUSAND &

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<sup>54</sup> *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, 1595.

<sup>55</sup> Gavin Stamp, "London: Royal Artillery Memorial," *Twentieth Century Society*, accessed 6 June 2017, <https://c20society.org.uk/war-memorials/london-royal-artillery-memorial>.

SEVENTY SIX OF ALL RANKS OF THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR KING AND COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1919." As the sightseer looks upward at the howitzer's anchoring bolts, the camera speed increases all while the faint background noise of the London traffic suddenly changes into that of a loud air hammer, then to that of a machine gun as the camera rapidly tracks along the cannon barrel, and finally to a six second full-screen frame of a terrifying mining explosion catapulting tons of dirt into the air, allowing the audience to contemplate the terrifying destructive power of the MK I howitzer, recreating the confusion and disorientation that shell-shocked soldiers like Hamp must have felt on the battlefield.

Losey makes effective use of contrasting sounds from the eerie solemn silence at the beginning to the far away city traffic noise, to the deafening explosion, and to the rain falling quietly on the deadly muddy battlefield at the end. The conception of the opening sequence arguably represents the best of his work: "The idea [of starting with the monument in Hyde Park] was mine. That's an incredible piece of camera operation, and I would never in a million years have been able to get that shot with anybody except my operator, Chic Waterson."<sup>56</sup> Fifteen years before *King and Country*, cinematographer Denys Coop also worked as camera operator with Robert Krasker (Oscar for best black and white cinematography) in Carol Reed's noir classic *The Third man* (1949), and there is a noticeable common quality between the black-and-white grainy imagery of the bleak underworld of Passchendaele and the underground sewer of Vienna.

As the harmonica resumes the dirge, the credits roll over the residua of the battleground: a lost boot, a soldier's helmet with a bullet hole, a broken wagon wheel, shovels stuck in mud, waterlogged duckboards, gas mask canisters, and reams of barbed wire; however, similar to the

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<sup>56</sup> Losey and Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 244.

clock as the *fil conducteur* in Fred Zinnemann's *High Noon* (1952), the image that repeatedly appears in this film is that of raindrops falling on slippery duckboards and into shell holes, turning them into lethal mud puddles. The ensuing dissolves of IWM photographs well depict not only the stage but also the destiny of many: a fallen soldier gradually decomposing in the mud. Losey punctuates the sequence with a full screen frame of IWM Q2041—the same one used in each opening sequence of the BBC's *The Great War*; "the ghastly uniformed shattered skeleton"<sup>57</sup>—and with the off voice of accused deserter Hamp reciting the following lines from A. E. Housman: "Here dead lie we because we did not choose / To live and shame the land from which we sprung. / Life, after all [sic], is nothing much to lose; / But [sic] young men think it is, and we were young" (XXXVI, 1-4).<sup>58</sup> The antithesis of a Plautusian *Miles Gloriosus*, or the "Braggart / Vainglorious Soldier," Hamp, with his opening recitation of Housman, not only summarizes his short-lived life as well as those of hundreds of thousands of other British soldiers but also echoes Wilfred Owen's warning, also known as "The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori*" (27-28).<sup>59</sup> It is all there: the deadly silence, the explosive clash of war machines with men, the perpetual rain, and the dead soldier fading into the nothingness of the Ypres Salient.

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<sup>57</sup> "Music and Visual Script," *BBC WAC T/32/1*, Tony Essex to Malcolm Arnold, n.d.

<sup>58</sup> A. E. Housman, *More Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936): 53. Hamp says "after all" instead of "to be sure" and "though" instead of "but."

<sup>59</sup> A Latin phrase from the Roman poet Horace's *Odes*, (III.2.13): "It is sweet and proper to die for the fatherland." Wilfred Owen, *Poems* (New York: Viking Press, 1921), 15.

## The Protagonists: Hargreaves, the “soldier’s friend,” and Hamp, the hero-victim

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And yet there is not a more fatal error to young lawyers, than relying too much on speech-making. If any one, upon his rare powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the drudgery of the law, his case is a failure in advance.<sup>60</sup> —Abraham Lincoln, notes for a lecture, July 1, 1850

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To introduce Captain Hargreaves, the camera leaves the cramped confines of Hamp’s cell for the more spacious outdoors—a nocturnal, behind-the-frontline scene where the Greek chorus infantrymen are slogging shit—to focus on his dapper entrance. When Webb expresses his regret for his being assigned this case—a deserter on trial for his life—and its lack of formality, Hargreaves replies dryly, “That would make it all the more futile, wouldn’t it? [...] We’re all on trial for our lives. Anything that makes him [Hamp] original is that he’s failed [...] as a soldier. The whole blasted thing is a waste of time. If a dog brakes his back, you don’t sit around chatting all day; you shoot it” (7:20-7:35). Gobsnacked at Hargreaves’s heartless comparison of Hamp to a wounded dog, Webb asks Hargreaves what he was like as a child, to which he coldly replies, “the same” (7:42). Private Jack Sparrow, the spokesperson of the Greek chorus, pipes up the following to share with the viewer the infantrymen’s opinion of Hargreaves: “Captain Hargreaves, prisoner’s friend” (16:35), and two others add, “Prisoner’s friend, fair trial!? Fair trial and a quick death” (16:36-16:40). Losey has just introduced the accused soldier’s worst nightmare—the uncompassionate defense attorney who would coldheartedly kill his own dog in the blink of an eye.

When Hargreaves introduces himself to his hero-victim client, Hamp replies, “I know you, sir, Trônes Wood and Warlencourt as well” (8:35), indicating that his reputation as a counselor precedes him. To better know his new client, Hargreaves queries him about how long he has

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<sup>60</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches & Writings*, Part 1: 1832-1858 (Library of America #45), 245.

been on the front and informs him that he is entitled to the help of a “defending officer” (8:46), or as Hamp says, “a soldier’s friend” (8:48). Unmoved, Hargreaves accepts, saying, “I suppose I can be as much use to you as anybody else, subject, of course, to your acceptance. No objection?” (8:50-8:55). An “at-ease” Hamp—thinking that formality no longer matters, much to Hargreaves’s dislike—thanks the captain for accepting his case, only to be scolded for lack of decorum and ordered “to pull himself together” (9:13)—a line repeated several times in the film. To illustrate that classic “Losey-esque” class tension, the camera—in reverse position from the opening sequence where it solemnly looks up at the War Memorial—hovers above the two and looks down at them in a make-shift cell with flashes from exploding shells blinking on Hamp as he provides his name, age, I.D. number, civilian occupation, education, and marital status. Analogous to the jurors in *12 Angry Men*, Hargreaves is a character in development, as Losey tells Ciment: “The picture is the personal relationship between that officer [Hargreaves] and that poor private deserter [Hamp]. And it’s really a class conversation in which the officer is educated by the boy’s simplicity.”<sup>61</sup> That “conversation” occurs soon after the opening sequence, and the unflinching defense officer’s Rousseauian journey is well depicted in two pivotal scenes, the first marking the moment it begins and the second its evolution. Throughout the movie, Coop’s cinematography plays a considerable role in supporting the script and the actors and contributes to a good part of the film’s artistic success.

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<sup>61</sup> Losey and Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 246.

## Hargreaves and Hamp's pre-trial *tête-à-tête*

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Character in development is a difficult theme in the cinema; making a rough guess, I should say that successful attempts could be counted on the thumbs.<sup>62</sup> —

Dilys Powell

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As both we and the captain learn that the soft-spoken Hamp quit school at the age of twelve to become a cobbler like his father and grandfather, married young, and has a little boy, we find him nice and sympathize with this simple soldier caught in a complicated conundrum. To better understand the psyche of his client, Hargreaves inquires, "Do you understand why I'm asking you these questions?" (10:10), to which Hamp replies, "You know best, sir" (10:14), portraying both his daftness and his respect of the class system. When Hargreaves pursues with the personal questions, inquiring first about his home life, he allows Hamp to stand at ease, but, before querying about his marital life, he proposes to Hamp to sit down, suggesting that he knows he will hear a sad life story, which he does: Hamp grew up without a father, and his buddy Len Wilson informed him via a letter that his wife has been having an affair with a neighbor. In a quick flashback, we see how Hamp imagines Len: sitting in bed with a smug smile while sipping tea, suggesting that he may, in fact, be the lover. Unfortunately, Hamp did not keep the letter, for it could have served well in his defense, and the only witness to the letter, Private Willy Bryson, recently died in action at Passchendaele, leaving Hamp the sole survivor of his battalion.

When Hargreaves hesitatingly asks if his marital problems had anything to do with what he is accused of doing, the simple-minded Hamp replies, "I don't know, sir. I never thought of it," (12:07) but follows with a rather savvy question, "Do you reckon it might be a reason, even if

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<sup>62</sup> Dilys Powell, *The Golden Screen: Fifty Years of Films* (London: Pavilion Books Limited, 1989), 137.

I never thought of it?" (12:10), indicating that, although equipped with only a primary-school education, he is not completely stupid. As Hargreaves stresses that other soldiers have lied using the same alibi and emphasizes that he must believe him in order to effectively defend him, the forever optimistic Hamp replies, "You can believe me, sir. It'll come out all right, sir" (12:36-12:39). When the multilayered sequence unfolds, the two are conversing in a profile medium close-up shot, but after Hargreaves asks, "Why did you volunteer?" (12:42), three flash cuts occur: first, a full close up of Hamp's face as he indubitably replies, "king and country, sir" (12:45-12:47), and then two pre-war stills of Kaiser Wilhelm II and King George V in full regalia—both on horseback in 1913, effectively and sublimely illustrating the power of the three-word slogan for the call to arms and the title of Losey's film. Afterwards, Coop rotates the camera to an over-the-shoulder (Hargreaves's) shot marking the beginning of the connection between the two characters, and Hargreaves's voice softens. Continuing his story, Hamp explains that his wife and mother-in-law, who never thought he would enlist, dared him to volunteer, and he did because, "more than anything else, [he] wanted to surprise them" (13:00-13:05). Despite being uneducated and "gormless," Hamp insists he is not "daft," as illustrated in the following lines when he points out that the officers live a different war than the privates:

And of course, uh, we, we, we, didn't know what it was gonna be like. Did we? I didn't think about it too much, but I suppose ya reckon to yourself, in my kinda life, it can't be much worse than this, ya know? But not to you, sir, but my sort and most of the lads. But we was wrong. Up there, well, it's worse than anything. (13:06-13:33)

When Hamp elaborates on those horrors, recounting, "in a manner of speaking" (13:55), that he and the lads "didn't know better" (13:47), suggesting that he and thousands of others were

duped by propaganda to enlist in Kitchener's army, Hargreaves advises him "to be careful of [his] manner of speaking" (13:56).

Stills of dead recumbent soldiers on top of each other superimposed on Hargreaves and Hamp now fill the entire screen as Hamp stands to recount that he is the sole survivor of his battalion, reciting the names of the battles he fought: "The funny thing is, the fellows I'd come out with, d'ya know there's none of them left except me; Loos, Loos that was the first one, yeah, it was a long time, that one. Trônes Wood, Gommecourt, Warlencourt, and now this one here—Passchendaele, worse than anything" (14:03-14:40). Eyes blinking rapidly and momentarily speechless, Hargreaves's warm mien disappears. The lone survivor's words have just struck a chord with the dispassionate captain; fifteen minutes into the film with the whistling of falling bombs in the background, the "prisoner's friend's" distraught expression indicates his moment of anagnorisis. The solicitor has taken the first step on "his road to Damascus." Humbled and more sympathetic, he is now beginning to understand Hamp. With its leitmotif closely associated with *Paths of Glory*, *King and Country* has been inevitably compared to Kubrick's masterpiece; however, unlike Hargreaves, Kubrick's protagonist Colonel Dax (Kirk Douglas) does not evolve in that neither his consideration for the common soldier nor his view of the value of one human life changes. Dax remains Dax throughout the film.

"Have you ever been wounded?" (14:42) inquires Hargreaves, to which Hamp answers that he bled a few times, visited the GCS once for nothing much, and was sent back up the line. Pensively lost in thought as if reliving the moments, he adds that many soldiers contemplated losing an arm or leg and that some even tried self-amputation to avoid fighting at the front line, a theme in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's César-winning film *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (2004) where five soldiers self-mutilate with the hope of being discharged only to be sent over the top in no

man's land at la Somme. When Hargreaves asks him if he ever tried it, Hamp recounts that he and his buddy Willy Bryson thought of trying it but never acted upon it and adds that Willy was killed; however, Hamp is unable to finish the story due to having "to go some place" (15:45), i.e. the latrine, because of chronic diarrhea.

When their *tête-à-tête* resumes, Hamp explains his reason for walking away from the battalion. Re-composed, once again stern, and looming over the seated private, Hargreaves inquires, "Did you expect to get away with it?" (17:55), to which he replies, "Well, I, I, I wasn't really thinking about it, sir, one way or the other. I just couldn't stand it anymore. It wasn't the first time, sir. I, I, I nearly did it once before; I mean, I, I, I thought of it, time of Warlencourt. I got sent back on a water party. I, I was thinkin' of gettin' away, but an MP got his eye on me, so I, I didn't" (17:57-18:22). Hargreaves asks Hamp what he would have done if the others had deserted, to which he replies, "I don't think it could have been much worse, sir" (18:33). Unlike color cinematography, black and white allows for infinite variations of intensity in lighting and shadows, sharpening and enhancing character development in a way that color cannot attain, as Ebert describes in a scene in Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1946):

Ingrid Bergman walks through a doorway toward Cary Grant. He is listening to a record of secret testimony, which proves she is not a Nazi spy. At the beginning of the shot, Grant thinks she is guilty. In the middle, he does not. At the end, he thinks she is innocent. Hitchcock begins with a backlit silhouette. As she steps forward, she is half light, half shadow. As the testimony clears her, she is fully lighted. The lighting makes the moral judgment.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ebert, *Awake in the Dark*, 56.

Ebert continues by saying that in black and white photography, “[. . .] the lighting indicated a hierarchy of moral values,”<sup>64</sup> and Orson Welles also believed that black and white was “the actor’s best friend because it concentrated more on the actor’s demeanor than any other aspect.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly in *King and Country*, as the camera alternates slowly back and forth between the two faces during this lawyer-client exchange, the captain’s eyes in the frontal shot remain hidden in his kepi’s shadow while the private’s facial profile is always lighted. Now softened, as indicated by his whisper, Hargreaves pursues his inquiry, focusing on the last time when he could not stand it anymore. Hamp vividly describes his near-death drowning experience in the Salient in the following:

The time this really started goin’ in my head, I got blown into a shell out. Two of the lads pulled me out with their rifles. Well, I, I, I had seen it ‘appen to a bloke a couple days before. He, he slips off the duckboards into the ‘ole, ya see, and he, he’s bobbin’ up and down in the mud, like an egg boilin’ in water with his pack on and everything. Well, I didn’t help him. Nobody did. So, of course, when I get in the mud, I thought that was my lot, ya see. I’m gonna drown in it like he did: s’, sucked into it, fighting in it, drowning in it. After that, I couldn’t stand it anymore.

(18:47-19:26)

Hungry for more details, Hargreaves, reminding Hamp that his battalion had been relieved and were having a respite from battle, asks why he waited ten days before deserting, to which Hamp ripostes, “Like I said, sir, I can’t say anything different. I couldn’t stand it anymore. It didn’t matter where I was, any place I could hear guns” (19:41-19:49). He adds that Webb, his

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>65</sup> James Egan, *1000 Facts About Film Directors* (Lulu Publishing: 2015), 127.

commanding officer, gave him extra rum to calm his nerves, but Hamp confesses that it didn't make any difference; he was adamant about not returning to the front—an incriminating detail in his trial.

Hargreaves, suspecting Hamp planned his desertion, needs to know why he waited ten days. "I don't know, sir, I didn't have a plan. I, I, I went to the MO that time, yeah, [...] he gave me a number nine, sir, for me bowels, but I spit it out when he wasn't lookin'. Maybe there was some sort of medicine that would've helped me, but there was one thing I didn't have any need of was a number nine" (20:29-20:48)—military jargon for laxatives. The only other "diagnosis" he received was a bad case of "cold feet," and the only other "treatment" was a pep talk—that "he was a soldier and should be a bloody soldier" (20:54-20:57). Hamp explains that the reason he consulted the medical officer was that he was hoping to get a tonic, something to stop the diarrhea, to stop the shaking, to help him sleep. A tonic, however, would not have helped, for Hamp was determined to get away from gunfire: "All I knew is I wasn't gonna go back up the line" (21:16). Tenaciously persistent, Hargreaves probes him again as to what made him decide to desert, and Hamp innocently replies, "I don't know, sir. I just started walkin', walkin' away from the guns. [...] After I had gotten a few miles away from the guns, I got it into my head that I was makin' for home, Islington, ya know" (21:30-21:49). Hargreaves wonders if he hid in ditches to avoid being detected, but he didn't. When arrested, Hamp heard the MPs say that, because he was deserting, it'd be a "shooting job" (22:58), and when Hargreaves asks if there is any additional information to add, Hamp, because he is the sole survivor of the battalion, reveals his optimism regarding the outcome: "there's nobody left in A Company that's been out 'ere as long as me, so they can't shoot me" (23:08-23:10). Oscillating between his duty to king and country and that to justice, Hargreaves is now standing with a lantern next to his head, his eyes

no longer in his kepi's shadow, marking an illuminating moment in his character transformation. Hamp's face, like Ingrid Bergman's in *Notorious*, is now a brightly lit frontal shot, indicating that not only verbally but also visually he is again convincing to Hargreaves and to the audience; however, the camera moves to a high-angle overhead take of the two, an ominous indication of their predicament. Feeling a strong duty to his client, Hargreaves then informs him of the probable verdict: "It's likely that you will be found guilty of desertion. And I would be failing my duty if I left the least shadow of doubt in your mind as to the consequences" (23:13-23:19); however, to maintain hope, he also hints that pleading innocent by means of shell shock might save his life: "unless I can convince the court that you were acting under extraordinary strain at the time you committed this crime, you will almost certainly be sentenced to death" (23:24-23:33).

Hamp, upon hearing the mere suggestion of the death penalty, bursts in vehement protest: "It's the first time, sir! Even Mr. Webb, sir, said I haven't been a bad soldier. He, he might say the same to them if he was asked. [...] Yeah, I thought that was worth mentioning, sir" (23:35-23:45). Determined to gather more useful information that might convince the court to be lenient, Hargreaves asks Hamp if he has anything else worth mentioning, to which Hamp answers by vividly describing a soldier's worst nightmare—having a buddy's body explode all over oneself, as so well portrayed by Manech who suddenly finds his comrade's entrails in his mouth in *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*. The following lines profoundly mark Hargreaves:

Did, did I tell you about Willy? [...] about when he, he, he was killed? [...] Well, ya see I, I was alongside him when it happened, same as many a time before, four, five, six yards away. It, it wasn't the first time I'd seen a man blown to bits, of course. And it wasn't even as if Willy was anything special to me, well just a bit, ya

know, cos he come from up our street, but that's all, nothing special. One thing about Willy, he was quick. Ya see, I never saw it. I'm five or six yards away, and I turned around, and now Willy's nowhere, except over me. Oh, I tell ya, they had to get me a new uniform. (23:55-24:46)

Hearing this horror story first causes him to sit and then to ask his war-weary client if he, after serving prison time, could be dependable on the front. Hamp's embarrassingly honest reply, "I'd try me best, sir" (25:11), aggravates Hargreaves all the more. Frustrated by his non-committal reply, Hargreaves pushes even harder, demanding to know if he could go up the line and stay up the line, only to be challenged by a defensive Hamp interrogating him about the nature of certitude: "Do I have to tell you the truth, sir? [...] Can you tell me, sir? Can you tell me anyway of being sure?" (25:35-25:48). As this second eight-minute-long sequence ends, Hamp has unintentionally succeeded in swapping roles: Hamp now plays the solicitor asking questions to Hargreaves as if he were on trial; as a result, Hargreaves's face stiffens, displaying his apprehension about being able to get the boy off.

These two scenes represent remarkable acting and cinematography. Unlike Richard Burton, for example, both Bogarde and Courtenay, who preferred the stage, could transition superbly from stage to screen, and both give performances rarely achieved in court-room/court-martial cinema. Disparate from *12 Angry Men* and Stanley Kramer's *Judgment at Nuremberg* where the actors move and the camera constantly moves, cuts, and focuses on multiple characters, *King and Country* focuses almost entirely on the sustained, intense long-take facial close-ups of the two protagonists. There is no room for error: their voices ring true and unaffected, and their facial expressions are faultless and genuine throughout, ending both times with Hargreaves's loss of composure, augmenting the tragedy of the moment. In *Judgment at*

*Nuremberg*, perhaps the most acclaimed court-martial motion picture, one of the most memorable scenes of Maximilian Schell's Oscar-winning performance as defense counsel Hans Rolfe comes when he grills Oscar-nominated for best supporting actress Judy Garland as Irene Hoffmann-Wallner.<sup>66</sup> As good as Garland's performance is, she is not as convincing as the standing Schell; her role is also the more difficult one of the two because, in the medium shot of her seated, she is unable to use full body language to support the facial expression. Unlike Fonda, Garland, and Schell, Courtenay and Bogarde carry the entire movie from beginning to end.

To shift from Hamp's setting to that of the CO's, Losey transitions with a dissolve of heavy rain falling onto the dead body of a soldier decomposing completely into the mud, the same soldier seen in the double exposure still of the first scene when Hamp said, "Passchendaele, worse than anything" (14:40), foreshadowing the grim dénouement. The camera then cuts and zooms full screen on a tableau depicting a verdant pastoral landscape hanging on the wall of the officers' digs as we keep hearing the heavy downpour. The officers, however, are calmly carrying on in the dry comfort of their quarters. At this point of the character development and almost in the blink of an eye, the two diametrically opposed images effectively and poignantly convey to the audience not only Hamp's near-certain predicament but also the rigid stratified British military caste system, or the gulf separating the officers from the NCOs. No words are said. None are needed. The one dissolve encapsulates that aspect of the narrative. It is a subject that both fascinated and revolted Losey from the day he had arrived in England, as he

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<sup>66</sup> See "Judy Garland's 1961 *Judgement At Nuremberg* [sic] Television Interview," Youtube.com, accessed 19 August 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuNslpfYFpo>.

told Alexander Walker: "There's no place I know where the class system is so horrifying and so unchanging as it is here in England."<sup>67</sup> A recurrent theme in Losey's filmography, the transition from the dissolve to the officers' billet trenchantly illustrates here the institutionalized clash of classes in the British military justice system even within the confines of a make-shift dugout amid one of the most horrific battles in the history of war, representing a powerful scene in a powerful movie.

### Hargreaves vs The Justice System

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Il vaut mieux hasarder de sauver un coupable que de condamner un innocent.<sup>68</sup>

—Champagnac Voltaire

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In Hodson's novel, Hamp's guilt is unquestionable, thereby eliminating any question of the prosecution's willfully executing Hamp. In Wilson's play, however, the prosecution slays Hamp, for they had a choice to convict him either of AWOL, punishable by prison time, or cowardice, an inevitable death penalty, and they chose the latter. Similarly in Losey's film, the prosecution, because they can make "sensible" decisions, are responsible for their verdict, while Hamp, suffering from war fatigue, is not, and there lies the crux of the drama, as Hargreaves states in Hamp's defense: "The prisoner, when he did the thing for which he is being tried, was no longer responsible for his actions. This court is responsible for its actions; it has not lost possession of itself. This court knows clearly what it is doing. This court has the power to choose" (51:11-51:26). In the play and in the film, Hamp's tragic outcome is the result of duplicity: both his

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<sup>67</sup> Alexander Walker, *Hollywood, England*, 203.

<sup>68</sup> "It is better to risk saving a guilty person than condemn an innocent one." Champagnac Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Tome Quarante-Quatrième Romans Tome I (Kehl: L'imprimerie de la société littéraire-typographique, 1784), 25.

mother-in-law and unfaithful wife dared him to volunteer; and Britain's propagandists enticed him—as depicted in the still shot of Phoebe's florist with "Women of Britain say Go" painted on the storefront—and thousands of other untrained youth to conscript, of which hundreds are shot at dawn *pour l'exemple*.

When the Colonel asks Hargreaves if he wishes to address the court on the prisoner's behalf, he replies, "No, sir," (51:03) for, instead, he wishes to address the court on its behalf. In this scene, Hargreaves, unable to conceal his contempt for British law and the hypocrites who support it, reminds the court that they, unlike Hamp who was not responsible for his actions, are responsible for theirs:

This court knows clearly what it is doing. This court has the power to choose. [...] Is this war so old, and are we so old in it that we have forgotten? Are we not fighting to preserve some notion of decency, some notion of justice to preserve for this court the right to choose? I beg to remind the court that if justice is not done to one man, then other men are dying for nothing. (51:22-53:53)

Doing a volte-face from Hargreaves, the lens captures the stunned facial reactions of the members of the court who, for the first time, understand their culpability: the first one bites his lower lip, the Colonel looks stern yet gobsmacked, Midgley is completely frozen, and Prescott bows his head in shame. "Matter of opinion" (54:13) is the only retort the obdurate Colonel can bark after Hargreaves's emotionally and factually charged concluding statement. Following the court's dismissal, the lens focuses again on the heavy, omnipresent rain as it pellets the tin roof where the abysmal trial has just adjourned. As the film approaches full-circle completion, the camera focuses on a pair of boots descending stairs, reminiscent of those of the fallen artillerymen in the opening sequence, but these belong to Hargreaves, heading to the officers'

quarters where Midgley both congratulates his defense as well as denigrates it, calling him an “amateur to plead for justice” (56:49), well exemplifying the British duplicitousness. As Losey explains to John Milne, “*King and Country* is a film [...] about hypocrisy, a story about people who are brought up to a certain way of life,”<sup>69</sup> and Midgley represents deceit at its finest.

### Hargreaves and the Verdict

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This is what we stand for: justice, truth, and the value of a single human being.<sup>70</sup>

—Judge Dan Haywood

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Following the trial and en route to the CO’s quarters where the insouciant Colonel and Midgley are enjoying a bottle of wine, Hargreaves, distraught by the guilty verdict, pauses a moment, bracing himself against a collapsed brick wall, and while standing on the slick duckboard, he throws his notebook in a mud puddle, signifying his defeat and perhaps his desire to bury the case in the Salient. In his haste, he slips in the mud, sullyng his trousers and hands, representing his soiled, guilty conscience. Once in the Colonel’s barely-lit quarters and sitting next to him, Hargreaves—his hands still covered in mud—coughs upon taking a swig of Haig’s whisky, and the Colonel rhetorically breaks the silence: “A bit short on ceremony, aren’t we?” (1:07:36). Winded, Hargreaves replies, “Yes, I had too much of that today” (1:07:46). When the Colonel coolly says, “You lost” (1:07:56), Hargreaves bereavngly retorts, “We all lost. We’re bloody murderers” (1:08:06-1:08:12), marking the apex of his contempt for the court and himself. Addressing Hargreaves by his first name, he chastises him for overstepping boundaries and commands him to pull himself together, the very advice that O’Sullivan gave Hamp. Apologetic

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<sup>69</sup> Joseph Losey, *Losey on Losey*, ed. John Milne (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 125.

<sup>70</sup> *Judgment at Nuremberg*, directed by Stanley Kramer (United Artists, 1961).

yet insistent on knowing the true reason the Colonel found Hamp culpable, Hargreaves rises to do a post-trial interrogation of his commanding officer with a stutter similar to Hamp's: "Why? Hmm? Actually why? [...] Was it O'Sullivan's evidence? You know he's an idiot. Was it, was it my defense? I, I, I did my best" (1:08:46-1:09:10). The Colonel demonstrates again his hypocritical pragmatism when telling Hargreaves, "Very eloquent, Charles, but nothing to do with the facts" (1:09:10-1:09:12). Disgusted with technicalities, Hargreaves ripostes, "Facts, facts, facts. We shoot that poor li'l bastard simply because he went for a walk. That's all it was, you know. It was a technical desertion, but it was just, a, a bloody li'l walk really. And you know it, don't you?" (1:09:13-1:09:36). Satisfied with sharing his true thoughts and feelings yet exhausted, Hargreaves sits, and the Colonel "check mates" him with more facts about the very immediate future: "These facts. Your battalion moving up tomorrow. Important to maintain morale. Sentence of death to be carried out immediately" (1:09:37-1:09:47). Holding the very memo with his soiled hands, a beaten Hargreaves with an inebriated speech interjects, "Oh my God, *pour encourager les autres*. Has it ever encouraged anyone? Discouraged anyone?" (1:09:50-1:10:04). When the Colonel assures him that it has, Hargreaves, still fighting for the cause, questions the Colonel again, "Are you sure?" (1:10:10). Affected by the blow, the Colonel admits that he is not entirely sure; they both look each other in the eye as if equals in a duel, after which they both simultaneously look away as if in disgust about the whole rigmarole. Aware of the inevitable and wanting to know who will do what and when, Hargreaves asks who is in charge of the execution, to which the Colonel replies pragmatically, "Jack Webb. His man. His platoon. His mistake. Teach him a lesson" (1:10:38-1:10:43).

Moving on to the next item of business—the *faire-part de décès* to inform Hamp's relatives of his death—the Colonel, now more interested in reading his book, orders Hargreaves

to deliver it to Webb. Reaching for the next-of-kin letter from the mantle and staring at himself in the mirror, a signature Losey shot, Hargreaves echoes in a whisper the “Mock Turtle’s Song” from John Lewis Carol’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, “There’s a porpoise close behind me, and it’s [sic] treading on my tail [pause] [facts]”<sup>71</sup> (1:11:10-1:11:17), which re-iterates his original criticism about the court at the beginning of the trial—i.e. calling the British judicial system a farce—and confirms his self-acknowledgment as an active participant in a surreal parody of justice, marking his awareness that he is his own worst enemy, or a Baudelairean “Héautontimorouménous”: “Je suis le sinistre miroir / Où la mégère se regarde.”<sup>72</sup> In essence, Hargreaves descends into his own chthonic realm of moral doubt. In retort, the unemotional Colonel, capitalizing on the word “facts,” recites the opening verses from John Masefield’s “Biography,” “When I am buried, and all my thoughts and acts / Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts, / And long before this wandering flesh is rotten / The dates which made me shall long be forgotten”<sup>73</sup> (1:11:25-1:11:37), illustrating his idyllic guilt-free conscience.

The ensuing sequence dedicated to the execution commences with a shot almost identical to that of his introduction in the film’s opening: a recumbent Hamp playing the harmonica in his cell. During his “farewell party” when his comrades get him rum soused while playing blind man’s buff, Private Jack Sparrow, in echoing Masefield’s message, reiterates the facts: “Here today, gone tomorrow. It doesn’t matter who kills you, does it? [...] You rot in the mud, and that’s that. It doesn’t matter what anyone bloody well thinks about it, does it? [...] We’ll be in the same boat as you are. We’ll all be rat food before long” (1:14:43-1:15:17). After

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<sup>71</sup> John Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1920), 151.

<sup>72</sup> My translation: “I am the sinister mirror / In which Megaera looks at herself.” Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal* (Tournai, Belgique: La Renaissance du livre, 2002), 105.

<sup>73</sup> John Masefield, *The Poems and Plays of John Masefield: Poems* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1922), 59.

the priest offers confession and communion—which Hamp immediately vomits—and Webb drugs him with a somniferic dose of morphine, heavy rain drops are falling into a mud hole as the battalion carry a half-conscious, blindfolded, chair-bound Hamp over the slippery duck boards in front of the firing squad. In this scene, the lens acts as one of the firing squad members taking aim, specifically the one who deliberately fires too far to the left of Hamp, indicating that at least one does not contribute to the execution. O’Sullivan removes the blindfold from Hamp, now lying half submerged in the Salient, and confirms he is not dead. To our surprise, Hamp opens his eyes. Webb grabs his pistol to finish the job, but Hargreaves takes it from him, kneels in the mud hole with Hamp, and, as he cradles him with his left arm almost like Mary mourning Christ, asks, “Isn’t it finished yet?” (1:24:56). In a full facial close-up, Hamp apologetically replies, “No, sir. I’m sorry” (1:24:57-1:25:03). As he closes his eyes and opens his mouth, Hargreaves puts the gun’s barrel in Hamp’s accepting mouth like a priest offering the Eucharist at Last Rights; the next shot, also a close-up, details every loud click of the chamber as his forefinger slowly squeezes the trigger. The exploding gunfire of Hargreaves’s *coup de grâce* not only echoes the bomb’s explosion in the film’s opening sequence but also reminds us of Hargreaves’s opening line about shooting a dog with a broken back. Burdened by culpability—that both he and the justice system had failed Hamp—Hargreaves, in assuming the responsibility to carry out the final act, makes certain to avoid another failure, and, at the same time, this peripeteia confirms and conveys to the audience his total transformation. In essence, the Hargreaves of the opening scene as a CO cog in the war machine has died with his client. Hamp’s limp body sinks deeper in the mud until there is nothing but rain falling on the slough of Passchendaele as Hargreaves’s voice reads the death notification to the next of kin: “Hamp, 10 Gifford Street, Islington, London, We deeply regret to inform you that your Private A. J.

Hamp, killed in action, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Army Council express their sympathy.—Secretary, War Office" (1:25:27-1:25:42). Analogous to the cemetery in *The Third Man* and to classical dénouements, *King and Country* ends and begins with two stills from the IWM: the first, a shot of General Haig in the backseat of convertible, and the second of a dead horse lying on his side in the Salient with an out-of-focus image of Ypres' Cloth Hall Tower—a "barb" to the pigheaded general who, believing a charging cavalry could defeat machine guns and mustard gas, signed the execution warrants of hundreds of men like Hamp. In his description of Haig in a 1935 diary entry, Liddell Hart wrote, "He was a man of supreme egoism and utter lack of scruple—who, to his overweening ambition sacrificed hundreds of thousands of men. [...] A man who gained his ends by trickery of a kind that was not merely immoral but criminal."<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

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On the Somme, [Haig] had sent the flower of British youth to death or mutilation; at Passchendaele he had tipped the survivors in the slough of despond.<sup>75</sup> —John Keegan

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It took the Allies thirteen weeks to capture Passchendaele. General Haig disregarded information of the chthonic conditions and never went there to see it or his men; however, when his Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Sir Launcelot Kiggell arrived to reconnoiter the conditions at the closing of the campaign, he allegedly said with shock: "Good God, did we really send men to fight in that?"<sup>76</sup> The driver beside him who had been through the campaign added, "It's worse

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<sup>74</sup> Liddell Hart in *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* by John H. Mearsheimer (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 60.

<sup>75</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: AA Knopf, 1999), 369.

<sup>76</sup> *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, editor Geoffrey Parker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 300.

further on up.”<sup>77</sup> Nearly half a million soldiers on both sides perished, and “the Allies had captured a mere 5 miles (8 km) of new territory at a cost of 140,000 combat deaths, a ratio of roughly 2 inches (5 cm) gained per dead soldier.”<sup>78</sup> In view of such aftermath, in retrospect, the case of Private Hamp could be summarized as, “[...] the story of a private who had been struck by a moment of sanity amid the madness of war so that he quite simply begins to walk home.”<sup>79</sup> His story and the nightmare of Passchendaele intersect and thus are inextricably intertwined. Inured to three years of bloodshed at the front and as the sole survivor of his battalion after Loos, Trônes Wood, Gommencourt, and Warlencourt, Hamp’s nerves snapped; the deadly quagmire and the sound of guns were the straw that broke the camel’s back. As for Losey’s Hargreaves—like playwright Wilson’s, an Aristotelian protagonist confronting his own fate or downfall—he will never “[...] be able to forget his [Hamp’s] innocence.”<sup>80</sup>

Unlike Paul Gross’s *Passchendaele* (2008), Losey’s *King and Country* has no women, no battles, and no German enemy yet imbues Passchendaele. With this tightly knit, well-constructed production, the director perspicaciously timed the filming as the monumental twenty-six-episode BBC documentary was being broadcasted in 1964 for the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great War when memories of it were fading and Second World War movies dominated theaters. *King and Country* was a timely and consequential contribution for future generations to remember those often ignored victims—the simple soldier suffering from shell shock and war fatigue. An admirer of Lewis Milestone, Losey had requested to use *All Quiet on the Western Front*’s butterfly for *King and Country*’s opening sequence, which Milestone

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “July 11 1917 to November 10 1917: Third Battle of Ypres (Battle of Passchendaele),” *World History Project*, accessed 30 January 2017, <https://worldhistoryproject.org/1917/7/11/third-battle-of-ypres-battle-of-passchendaele>.

<sup>79</sup> Morley, *Dirk Bogarde*, 112.

<sup>80</sup> Wilson, *Hamp*, introduction.

delightfully accepted but the studio denied.<sup>81</sup> It was a blessing in disguise; similar to Orson Welles's influential opening sequences in *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *Touch of Evil* (1958), the Royal Artillery War Memorial as a silent flashback narrator and an allegory to the condemnation of war represents one of the most indelible microcosmic overtures in the war film genre. Like the producers of *The Great War* who repeatedly showed photograph Q2041 of the "ghastly uniformed skeleton," Losey, in similar fashion, skillfully transforms impressionable IWM stills of dead soldiers as *fil conducteur*, or the unifying thread of the movie, to portray the hero-victim Hamp, rendering the film that much more credible as well as memorable, which Eugene Archer confirms in his 1964 review: "[...] his gaunt face fleshing out the feature of a skeleton to create the director's most haunting image."<sup>82</sup> In writing about the mystery of being photogenic, Néstor Almendros, "a true master of light,"<sup>83</sup> explains that a person who "has no bones" is very difficult to light: "A good bone structure in the face gives the light something to hold on to and allows it to create an interplay of shadows. If the face is flat, the light has nowhere to fall."<sup>84</sup> Such subtleties in cinematography lighting are best achieved in grainy black and white.

If there ever was a time to produce the kind of stark reality of military (in)justice in the Great War juxtaposed against the dismal conditions of Passchendaele, 1964 was the time, Shepperton Studios was the place, and Dirk Bogarde and Tom Courtenay were the perfect protagonists. If not Hodson's book or Wilson's play, Losey's film is worthy of a Pulitzer

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<sup>81</sup> Losey and Ciment, *Conversations with Losey*, 245-246.

<sup>82</sup> Archer, "Attack on War Seen at Philharmonic Hall: Tom Courtenay Excels in Role of Private," *New York Times*, 24 September 1964.

<sup>83</sup> Rustin Thompson, "Myth-making With Natural Light," *MovieMaker*, 1 July 1998 (New York: MovieMaker Publishing), 154-169.

<sup>84</sup> Néstor Almendros in *Projections: A Forum for Film-makers* by John Boorman and ed. by Walter Donohue, issue No. 1, (Faber & Faber: London, 1992), 199.

nomination. The convergence of all these elements comes only once, and *King and Country*—a “savage attack on war and the bestiality it engenders”<sup>85</sup>—exemplifies the Seventh Art at its best. It is a war film essential.

## Epilogue

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I should like us to acquire the whole of the ruins of Ypres. [...] A more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the world.<sup>86</sup>

—Winston Churchill addressing the Imperial War Graves Commission, London, 21 January 1919

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Harry Patch—the last surviving British combatant, the last “Tommy”—was wounded during the Battle of Passchendaele on 22 September 1917 when a shell exploded overhead killing three of his comrades, scarring him for life: “[...] such was the trauma of his experiences, his family disclosed, that each year the old man had locked himself away in a private vigil for his fallen friends.”<sup>87</sup> He died 25 July 2009 at the age of 111, a defining moment, for the living memory of the Third Battle of Ypres now belongs to the popular culture and the arts.

From 6 October 1917 to the end of March 1918, Commonwealth soldiers buried 343 of their own at Tyne Cottage, a barn off the side of the Passchendaele - Broodseinde road,<sup>88</sup> and there began a cemetery on the grounds captured in Frank Hurley's E01220, *King and Country's*

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<sup>85</sup> Archer, “Attack on War Seen at Philharmonic Hall: Tom Courtenay Excels in Role of Private,” *The New York Times*, 24 September 1964.

<sup>86</sup> Mike McBride, *Last Stand At Zandvoorde 1914: Lord Hugh Grosvenor's Noble Sacrifice* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2016), 212.

<sup>87</sup> Daniel Boffey, “Passchendaele, 100 Years On: A Final Act of Remembrance,” *The Guardian*, 29 July 2017, accessed 30 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/29/passchendaele-100-years-on-a-final-great-act-of-remembrance>.

<sup>88</sup> Paul Chapman, *Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial: In Memory and In Mourning*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2016), 1.

movie poster. Today, Tyne Cot Cemetery with its 11,965 burials, of which 8,369 are unnamed, is the largest in the world of any war for Commonwealth forces soldiers, and the Portland marble Menin Gate bares the names of 54,896 allied soldiers who were never found.<sup>89</sup> Many of them disappeared into the swamp created by continual shelling and rain on reclaimed bogland. All Commonwealth troops sent to the trenches at Passchendaele marched through the Menin Gate. Still today, traffic is stopped there at 20:00 BST every day for the local fire department to sound the Last Post. Of the poets honoring those such as Hamp who died at Passchendaele, Siegfried Sassoon perhaps eulogizes them best in "On Passing the New Menin Gate":

Who will remember, passing through this Gate,  
The unheroic Dead who fed the guns?  
Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,—  
Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?

Crudely renewed, the Salient holds its own.  
Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;  
Paid, with a pile of peace-complacent stone,  
The armies who endured that sullen swamp. (1-8)<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Common Wealth Graves Commission*, cwgc.com, accessed 28 February 2018, <https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-cemeteries-and-memorials/53300/tyne-cot-cemetery/history>.

<sup>90</sup> Siegfried Sassoon, "On Passing the New Menin Gate," *Collected Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* (New York: Viking Press, 1949), 188.

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