

**Filming, faking and propaganda:  
The origins of the war film, 1897-1902**

**Film, het vervalsen en propaganda:  
De oorsprong van de oorlogsfilm, 1897-1902**  
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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**Stephen Bottomore**

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Promotor: Prof.dr. F. E. Kessler

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## **Short summary**

In this thesis I present the first detailed treatment of war and early cinema, describing the representation of conflicts in film from the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 through the Spanish-American War, Boer War, and others to about 1902. I show that in attempting to cover these events, early filmmakers faced a challenge, for warfare at the end of the nineteenth century was changing, relying more on defence and concealment and less on highly visible offensives; there was also increasing regulation and censorship. Surprisingly, in just half a decade, filmmakers found ways to cope, by developing new 'genres' such as acted fakes and films of 'related events', and new exhibition strategies. However, much of what they presented in these ways was, effectively, militarist propaganda.

## **Executive summary**

War was one of the main subjects of early films, yet, while several scholars have noticed this preoccupation, there has as yet been no systematic examination of it. In this thesis I aim to write this history for the first time, describing the cinematic coverage of conflicts from the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 through the Spanish-American War, Boer War, and other conflicts up to about 1902. I show that in attempting to cover these events, early filmmakers had a difficult task, for warfare at the end of the nineteenth century was changing, relying more on defence and concealment and less on highly visible offensives such as cavalry charges; and furthermore, there was increasing official regulation and censorship of reporting. All this posed a challenge for filmmakers. These wars had to be represented, being, as all wars are, the biggest news stories of their day. Yet, with the new tactics making battle less visible, and with increasing official controls, how could wars be put on film? Surprisingly, in just half a decade, filmmakers found ways to cope, 'representing' war on screen by developing new 'genres' of films and novel exhibition strategies.

One solution appeared in the form of collusion with the military, whereby the cameraman would 'arrange' to film the troops in the war zone in apparently genuine military activity. Another strategy was to film 'war-related' actualities: views of people and places connected with the war. Thirdly, producers made staged films away from the front, such as 'fakes' (realistic or otherwise), or scale-model re-enactments, or allegorical scenes of imperial triumph. A fourth solution involved exhibitors putting together mixed programmes of war-related films, and in the process creating some of the longest film shows seen to date.

Thus, in grappling with this problem of 'how to represent war', filmmakers made genuine cinematic innovations. However, though the resulting films and shows were formally inventive, the subject matter was often little more than sensational demonisation of the other side. These early filmmakers, therefore, while being genuine innovators, also laid the groundwork for film propaganda through the twentieth century.

## Samenvatting

Oorlog was een van de belangrijkste onderwerpen van vroege films. Hoewel verscheidene filmhistorici de bovengemiddelde aandacht die deze films trokken hebben opgemerkt, is er tot op heden echter nog geen systematisch onderzoek naar gedaan. In deze dissertatie beoog ik deze geschiedenis voor het eerst te schrijven, door het beschrijven van filmische verslaggeving van verscheidene conflicten, vanaf de Grieks-Turkse Oorlog van 1897, via de Spaans-Amerikaanse Oorlog, de Boerenoorlog, en andere conflicten tot aan ca. 1902. Ik zal laten zien dat vroege filmmakers in hun pogingen deze gebeurtenissen te tonen voor een moeilijke opgave stonden, aangezien oorlogsvoering aan het eind van de negentiende eeuw veranderd was, en meer gebruik maakte van verdediging en camouflage dan van zeer zichtbare aanvallen zoals voorheen de aanvallen van de cavalerie dat waren. Bovendien was er een groeiende officiële regulering en censuur van de verslaggeving. Dit alles vormde een bijzonder complexe uitdaging voor de filmmakers. Deze oorlogen moesten echter gerepresenteerd worden, aangezien ze, zoals alle oorlogen, voor het publiek zeker de belangrijkste nieuwsberichten van hun tijd waren. Maar hoe konden oorlogen, ondanks de nieuwe tactieken die oorlog minder zichtbaar maakten, en ondanks de toenemende officiële controle, toch op film worden vastgelegd? Verrassend genoeg vonden filmmakers in slechts een half decennium manieren om met deze problemen om te gaan, door oorlog in beeld te brengen in nieuwe 'filmgenres' en door nieuwe vertoningstrategieën te ontwikkelen.

Eén oplossing diende zich aan in samenwerking met het leger, waarbij de cameraman er voor zorgde dat de troepen in het oorlogsgebied werden gefilmd tijdens ogenschijnlijk authentieke militaire activiteiten. Een andere oplossing was het filmen van oorlogsgelateerde non-fictie opnames: beelden van mensen en plaatsen die met de oorlog verband hielden. Ten derde werden op afstand van het front in scène gezette films geproduceerd, zoals 'fakes' (realistisch of anderszins), inclusieve nabootsingen van zeegevechten met schaalmodellen, of allegorische scènes van imperiale overwinning. Een vierde oplossing diende zich aan doordat vertoners gevarieerde programma's samenstelden van aan oorlog gerelateerde films, waarmee ze bovendien enkele van de langste filmvoorstellingen tot dan toe creëerden.

Door met het probleem 'hoe oorlog te representeren' om te gaan, zorgden filmmaker dus daadwerkelijk voor innovaties op filmgebied. Hoewel de films en filmvoorstellingen die dit opleverde in formele zin innovatief waren, stegen ze wat betreft hun onderwerpen vaak niet uit boven een sensationalistische demonisering van de tegenstander. Deze vroege filmmakers legden daarmee, behalve dat zij absoluut innovaties doorvoerden, eveneens de fundering voor de filmpropaganda van de twintigste eeuw.

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In the process of researching this dissertation over several years, I have been helped greatly by many different archives, libraries, and other institutions, as well as by colleagues and friends. I am deeply grateful to all for their advice, support and information.

I am especially obliged to the following institutions and libraries: the British Library, British Film Institute and the National Film and Television Archive in London, the Library of Congress in Washington, the Nederlands Filmmuseum, the Centre National de la Cinématographie and the Cinémathèque française. Without the huge resources of these institutions I could not even have attempted to write this thesis, and particular staff members have been extremely helpful, among whom are: David Sharp and Janet Moat at the BFI library, as well as Sean, Anastasia and others there; Bryony Dixon at the NFTVA Viewings Service; Roger Smither and Ann Fleming at the Imperial War Museum. At the Library of Congress, Pat Loughney, David Francis, Madeleine Matz and Paul Spehr have all been generous with their time and in providing information. Beth Werling and John Cahoon at the Seaver Center were cooperative in finding much relevant material in their archive; and Biograph expert Ron Magliozzi at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was generous with his knowledge. As so often, American archivists and librarians have been wonderfully accommodating. I wish to thank especially the librarians at Onondaga County Public Library and the Onondaga Historical Association who mailed me many Syracuse newspaper articles for my work on Ackerman in the Philippines and China.

I would like especially to acknowledge the kind support of the following friends and colleagues. In the UK: Nick Hiley and Luke Mckernan, for their expertise on war and actuality filmmaking, and their incisive comments at critical moments; as well as Deac Rossell and Tony Fletcher for their specific research findings. Farther afield in Europe I thank: Sabine Lenk, Ivo Blom, Riccardo Redi, Laurent Mannoni, Henri Bousquet, Yuri Tsivian, the late Geoffrey Donaldson, Herbert Birett, Nico de Klerk, Martin Loiperdinger, Joseph Garncarz and Joan Minguet Batllori. In the USA: Richard Koszarski, Charles Musser, Paul Spehr and Kirk Kekatos. Elsewhere: Hiroshi Komatsu, Paolo Cherchi-Usai, Ernie de Pedro and Nick Deocampo. I acknowledge others within the individual chapters.

I am indebted to Patrick Hickman-Robertson for giving me my start in film history research, and for finding the initial quotation on Frederic Villiers which kicked off all my subsequent work on early war films. Thanks also to Kevin Brownlow for his encouragement and help over the years, and for the chance to see his incredible collection and research files at his home. Michelle Aubert was at the NFTVA when I began my research on Boer War cameraman Joseph Rosenthal, and became as devoted to researching this pioneer as I was. Since heading the CNC in France she has never faltered in her support for my work, and her colleague there, Nadine Dubois, has helped by supplying film descriptions and film frames at very short notice. My friend Vanessa Toulmin at the National Fairground Archive has been wonderfully generous in



supplying me with images and photocopies (as well as offering her expertise on early film exhibition), despite many other commitments.

I am particularly thankful to my supervisor for this thesis and friend, Frank Kessler. Frank not only encouraged me to take on the project through Utrecht University, but has been a constant guide in trying to turn a mass of research notes gathered over twenty years into a dissertation with some focus. His sharp eye has spotted many inconsistencies and errors, and his wide reading in the field of film history and other fields has meant that he could give me leads which I would not otherwise have considered. Sincere thanks for his continued forbearance, especially when my schedule overran, and for the practical support of himself and Sabine Lenk which allowed me to stay in Holland when required.

This dissertation would not have been started without the opportunity I was given through the Ph.D. International program of the Onderzoeksinstituut voor Geschiedenis en Cultuur (OGC) of Utrecht University. My gratitude goes to the OGC, and in particular to Franz Ruiter and Bas Plaatsman who offered me this chance and retained their friendly confidence throughout. I was also helped by a grant from the Kraszna-Krausz Foundation in 2001-2002, and by a grant from the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek in 2006. These enabled me to make further prolonged visits to archives, especially in the United States, which has enhanced the depth of my research. Prior to writing this thesis, I had already published several articles in journals on the early filming of wars; I had also edited an issue of *Film History* (the first ever double issue) on the theme of war and military film.<sup>i</sup> These, however, only covered part of my subject, and the OGC's decision to sponsor my PhD has enabled me to make a far fuller survey of this theme. Thanks also to Joost Broeren for his Dutch translation of my thesis summary.

I am grateful to friends and family in the UK, the USA, Thailand and many other places for encouraging me to commence this project and to see it through. My late parents always supported me in my research, and helped me learn to think and to write in a more critical fashion. I have worked on this subject of the early war film over the past several years while pursuing a parallel career in documentary television production, and my colleagues at North South Productions – Polly, Sue, Peter, and especially the late Richard Keefe – provided me with a wonderful work environment for many years, enabling me to see (and film) the world, yet always being considerate when I wanted time off to do my archival research.

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<sup>i</sup> My articles dealing with this theme of the early war film include the following: 'Frederic Villiers, War Correspondent', *Sight and Sound* 49, no. 4, Autumn 1980, p. 250-55. 'Joseph Rosenthal: The Most Glorious Profession', *Sight and Sound* 52, no. 4, Autumn 1983, p. 260-265. 'Il Cinema Appare Nelle Guerre Balcaniche e Boere, dal 1895 al 1914', in *Il Cinematografo al Campo*, edited by R. Renzi (Ancona: Transeuropa, 1993), p.32-39. 'Films of the Balkan Wars', *Journal of Film Preservation*, no. 46, April 1993, p. 49-50. 'In Time of War', *Sight & Sound* 111, no. 9, Sep 1993, p. 30-33. "'Every Phase of Present-Day Life": Biograph's Non-Fiction Production', *Griffithiana*, no. 66/70, 1999/2000, p. 147-211. 'War and Militarism', issue of *Film History* 14, nos.3-4, 2002.

## Archives and libraries visited for my research

### United Kingdom:

Bill Douglas Centre, Exeter: various periodical references.

British Film Institute (BFI) Library and Special Collections: rare film journals and manuscripts including programmes of early film shows.

British Library (BL): numerous rare books, periodicals and microfilms, including war correspondents' accounts.

British Library Newspaper Library: numerous cinema, photographic, theatrical and military trade journals; newspapers and weeklies.

Imperial War Museum: various items in the film collection including M&K Boer War fakes.

National Archives (Public Record Office) (PRO): War Office files about the regulation of war filming; Foreign Office reports of reactions to war films in different countries; Board of Trade files of ships manifests showing travel of war correspondents etc, and companies' files re early film producers.

National Army Museum: Cox papers re Boer war filming; manuscripts and papers re Boer and Sudan wars, and other reference sources.

National Fairground Archive (NFA) (at Sheffield University library): rare performing arts periodicals and programmes.

National Film and Television Archive (NFTVA): numerous early films of the Boer and other wars.

National Museum of Photography, Film and Television (NMPFTV), Bradford: photographic journals and sundry research files.

Royal Photographic Society: rare photographic journals (now in the NMPFTV).

Science Museum: Charles Urban Collection (now in the NMPFTV): Warwick and Urban catalogues listing Boer and other war films.

### France

Bibliothèque nationale de France: photographic, film and theatrical journals, and Rondel Collection.

BiFi, Paris (now housed in the Cinémathèque française): film books, especially French regional film histories; early cinema trade journals and books; Will Day Collection re early cameramen and exhibitors.

Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), Bois d'Arcy: early war films, including Méliès fake war films.

ECPA: information about early war cameramen.

Société Gaumont, Paris: information on early newsreels.

### United States of America

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS): Selig collection; Clark scrapbooks; journal citations (e.g. *Views and Film Index*).

Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley: rare books and accounts of the Spanish American war.

Columbia University, New York: Edward Epstein photographic collection.

Library of Congress (LoC), Book and Periodical Divisions: newspaper citations; early film journal citations; rare books, especially by war correspondents.

Library of Congress, Copyright Division: various scripts and production details of films made for the US military, etc. from 1890s.  
Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division: items in George Kleine collection.  
Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division: photographs of Spanish American and other wars.  
Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division (LoC-MBRS): early war films from the Paper Print collection and Roosevelt collection; periodicals such as the *New York Clipper*; rare film books.  
Museum of Modern Art Film Dept., New York: Biograph and other films; Biograph production register and film frames; early film journals; Merritt Crawford early film materials collection; rare film books.  
National Archives, Washington: references to the US military's interest in motion pictures during the Spanish-American War, Philippine War and Boxer Uprising, especially regarding the work of C.F. Ackerman.  
New York Public Library (NYPL): rare book collection; newspaper citations; rare early film journals; a unique run of the *Photographic Dealer*.  
Seaver Center, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History: Biograph Company collection: re Philippine and other wars; Edward Amet collection re fake war films; Earl Theisen collection.  
Smithsonian Institution: National Museum of American History (NMAH): Gordon Hendricks collection.  
UCLA: items re Spanish American war in Albert Smith collection.  
USC: film journals collection (e.g. *Moving Picture News*); film books.

### **Philippines**

American Historical Collection, Rizal Library, Ateneo University: various books, photographs and journals from the American period, including secondary works.  
Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati: accounts of the Philippine War, including periodical references and rare books.  
Lopez Museum: periodicals from the American period.  
University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City: secondary works on the Philippine War.

### **Other countries**

Cineteca del Friuli, Gemona: rare early Italian film journals.  
Nederlands Filmmuseum: early films and rare books.  
Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde: rare early film journals.  
Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main: rare books and early film journals.  
Danish Film Institute, Kobenhavn: rare film books.  
National Library of Australia, Canberra: material on early film screenings.  
State Library of New South Wales (including the Mitchell Library), Sydney: material re early war cameraman, Joe Rosenthal.  
AUA Library and Chiang Mai University Library, Thailand: various general reference resources.

## SOURCES and ABBREVIATIONS

During my research I have consulted numerous books and articles on film history, as well as manuscript sources, and dozens of photographic, theatrical and early cinema trade journals from 1895 to 1915. The following are the most frequently used sources, together with the abbreviations I have used.

### Periodicals

(Published in London, unless otherwise indicated)

Abbreviation	Full title
AP	<i>The Amateur Photographer</i>
Bios	<i>The Bioscope</i>
BJ or BJP	<i>British Journal of Photography</i>
BJP Suppl.	<i>British Journal of Photography supplement</i> , normally meaning the <i>Lantern Record</i>
<i>The Era</i>	<i>The Era</i>
FH	<i>Film History</i> (Indiana)
<i>Graphic</i>	<i>The Graphic</i>
HJFRT	<i>Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television</i> (Oxford)
HW	<i>Harper's Weekly</i> (New York)
ILN	<i>Illustrated London News</i>
KLW	<i>Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly</i> (later simply <i>Kinematograph Weekly</i> )
LW	<i>Leslie's Weekly</i> (New York)
MHTR	<i>Music Hall and Theatre Review</i>
MPW	<i>Moving Picture World</i> (New York)
NY Clipper	<i>New York Clipper</i>
NYDM	<i>New York Dramatic Mirror</i>
NYT	<i>New York Times</i>
OLCJ	<i>Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal</i>
OMLJ	<i>Optical Magic Lantern Journal</i>
PD	<i>The Photographic Dealer</i>
PJ	<i>The Photographic Journal</i>
PN	<i>The Photographic News</i>

## Other sources

Abbreviation	Full title
Barnes, 1897 volume; Barnes, 1898 volume; etc	John Barnes' series on <i>The Beginnings of the Cinema in England</i> , mainly covering one year per volume to 1901. Published from 1976 to 1997 and republished by University of Exeter Press thereafter.
<i>Early Rare British Film-Makers' Catalogues</i> microfilms	'Early Rare British Film-Makers' Catalogues, 1896-1913' (London: World Microfilms, 1983).
Gifford, <i>British Film Catalogue... Non-Fiction</i>	Denis Gifford, <i>The British Film Catalogue: Volume 2: Non-Fiction Film, 1888-1994</i> (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001).
Low and Manvell, vol.1	Rachael Low and Roger Manvell, <i>The History of the British Film, 1896-1906</i> (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948).
McKernan/Herbert, <i>Who's Who</i>	Luke McKernan and Stephen Herbert, eds., <i>Who's Who of Victorian Cinema - a Worldwide Survey</i> (London/ Bloomington, IN: BFI/Indiana University Press, 1996).
Musser and Nelson, <i>High-Class Moving Pictures</i>	Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, <i>High-Class Moving Pictures : Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920</i> (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991).
Musser, <i>Before the Nickelodeon</i>	Charles Musser, <i>Before the Nickelodeon : Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
Musser, <i>Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography</i>	Charles Musser, <i>Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900 : An Annotated Filmography</i> (Gemona (UD) Italy / Washington, D.C.: Giornate del cinema muto ; Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).
Musser, <i>Emergence</i>	Charles Musser, <i>The Emergence of Cinema : The American Screen to 1907</i> (New York: Scribner's, 1990).
Musser, <i>Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition</i>	Charles Musser, ed., 'Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1884-1908 – a Microfilm Edition' (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America and Thomas A. Edison papers, 1984).

## Military history sources

In addition to the above-mentioned general and cinema-related sources, I have read many books and correspondents' accounts about the wars of the period (selectively cited in the chapters). The following books have been my

main general reference sources on military matters, the Clodfelter proving particularly valuable, and from my experience, accurate:

Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts : A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991* (Jefferson, N.C. ; London: McFarland, 1992).

Robert A. Doughty, ed. *Warfare in the Western World. Vol 2: Military Operations since 1871* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1996).

R. Ernest Dupuy, and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History : From 3500 B.C. To the Present* (London: Jane's, 1986).

R. Holmes, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (OUP, 2001).

# INTRODUCTION, CHAPTER SUMMARY AND DEFINITIONS

## I. INTRODUCTION

### **Early cinema and warfare: overall argument**

It has sometimes been assumed by historians that the First World War was the first war to be extensively recorded on film, and that this war in a sense marked the beginnings of the cinema's relationship with the military. However, as I will show, war and film had come together long before the Great War. Almost as soon as the cinema was born in the mid 1890s, links with the military flourished. Many military events were recorded on film, and cameramen were soon travelling all over the world to cover the various so-called 'small wars' which were taking place at the turn of the century, in places such as Cuba, South Africa, the Far East and the Balkans.

I cover the period from 1897 to 1902 in this thesis, examining how the filming and representation of wars developed rapidly in this period of a mere half a dozen years. The armed conflicts dealt with are the following: the Greco-Turkish War, Sudan War, Spanish-American War, the Philippine War, Boer War, and Boxer Uprising. I trace the stories of the cameramen who covered these conflicts, describing where they went and what they tried to film. I also look at the problems they faced, and how these were (sometimes) overcome.

In this era of increasing official regulation and censorship, it was often difficult for correspondents to reach the front, especially if they were wanting to take photographs or films. And, ironically, at just the time cinema arrived in the 1890s, military technology was developing and the nature of warfare was changing, so as to make war more difficult to film. Longer range weaponry such as the machine-gun and long-range rifle meant that the battlefield was effectively stretched out, and there was an increasing emphasis on defence, thereby consigning the old style of close-order combat – with its hand-to-hand fighting and cavalry charges – to the history books. In the Boer War, for example, opposing forces were often at hundreds of meters distance from one another, concealed from view while exchanging sniper fire.

Early filmmakers had an almost impossible task to capture this new kind of warfare. Several early cameramen attempted the task on their primitive equipment, but in this newly emerging era of 'invisible war' – with camouflage, smokeless powder and long-range rifles and artillery – these efforts often failed. Using large, noisy cameras and without telephoto lenses, they were constantly frustrated. So, unable to record much if any actual combat, cameramen usually had to content themselves with merely filming troops on the march and other routine, non-combat activity in the war zone.

But cameramen and producers learned rapidly, and made great efforts to cover the new style of warfare. Early filmmaking in general was often a

question of 'problem solving', overcoming the inchoate technology and production processes in order to get the point across in the best way possible; nowhere was this more important than in the war film, where news of the war was in great demand, yet the events were so difficult to film.<sup>1</sup> One innovative strategy which had emerged by 1899, was to work closely, almost as partners, with the military authorities in the war zone. Thus, cameramen like Carl Ackerman in the Philippines began to seek help from officers to film troops in set-up engagements ('arranged', as I call them), such as charging past camera, as if the soldiers were attacking an off-screen enemy.

But some other cameramen shunned this 'pally', 'embedded' relationship with the military authorities, and remained more independent, finding alternative ways to overcome the practical problems of filming warfare. Some of these men – such as Paley in Cuba, Dickson in South Africa, and Rosenthal at several conflicts – surmounted official restrictions through persuasion and guile, working hard and taking risks to reach the war front. Their efforts established a foundation of moving picture journalism for the cameramen who would come later and cover wars throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

Part of the reason for the success (albeit limited) of these early war cameramen was their increasing degree of professionalism. While some of the first war cameramen were war correspondents like Frederic Villiers, or former military men (like Surgeon-Major Beevor) who had acquired or been lent film cameras to take to the front, by the time of the Boer War several of the operators (such as W.K.-L. Dickson) were in every respect professionals.

My thesis is not restricted to dealing with the filming of warfare on location, for development was also taking place 'back home' as producers and showmen experimented with new ways of representing war. Producers made up for the paucity of films from the front by shooting re-enacted incidents of the war, sometimes called (at the time and since) 'fakes'. They also made allegorical acted scenes, which were usually nationalistic propaganda in all but name. These various kinds of dramatised film satisfied some audiences, but also led to heated arguments in the case of the fakes, about whether spectators were being conned, especially if the film in question was claimed to have been 'shot at the front'.

Aside from such debates, exhibitors too were learning how to present war on screen more effectively. Some go-ahead showmen began to programme several military films together – including such subjects as shots of marching troops, genuine and faked films of the conflict, along with war-related lantern slides – in order to make more complete 'stories of the war'. The Eden Musée in the USA played a significant role in the development of this practice, for during the Spanish-American War this theatre screened extensive shows built up from individual film titles and lantern slides, sometimes rousing audiences to a frenzy of patriotism.

There were other instances of war films stirring audiences to patriotic pride or fury during this period, for during wartime, with heightened emotions on all sides, films about war (even apparently mundane shots of troops marching)



can elicit powerful passions. In some instances such films were aimed at legitimising, even glorifying warfare. Thus, within only its first decade, cinema had become thoroughly implicated in the prevailing militarism of the time.

During this first half dozen years of the war film, the visual language for presenting war on screen became increasingly sophisticated. I will map out some of the key elements of this visual language or 'cinematic apparatus', which employed as its vocabulary various war-related film genres: from general military scenes and shots of commanders, to actuality and 'arranged' films made at the front, as well as fakes shot far from the conflict. In this way exhibitors presented diverse images which represented the distant fighting for audiences far from the conflict, thereby managing to satisfy public curiosity about these wars.

The convergence of war and cinema had effects on the development of the film medium itself. In overcoming some of the problems of filming and exhibiting war on screen, these early film pioneers managed to further the aesthetic and commercial development of cinema in general, popularising longer durations of shows, and spurring on stylistic developments and the shift to the story film. In my conclusion I examine some of the evidence for this 'galvanizing' effect of the early war film on cinematic style.

### **Particular points in my thesis**

Particular points of note which I present in my thesis include the following. I offer a historical introduction to and interpretation of this subject, covering pre-cinematic modes of representing war in media such as photographs, lantern shows, newspapers and periodicals (though in the main body of the thesis I concentrate on film rather than on other media). I show that these existing traditions and practices of war reporting were significant for early war cameramen, and indeed some of these pioneer filmmakers had formerly been in the lantern or photographic trades or war correspondents.

War correspondents have a further importance for us, because the early cameramen were sometimes observed by such journalists while filming in the war zone, and through my reading of a large number of accounts by war correspondents, I have managed to find some fascinating and previously unnoticed descriptions of these cameramen at work.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these accounts, my sources include many trade journals, including photographic, theatrical, lantern and (later) film journals, some of which have scarcely been used by film historians to date.<sup>3</sup>

My thesis offers new information about some of the filmmakers who helped advance the art of early war filming. These include: veteran war correspondent Frederic Villiers who took a film camera to the Greco-Turkish war in 1897; lantern lecturer William Paley who filmed during America's first colonial war with Spain in 1898; cameraman Joseph Rosenthal who filmed the Boer war; and American journalist Carl Ackerman who filmed pro-American scenes in his country's conflict in the Philippines and China from 1899 to 1901.

In studying the exhibition of war films, I use data from various local and national film histories to show how war films, faked and genuine, were received around the world. It is especially interesting that audience reactions to the same films were different in different countries (this applies to non-war films too, though less markedly), and I trace some of this national variance in reception, including several examples of both enthusiastic and hostile reactions to Boer war films. Incidentally, through my unearthing of rare descriptions of war films by early spectators, and from published synopses, I have managed to identify for the first time several hitherto unidentified early war films held in major film archives.

I have researched this subject of war and early cinema for many years using numerous sources.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, despite examining large numbers of books and journals, the evidence for some of this activity of early war film making and exhibiting remains slim. Sometimes the only proof that a particular war film was made or that it was subsequently screened, is a single tantalising sentence in a magazine of the time. One would wish for more evidence, but in some of these cases we probably will never know for sure what really happened, for we reach the limit of historical resources. In these circumstances my task has been a historiographical one of trying to work out, or make reasonable guesses about, what happened and when.<sup>5</sup> I hope that my readers will bear with me in this task. Fortunately, this only applies to some filmmaking activities, and in many cases we are on surer ground, with more reliable or multiple sources to confirm the historical facts.

I should add that, while I have attempted to be as impartial as possible, and to take account of international dimensions, many of my sources are British and the thesis is written from a somewhat British perspective. I should also say that, while I take into account certain other media (such as the press and magic lantern shows) my study fundamentally concentrates on cinema.

### **Previous writers' work**

Surprisingly little attention has been devoted by scholars to the origins of the war film to date. Probably part of the reason for this neglect is that there is little contact between the disciplines of military history and media studies/film history. Practitioners of military history tend to concentrate on the conduct of war rather than on its media representation; humanities/media scholars are generally uninterested in, and sometimes hostile to, the military. My bringing together of these two subjects is therefore quite an unusual exercise in interdisciplinary history.

A certain amount of important work, however, has already been done in this field. To date the most influential theoretical examination of *war and cinema* has been Paul Virilio's book of that title. Virilio's main argument is that the evolution of war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has gone hand in hand with, and is in a sense linked to, a change in human perception; and this has been accompanied by developments in photographic and cinematic technique.<sup>6</sup> Virilio also suggests that the principal instigator and beneficiary of photographic image innovation has been the military, for whom a 'supply of images' has become almost as important as an ammunition supply.

Virilio's work is provocative and perceptive, and offers an interesting starting point for investigating why photographic images have been so important to the conduct and perception of warfare. But the book's main drawback as an analysis is that it is based on little primary research (and is not without errors). While he argues that war creates a demand for war news, Virilio scarcely describes how moving images of war were actually filmed and presented to audiences, and notably fails to look at the *early* development of these practices. Some other film historical works are similarly disappointing in the latter respect.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to Virilio's theoretical examination of war and cinema, there has been some more detailed historical work in this field which I have drawn on. Nicholas Hiley's all-too-little known thesis, *Making War*, is mainly about the First World War, though devotes considerable attention to the earlier era, and is extremely valuable for a number of insights, including its examination of the relationship between government and the media, notably film.<sup>8</sup> On the theme of the media and film in the Boer War and the First World War, the work of Stephen Badsey is equally important.<sup>9</sup>

Several authors have described the relationship between individual wars and cinema in the early period. Charles Musser in his *The Emergence of Cinema* deals admirably with the Spanish-American War; authors including John Barnes and Elizabeth Strelbel have studied the Boer War and cinema.<sup>10</sup> The films of the Philippine-American War have been the subject of several studies.<sup>11</sup> And Frank Gray's work on the Boxer Uprising is full of insight.<sup>12</sup> But all these historians have kept a quite narrow focus, discussing only films of the particular war in question. By contrast, my thesis goes deeper and wider, covering early films of several conflicts in this era, showing who made the films and how, and to what extent these pioneers built on pre-cinematic media traditions of war reportage, and how practices of presenting military subjects on screen evolved in the early film era.

## II. CHAPTER SUMMARY

My thesis is divided into parts and subdivided into chapters, covering the particular wars one by one, starting with the Greco-Turkish war of 1897, and going through to the Philippine and Boer Wars which ended in 1902, and finishing with the Boxer Uprising. In addition to this war-by-war coverage, I also have two initial more general chapters in which I examine the origins and aesthetics of early war filming, and a conclusion. I deal with six wars altogether, and generally cover three main themes to do with film in each war: filming, staging and exhibition (sometimes in separate chapters). In addition, I give a background historical and media context for each war. Within chapters I sometimes use 'boxes' for placing filmographic or other information which is peripheral to the main argument.

The individual chapters may be summarised as follows:

I begin in chapter 1 by looking at the military context in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier, and the popularity of media accounts of far-off, small wars, and I describe the changing battlefield, notably the adoption of accurate, high-velocity rifles and smokeless powder. I examine how pre-cinema media represented warfare: I briefly cover photography, the magic lantern and war correspondence and war art, and discuss how the changing nature of warfare affected its reporting.

Three issues or practices seem to me particularly significant in the pre-cinema era in relation to later issues about film and warfare. Firstly, a debate which took place in the 1890s about the relative merits of photography or drawings for the visual reporting of war. This has something in common with the debate which was to develop among early filmmakers about the relative value of actuality films versus re-enacted films of war. Secondly, the practice whereby photographers who covered conflicts from as early as the American Civil War, would 'arrange' the scene, especially the aftermath of battle, to produce a more vivid or pleasing photograph, which found its analogy among war cameramen, who sometimes 'arranged' their shots. Thirdly, the use of symbolic and nationalistic imagery in the press, often to comment on conflicts taking place between nations, was to find a direct parallel in the many allegorical films produced during the Boer and other early wars.

After this foray into pre-cinema, in chapter 2 I then move on to a general examination of war as represented in the early cinema. I note the strong drive to report the wars of this era in the new medium, yet the problems that early cameramen experienced in trying to film modern, warfare-at-a-distance. I cover the ways in which they tried to surmount these problems, such as 'arranging' troop movements at the front for the camera; and by post-production programming of films, which practice – through showing a multiplicity of short films related to the war – could offer audiences a greater feel for the event. In a more theoretical vein, I show that, based on discussion and discourse at the time, a push for 'authenticity' was behind the choice of what producers tried to film as well as what exhibitors chose to show. I delineate a 'theory of authenticity' as applied to early news and war films.

I also cover staged films. The best known of these films were re-enactments of battlefield incidents, and some filmmakers/showmen, claimed them to be actual recordings of the incidents themselves. I discuss the controversy which arose about these so-called 'fakes', and about the claims made for them, especially issues of deception and believability. I cover the reaction of early cinema spectators to such films, and discuss the advice on spotting fakes by commentators of the time, based on 'plausibility'. Also, there was another (less often discussed) class of acted films about early wars: symbolic or allegorical scenes, which did not claim to represent (or be recordings of) real battlefield events. These were often nationalistic or colonial in theme – and therefore effectively were propaganda.

After this, the main body of the thesis begins, in which I discuss particular wars and how these were filmed or otherwise represented and then exhibited by early showmen. Chapter 3 covers the Greco-Turkish War (1897). I prove that this war was filmed by war correspondent Frederic Villiers, meaning that he was the world's earliest war cameraman. Re-enacted films of this war were produced by Georges Méliès, and so this became the first war to be both filmed and to be faked. Interestingly, it seems that the fake films of Méliès eclipsed those of Villiers in audience appeal. The issue of believability of fakes emerged at this early juncture in film history, for some of Méliès' re-enacted films were apparently believed to be genuine records of the war by some spectators.

Several other issues which we cover later in more detail emerge for the first time in this war: including the importance of war correspondents in the early development of war filming. And there is a possible first example by a filmmaker of 'arranging' events on the battlefield, for Villiers may have posed some Greek soldiers in order to film them. The issue of propaganda arises too, for Villiers only filmed from one side in the war (the Greeks), and he was undoubtedly biased in their favour. I also cover the theme of deception and re-titling (a variation on faking), and I show that a film depiction of a completely different battle was shown as a Greco-Turkish War film, and taken by some in the audience as a genuine record of Greeks under attack. Some writers at this time addressed this issue of deception, using the criterion of *plausibility* to demonstrate that these first fake war films could not be genuine.

My 4<sup>th</sup> chapter covers the Sudan Campaign of 1898, especially the Battle of Omdurman. I prove that at least two men used film cameras at this campaign: Frederic Villiers (again), and the squire-filmmaker, John Benett-Stanford; and a third man, René Bull may have done so. All three were war correspondents, and I cover their work individually. Only Stanford managed to return with a film, this being a single shot of troops before the battle: seemingly a disappointing outcome, but this was a very important film given that it was taken on the site of battle, albeit just before the allied victory. But film exhibitors needed more, and to make up the difference they showed a number of 'related films': films of troops marching or at exercises (preferably the same units which had fought), views of the commanders in the war, etc. In addition a number of more symbolic, nationalistic moving images were produced and screened: British flags flying, allegorical pantomimes about the war, etc. Sometimes several films of the war were programmed together. This showmanship was in a sense a mini version of the more ambitious patriotic film exhibitions which galvanised American audiences during the Spanish-American War, the subject of our next chapters.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 – sometimes called the Cuban War – forms the theme of chapters 5 to 7. In the previous wars mentioned, the cameramen had all been war correspondents, and while this was not the case in America's war, there was a close relationship between film and newspaper reporting. The two cameramen who managed to reach Cuba to report on the war, William Paley and Billy Bitzer, worked hand-in-hand with print and photographic journalists (of whom there were many) and were conveyed to

the front courtesy of major newspapers, notably Hearst's. I have found new sources which reveal more details of Paley's views and thoughts on filming the campaign than have been known hitherto (notably his disillusionment with the non-cinematic nature of modern warfare) as well as about his actual film work and his misfortunes in Cuba. Both cameramen, Paley and Bitzer, had severe problems filming in Cuba and both were invalided back to the USA with acute fever, though had managed to film some scenes of military activity on the island, and Paley's in particular were of considerable merit.

Back in the USA, producers were also at work, filming soldiers during training and the like, and also trying to represent this war in staged moving images. New sub-genres of dramatised war films emerged during this war. Several symbolic scenes, featuring Uncle Sam, flags etc, were released, the most famous being *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag*, the first known use of abstract imagery in film history. And while Méliès had pioneered the re-enacted battle scene the previous year, a new sub-genre emerged during this war in the shape of restaged naval battles with scale-models, by Smith and Blackton and by Amet: this being the first use of models in cinema history.

Films related to the Spanish-American War were shown in several countries, the reception varying markedly, and in this regard I present, for the first time, an overview of how the films were received in Spain – generally, in rather a lukewarm manner. By contrast, in the USA the reception was often vocal and passionate, and to feed this audience demand, enterprising American exhibitors started programming groups of films and slides of the war together to create what were in effect early feature documentaries. This is another important cinematic innovation, partly engendered by this war, and all in all the Spanish-American War had momentous effects on the American cinema. As well as helping to initiate stylistic changes in filmmaking, the war steered the medium toward topicality and so conferred motion pictures with greater status. On the negative side, though, by turning warfare into spectacle, the film industry was helping to promote US imperialism.

The latter theme is taken up in my 8<sup>th</sup> chapter, which concerns the Philippine war (1899-1902), a conflict which followed the Spanish-American War, and involved Philippine nationalists fighting the new colonial power, America, for control of their country. This war entailed a successful counter-insurgency campaign by the Americans, and, as I demonstrate, an equally successful effort by US forces to control reporting of the war in the media, including film.

Three cameramen filmed the war: Burton Holmes and Joseph Rosenthal were each there for a few weeks, while Carl Ackerman was in the islands for half a year. All of them faced the by now, familiar problems of filming warfare, and, as some kind of solution, 'arranged' events with US military units, in order to capture authentic-looking action for the screen. All three shared a pro-American outlook, and Ackerman was actually working for the US War Department, contracted to provide them with copies of his films. In furtherance of this aim, he was living among the troops, wore Army uniform, and only filmed events which cast the Americans in a good light.

In addition to this location work, several dramatic representations of the war were made and sometimes released before the genuine Philippine-shot material was even filmed. Like the genuine films, these scenes – many produced by Edison – also tended to be strongly pro-American, and often took a demeaning view of the Filipino adversaries. However, uniquely in this early war, anti-colonial screen propaganda was also presented – in the form of lantern shows by the Anti-Imperialist League (though fewer spectators would have seen these shows than saw the commercially-produced films).

The following chapters, numbers 9 to 11, cover the Boer War (1899-1902), a conflict which was more fully represented in motion pictures than any other until the First World War. Militarily this was undoubtedly an important conflict, the first truly ‘modern war’ it might be said, with two forces fighting one another with up-to-date long-range weapons. At least eight different film cameramen were in South Africa to film the war. However, capturing action was a near impossible task, as camouflaged, Khaki-clad forces traded artillery shells or Mauser bullets across the vast empty battlefields of the ‘veldt’. Even reaching the war zone was an effort, for cameramen faced impediments from British military censors (present in force in this campaign), as they sought to get to the action. But as their frustrations grew, so did their skills, and Rosenthal and Dickson in particular displayed an increasing professionalism during the war, even managing to capture moments during actual fire fights. Part of the reason for their success – albeit limited – was that they based themselves within British military units, following the progress of their hosts and sharing the combat experience. But these two cameramen – unlike Surgeon-Major Beevor, who was actually part of a regiment, or Ackerman in the Philippines – were not tied umbilically to their host units and managed to retain some independence. Nevertheless the lesson was learned, that filming a war could not be done entirely independently: cameramen would always have to seek approval from officials and stay at least partly among the troops if they were to have any chance of being present during combat.

The Boer War inspired more acted films – battlefield re-enactments and allegorical scenes – than any other conflict before or since: 40 or 50 in all. Their tone and bias varied considerably, depending in which country they were produced. Pathé’s films, depicting battlefield incidents (probably filmed at Buttes-Chaumont park in Paris), were fairly neutral – contrary to British comments at the time – and alternately depicted the British and Boers as victors and vanquished. The Edison company’s films made in the USA were similarly even-handed, if laughably inaccurate in locale and details of costumes. The only really strongly anti-British film was by Nöggerath in the Netherlands. On the other hand, most of the British-made films were robustly pro-British. R.W. Paul made over a dozen films representing incidents in the war, many with a strongly anti-Boer tone, a tone also found in the fakes made by Mitchell and Kenyon (M&K produced even more such films than Paul), including the most popular of Boer War fakes, *The Dispatch Bearer*. Other British companies made similar films, British Gaumont taking demonisation of the Boers to the extreme with its production, *Boer Atrocities*; and Hepworth produced a couple of allegorical films which stressed British triumphalism.

No-one who examines the representation of the Boer War in the British media can but be struck by the strongly patriotic, jingoist tone of much of it. There has been some discussion in academe about the extent to which the British working classes supported the war, but the evidence of film reception seems to show it as pretty wholehearted. Audiences at music-hall and fairground venues were vociferous in their appreciation of films representing British victory. Given the lack of battlefield material, numerous films were made of troops, commanders and their units returning to the UK or elsewhere, and again these were received enthusiastically by British spectators. On the other hand, beyond the shores of the UK the reception could be very different. I have found evidence that audiences for films about the Boer War in countries such as Russia and Belgium were vociferous in their disapproval of Britain, to such an extent on some occasions that British consular staff became quite concerned. Such reactions are significant for film history, as they show both an active involvement of spectators in the film going experience, and also a growing concern (interest?) among authorities in the capacity of film to move audiences emotionally.

The final conflict I cover, in chapters 12 and 13, is the Boxer Uprising of 1900, and its aftermath. More than any other conflict of the period (or perhaps since) the anti-western Boxer movement united the developed world – western countries and Japan – in opposition, and inspired one of the first multinational military interventions, aimed at quelling the uprising and punishing China. Capturing these events on celluloid presented major problems for filmmakers, the principal one being that the events – including the famous siege of the foreign legations – had finished before the crews could arrive. So cameramen could only film the aftermath, including aspects of the brutal punitive expeditions which pressed into the Chinese hinterland.

The trans-national character of the intervention meant that it was of direct interest in various parts of the world, and so film companies from several nations were inspired to cover the situation: there were cameramen from Britain and France – one each – and two each from Japan and America. The Briton, Joseph Rosenthal, shot what was perhaps the most interesting coverage, in technical and other ways. Rosenthal experimented with panning shots, an important development for documentary, and in terms of attitude he maintained a refreshingly independent line, escaping his western hosts and managing to cover some aspects of the Chinese side of the war, and even daring to film at the forbidden outpost of Port Arthur. By contrast, most other cameramen were tied to the foreign military forces, none more so than Carl Ackerman – just as he had been in the Philippines – who was working with both the American and German militaries, and mainly filmed their activities rather than anything to do with the Chinese (apart from a couple of shots devoted to statesman Li Hung Chang). I have unearthed several new sources about Ackerman's work, revealing the details of his mission. Thanks to this new information I have traced his itinerary from Tientsin to Peking, and I can describe his methods of work and relations with the forces for the first time. Ackerman provides an important case study in the early history of war filming, being a cameraman utterly in thrall to western military forces, for whom he was effectively making propaganda.



Many dramatic representations were made of the Boxer Uprising by French, British and American producers – nearly as many as for the Boer War. Almost all demonise the Boxers (and often the Chinese generally) for daring to rise against the West, and the films rejoice in the comprehensive victory by the allies. Producers of such films included Mitchell & Kenyon, Lubin, Méliès and Pathé: of these only Méliès' film about the uprising presents the Chinese in a positive light. James Williamson's film, depicting an attack on a Chinese mission, is highly significant in the development of editing, and indicates that war faking was turning out to be an important stepping stone in the development of fictional representation in cinema.

In terms of exhibition, a mixture of genres was screened, including general shots of China and departing troops, in addition to whatever had been filmed in the conflict zone. The Boxer events overlapped with Britain's involvement in the Boer War, and interestingly the two conflicts were often conflated for exhibition purposes, with 'war shows' featuring films from both wars, and indeed from other conflicts. It seems from this practice, that by this stage the 'war film' had become a genre unto itself, almost despite which particular conflict was being exhibited. In this sense, war had effectively planted itself in the cinematic scenery.

In my Conclusion, chapter 14, I pull together some of the previously discussed themes, as well as introducing a hitherto unmentioned theoretical concept. This is the idea, due to the celebrated German sociologist Werner Sombart, that historically speaking, war has often acted as a motor of industrial and technical progress. This seems to have applied to cinema too, for in addressing the problem of 'how to represent war', filmmakers made genuine cinematic innovations, and throughout the thesis I have described technical and stylistic developments which were seen first in war films.

Two obvious examples would be the scale-models used in staged war films; and multi-film exhibition practice. One could also argue that faking and staged representations in general were highly influential, and might have helped lead to the rise of fiction films; what's more, allegorical scenes showed that film could deal with abstract concepts. In terms of documentary practice, war cameramen made several technical advances and became more professional as operators; the acclaim for moving images about current wars elevated the news film as a genre. In short, one can argue that the early war film helped to 'develop' cinema in general.

But while all these examples of the positive role of the war film in stimulating cinematic development are important, one should not forget a more negative aspect to the genre. Most early war films glorified warfare, or at least failed to condemn it, and the demonisation of the other side which one sees in some of these films probably helped lay the groundwork for film propaganda later in the twentieth century. What's more, several films related to wars in this era were shot or presented in a highly deceptive manner. Films were not only faked, but others were falsely titled, and in the war zone troops were artificially 'arranged' for the purposes of filming. Altogether, while the war film led to

stylistic developments, and stimulated a public interest in seeing news events on the screen, it also demonstrated in the most comprehensive possible fashion that film could be a means of deception and propaganda.

Following this concluding chapter, I include several Appendices, in which I deal with such matters as the alleged use of telephoto lenses to film early wars, the opposition expressed to war films in the first years of cinema, Winston Churchill's little-known plan to film the Boer War, and I offer an Ackerman war filmography.

### III. DEFINITIONS OF TYPES OF EARLY WAR FILMS

I present here a glossary of the terminology which I use throughout the thesis, which offers a more precise definition of the types of early war films than has hitherto been in use by early film historians. Throughout this thesis I divide early war films into two broad types, categorising them as either 'actuality' or 'staged'. I define these categories and further sub-divide them as follows:

**A. Actuality war film:** a film of real people and events, shot at an actual war-related location, i.e. a non-fiction recording of reality (not with actors, nor filmed in substitute locations nor a studio). This term 'actuality' has the additional benefit that it suggests a film related to topical/current (i.e. newsworthy) events.<sup>13</sup> This category is divided into three sub-classes, which I call:

- 1) *Conflict-zone actuality*: a film shot in the conflict zone showing military activity. I also call this kind of film, 'battlefield actuality'.
- 2) *Arranged actuality*: a film shot in the conflict zone with genuine troops, but in which the action has been 'set-up' to be filmed. I sometimes call this category 'arranged film' or 'set up film'. Even though such on-location films were prepared 'artificially' to be filmed, I do not use the term 'staging' or 'staged' in this context, as this misleadingly suggests a stage or actors were used.
- 3) *War-related actuality*: a film which, while not shot in the conflict zone at the time of war, is somehow related to the war and shows military activity. I sometimes call this category, 'related film' or 'close substitute' (a substitute for real conflict-zone footage). For more on this category, see my section on 'Conceptual distance' in Chapter 2. I identify three such kinds of film, depicting either:
  - i) a similar kind of *event* to the conflict in question (e.g. general images of charging troops or artillery firing);
  - ii) the *same soldiers/commanders* who fought in the war, but filmed elsewhere (e.g. at exercises or in transit to/ from the front);
  - iii) the *same location* where hostilities took place (often being scenic views of the conflict zone before the war began).

**B. Staged war film:** a film about the conflict, shot with actors or scale-models away from the war zone. Another appropriate term might be ‘imaginative representation’, though I include only those films made at or near the time of the conflict (i.e. excluding much later dramatisations), so a longer but more accurate term would be ‘staged film about a current war’.<sup>14</sup> This category is divided into three sub-classes, which I call:

- 1) *Fake war film:* a staged film which re-enacts an incident or event from the current conflict, and was not made at the real location nor with the real participants. I will sometimes use the term, ‘re-enactment’ for this type of film or ‘battlefield reconstruction’, or ‘faked war incident’. Other terms which have been used for this type of film are ‘re-constituted newsreel’, ‘war re-enactment’ or ‘reproduction’.<sup>15</sup> An objection might be made that the term ‘fake’ is, strictly speaking, only applicable when there is proven *intent to deceive*, but this would mean that the same film would sometimes be categorized as a fake and sometimes not, depending on what one knows about the intentions of the producer or exhibitors. I will therefore normally use the term ‘fake’ as a definition of genre, i.e. a staged re-enactment. (I discuss this intent issue elsewhere in the thesis). I further sub-divide fakes into two types:
  - i) *Re-enacted battlefield incident:* a film made with costumed performers depicting a war incident from the current conflict (the incident may or may not really have happened). Such films were usually staged with actors and shot in studios or on land vaguely resembling the war zone, far from the front. An alternative term is ‘acted fake’.
  - ii) *Re-enacted war film with models:* a staged film using scale models to reproduce a major actual battle of the current conflict, especially a naval battle.
- 2) *Staged allegorical war film:* this type, rather than reproducing specific military incidents, portrays wider allegorical or emblematic themes. Made in pantomime style, such films often include the theme of national victory, with figures such as Britannia, Uncle Sam, et al triumphing over their foreign opponents. Alternative terms are: ‘symbolic representation’, ‘allegorical scene’ or ‘staged symbolic film’.
- 3) *Dramatised film about the conflict:* a film made during or soon after the conflict which is more elaborate than a mere re-enacted battlefield incident.

**Mis-description or false titling:** In addition to these categories, there is an important issue of labelling or naming such films by distributors or exhibitors. As we shall see – firstly and most notably in the Greco-Turkish War chapter – films might be given a ‘new identity’ by being re-titled. Usually this re-labelling was mendacious, and designed to confer increased topicality or authenticity on a film. For example a routine film of troops marching might be given added value and topical interest by telling the audience that the soldiers had been filmed en route to the war zone, or just before battle; or generic shots of artillery firing would be claimed as having been filmed in battle. Alternative terms for this category would be: ‘mis-titling’, or even ‘faking by renaming’.

## Notes for Introduction, Chapter Summary and Definitions:

<sup>1</sup> I have been influenced in this issue by Charlie Keil's book, *Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907-1913* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001). Keil looks at changes in filmmaking style, discussing this partially in terms of filmmakers *solving problems* of how best to tell stories and communicate with their audiences. I would argue that the filmmakers who tried to present war on screen in the early era also had problems to overcome (the new kind of warfare; increasing regulation) and had to innovate to find ways of presenting war effectively on screen.

<sup>2</sup> This applies in particular to cameramen William Paley and Surgeon-Major Beevor.

<sup>3</sup> These include the *Music Hall and Theatrical Review* and the *Photographic Dealer*.

<sup>4</sup> For much of the time while researching I have been lucky enough to live within easy travelling distance of the British Film Institute and the British Library, including the unique resources of the BL's periodical department at Colindale.

<sup>5</sup> Through the digitisation of historical newspapers we will have the means to search a wider range of resources than could ever be achieved by one mere researcher reading texts. This might add more detail to some of the incidents which I have managed only to sketch out.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989), p.7. Virilio argues that an alteration in our 'fields of perception' has taken place in relation to warfare.

<sup>7</sup> Several books on the history of cinema and warfare neglect the early period. For example, Joseph Daniel, *Guerre et Cinéma : Grandes Illusions et Petits Soldats, 1895-1971* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972) begins his main coverage from the First World War onward, and there is not much even about that war.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Hiley, 'Making War: The British News Media and Government Control, 1914-1916', Ph.D., Open University, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Badsey, 'The Boer War as a Media War', in *The Boer War : Army, Nation and Empire*, edited by P. Dennis and J. Grey (Canberra: Army History Unit, 1999); Stephen Badsey, 'The Battle of the Somme: British War-Propaganda', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 3, no. 2, 1983, p.99-115.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema : The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's, 1990). Elizabeth Grottle Strebel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage', in *Film before Griffith*, ed. J. L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.264-271. John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894-1901*, volumes 2 to 5 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996 onwards).

<sup>11</sup> Published studies about the films of this war include: Clodualdo Del Mundo, *Native Resistance : Philippine Cinema and Colonialism, 1898-1941* (Malate: De La Salle University Press, 1998); Nick Deocampo, 'Imperialist Fictions: The Filipino in the Imperialist Imaginary', *Bulletin of the American Historical Collection* 27/4, no. 109, Oct-Dec 1999, p. 47-60.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's "Composed Picture": *Attack on a China Mission - Bluejackets to the Rescue* (1900)', in *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.203-211.

<sup>13</sup> The French word, *actualité*, was widely used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to suggest a *current* news issue or event. The term 'actuality' is not quite perfect for our purposes, as it implies an 'actual' recording of events as they happen, whereas, as I mention, some films might have been set-up or 'arranged'. However, I think that 'actuality' is reasonable shorthand for what I have in mind.

<sup>14</sup> Méliès' term, 'artificially arranged scenes' is a useful term for dramatised films in general (including staged war films), as are other shorthand terms employed in the early film period, 'posed' or 'made-up' films.

<sup>15</sup> David Levy uses the terms: 're-constituted newsreels', 're-enactments', and 'reproductions' in his important paper: David Levy, 'Re-Constituted Newsreels, Re-Enactments and the American Narrative Film', in R. Holman, ed., *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study* (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), p.245.

**Chapter 1**  
**REPRESENTING WAR IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**  
**Artists, photographers, and the changing battlefield**

**INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I trace the development of the visual reporting of warfare in the pre-cinema era, and follow discussions and debates about artistic and photographic representation. I begin by showing that up to the later nineteenth century, wars were often relatively small in scale; they were fought at close quarters, with cavalry charges, swordsmanship and the like. This kind of warfare was celebrated in the visual media for its heroics and pageantry. The audience for such media representations expanded through the nineteenth century with the development of illustrated periodicals and photography. But warfare was going through a transformation by this time, with weaponry gaining in range and accuracy, so the battlefield was becoming larger and the emphasis shifting from open conflict to concealment and defence. The visual media had some trouble coping with these changes, though in practice a working consensus emerged on the pages of illustrated periodicals in which two types of picture were used: photography to show the background events of the conflict, and artists' impressions to show the heat of battle. Meanwhile debates took place between the exponents of the two forms as to which could best capture and represent warfare: drawings or photographs. These debates were to have parallels in the field of early cinema.

**TRADITIONAL WARFARE AS VISUAL SPECTACLE**

**Early representations of war in the visual media**

War is the most extreme kind of human interaction, and arguably the activity which has the most profound effect on human and social development. It has always been an important subject for media representation, no matter what kind of media were available. In the ancient world, war was often portrayed in art and paintings – in Egyptian tomb art, for example – in the form of images glorifying war leaders. Such art was mainly for viewing by an elite, and the same applied to representations of war through the Middle Ages and beyond: one thinks, for example, of the Bayeux tapestry, and in a later age, salon paintings, all of which had a relatively limited viewership. With the proliferation of mass visual media in the nineteenth century (panoramas, lantern shows, illustrated periodicals, etc), representations of wars became more widely disseminated, though conflict was often celebrated in the same glorifying way as in the former age; its seamier sides – of death, destruction and loss – usually being minimised. It is worth taking a moment to examine why this should be so.

### **‘Enlightened’ and ‘light-hearted’ wars**

After the large-scale Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century, the rest of the century was mainly marked by smaller conflicts. While there were major wars – notably, the Crimean War (1854-56), the American Civil War (1861-65) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71)<sup>1</sup> – through most of the century ‘small wars’ were being waged almost continuously in what was effectively a non-stop low-level conflict. Even if one restricts the discussion to Britain’s involvement, this continuous military endeavour is striking. During Queen Victoria’s reign, from the 1830s to the end of the century, over forty, mainly colonial, wars were waged by British forces, and the country’s military expenditure grew threefold.<sup>2</sup> Other colonial powers were engaged in their own series of conflicts in this period, and no doubt this pattern of regular low-level conflict and growing expenditure on foreign wars was replicated for some of the other European nations.

Such wars were generally presented as being for the public good: both to increase the wealth and influence of the conquering power, but also to improve the lot of the subject peoples in the countries concerned. The latter point is sometimes overlooked in historical writings on colonialism, but was a strong motivation. British officers considered their colonial adventures as being benevolent, even ‘chivalric’ endeavours, a necessary means of overthrowing fanatics and dangerous powers.<sup>3</sup> One commonly finds this belief expressed at the turn of the century, especially by American and British writers. As we shall see, the desire to establish good governance was a principal motive for action in the late 1890s by the Americans in Cuba and the Philippines, and for Britain’s reconquest of the Sudan. It would be hard to find a clearer statement of this view of the beneficence of military intervention (nor one expressed in better prose), than Winston Churchill’s:

‘What enterprise that an enlightened community may attempt is more noble and more profitable than the reclamation from barbarism of fertile regions and large populations? To give peace to warring tribes, to administer justice where all was violence, to strike the chains off the slave, to draw the richness from the soil, to plant the earliest seeds of commerce and learning, to increase in whole peoples their capacities for pleasure and diminish their chances of pain – what more beautiful ideal or more valuable reward can inspire human effort? The act is virtuous, the exercise is invigorating, and the result often extremely profitable.’<sup>4</sup>

While Churchill’s frankness is extraordinary, many others of a colonial frame of mind would no doubt have agreed, if more discretely. However, in practice these apparently noble aims tended to be enacted through considerable violence, the Sudan campaign of the 1890s being a good example, where an overwhelming western superiority in weaponry – ‘scientific war’ it was called – defeated traditional, poorly armed opponents. And while Churchill’s ideals of bringing peace, justice, and learning were achieved to some extent in some regions, it was within a limited colonial context.<sup>5</sup> But while our modern view would differ markedly from Churchill’s, our theme is the media representation of the events of this era, so the important issue is what people at the time,

especially the public in the west, thought and believed of the actions and wider roles of their own countries.

It was again Churchill who expressed another not-uncommon nineteenth century view about warfare. Through most of the century colonial wars were conceived of by a good section of the military and probably the public, as being almost routine affairs. They were usually modest in scale – indeed were often called ‘small wars’ – and resulted in relatively low casualty figures (among the colonial forces, that is).<sup>6</sup> For this reason – and unlike today – war was often not regarded as being overly horrendous, and Churchill later noted of these conflicts in the pre First World War era:

‘This kind of war was full of fascinating thrills. It was not like the Great War. Nobody expected to be killed. Here and there in every regiment or battalion, half a dozen, a score, at the worst thirty or forty, would pay the forfeit; but to the great mass of those who took part in the little wars of Britain in those vanished light-hearted days, this was only a sporting element in a splendid game.’<sup>7</sup>

Churchill goes on further to contrast this ‘light-hearted’ game of war with the horrors of the First World War, ‘where death was the general expectation’ among soldiers.<sup>8</sup> Modern military historians agree with this distinction between the two kinds of warfare. What is called ‘total war’ only appeared in the twentieth century – ‘a truly mass phenomenon’, as Susan Carruthers puts it – in which, as well as the military forces suffering casualties, entire large populations were seriously affected and ordinary citizens suffered injury.<sup>9</sup> In the nineteenth century, by contrast, armed conflict had been smaller in scale and impact than modern war, with a concomitantly lesser effect on the armed forces and the general population.

There were therefore two good reasons (and probably others) why most of the publics in western countries were generally not anti-war and were supportive of their militaries: the conflicts being fought were considered to be of some service to the world, and yet these small wars had relatively little impact on the colonising country. This generally positive regard by the public in the west for military forces and their endeavours was reflected in representations in the visual media.

### **War in nineteenth century visual media**

Military achievements in this era were glorified for the public in illustrated periodicals, magic lantern shows, dioramas and panoramas. Battlefield exploits and heroic deeds such as cavalry charges were represented in splendid detail and magnificence, and ‘heroic myths of empire’ were promulgated.<sup>10</sup> Panorama painters were especially prone to celebrate armed conflict, and indeed about half of the surviving examples of panoramas depict warfare [Fig. 1 and 2], as do the printed versions. For example, an extant panorama in Innsbruck represents the battle of the Tiroleans against Napoleon’s forces (Mount Isel, 1809), while another in Belgium depicts the battle of Waterloo. Another example, the Boubaki panorama, shows an event in 1871 from the Franco-Prussian War, and exemplifies the scale and impact

of these depictions: measuring 10 metres x 110 metres, it gives an almost perfect illusion of three-dimensional reality.<sup>11</sup> Lantern shows too were often on military themes, with war correspondents describing their experiences, or military men talking about regimental life.<sup>12</sup> [Fig. 3] War-related lantern presentations later became more widespread through mass-produced slides. [Fig. 9]

**Box:**

***Art and war***

‘It is a grotesque paradox that war, humankind's most destructive activity, has also been the inspiration for some of its greatest moments of creativity. This paradox is reflected in our personal and societal responses to conflict. War is 'evil', but it can also be 'just'; sacrifice can be 'worthless', but it can also be 'glorious'. War undoubtedly brings out the worst in humankind but it can also prompt episodes of extraordinary courage, compassion and self-sacrifice. War is often regarded as 'the mother of invention'. However, it may equally well be considered to be 'the mother of creativity'. From Homer's *Iliad* to Goya's *The Disasters of War* or Britten's *War Requiem*, our seemingly innate compulsion to destroy each other has been the source of inspiration for some of the greatest works of art. This is not surprising. No activity of humankind engages our emotions as totally as war.’

Colin Harding, NMPFTV website.

It is perhaps no accident that the emergence of such larger-scale depictions coincided with Napoleon's time, for his was an era of increasing public participation in war. The French commander had created a large conscript, citizen army, which therefore touched most French peoples' lives directly, with much of the population having a friend or relative in the army. The country's forces became extremely prominent through public parades in vivid uniforms, and were celebrated through numerous references in songs and in a variety of imagery.<sup>13</sup> Napoleon's military campaigns inspired many paintings which celebrated his battles (sometimes, interestingly, paying more attention to propaganda and glorious victory than to the actual military outcome).<sup>14</sup> [Fig. 10] This national celebration of the military developed in all western countries to different degrees though the first half of the nineteenth century. [Fig. 4] It expanded further with the arrival of mechanically reproducible mass media, which were truly able to reach the entire public.

**Mass media and war correspondents**

While newspapers had been published from well before the nineteenth century, their circulation mushroomed in the 1800s, even more so when cheap newsprint became available later in the century. Illustrated periodicals appeared, and swiftly expanded as a new form of journalism which combined the written word with illustrations by artists, often depicting contemporary events. Needless to say, among the most prominent subjects of their reports and illustrations were warfare and the military.

To cover the various distant conflicts for the growing numbers of newspapers and periodicals of the nineteenth century, a new breed of reporter appeared:



the war correspondent and war artist. These correspondents would regularly travel to the world's conflict zones to write reports or make drawings of the largely colonial wars which the western powers were waging. Among them were the Britons, Melton Prior of the *Illustrated London News*, George Steevens of the *Daily Mail*, Bennet Burleigh of the *Telegraph*, Archibald Forbes of the *Daily News*, and there were a host of American and Continental European correspondents too, including Richard Harding Davis, Henri Turot, and Luigi Barzini. They were undeniably brave (Prior as a shell exploded, covering him in sand: 'Never mind, I've got a jolly good sketch'), though frequently chauvinistic (Forbes on the British victory over the Zulus: 'It did one good to see the glorious old "white arm" reassert again its pristine prestige').<sup>15</sup> Indeed, such correspondents made no secret of their affiliations to their own countries, sometimes to the extent of actually taking up weapons to fight when so moved, subsequently reverting to their role as mere reporters.<sup>16</sup>

For the newspapers and periodicals concerned, sending war correspondents and artists to the seat of wars was an expensive business, especially given the high costs of telegraphing despatches back – sometimes running into hundreds of dollars for a single telegram – and while the general opinion seemed to be that the costs were justified by the higher circulations that the newspapers achieved, some newspapermen dissented.<sup>17</sup> But whether or not the sums precisely added up, reports of wars were vivid and exciting, and were undoubtedly popular with readers.

### **Photographic war reporting**

At about the same time that illustrated periodicals were gaining in public favour, another medium was also growing in importance. Photography had appeared in the late 1830s, and though this new visual medium initially involved complicated equipment and processing, it soon found a role in news and war reportage.<sup>18</sup> The Crimean War (1854-55) was the first conflict to be extensively covered by photography, notably by Roger Fenton, whose images were in effect semi-official propaganda, offering a reassuring view of the war (in contrast to the written reports of the iconoclastic William H. Russell). Fenton's photographs avoided the grimmer sides of war: the surviving examples, while they show much destruction wrought by the fighting and damaged buildings etc., there are no dead bodies.<sup>19</sup> The American Civil War (1861-65) was covered by many camera-reporters, and the war was treated by some of these photographers in a more varied and critical fashion than had been the case in the Crimea.<sup>20</sup> The next major conflict to be recorded by cameras was the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), and a number of images survive depicting the circumstances of the war, though little which indicates the human conflict.

Due to the ponderous nature of cameras of the time, these early photographs of wars rarely captured battlefield action, and whatever there was tended to be distant and fuzzy. These images showed, rather, soldiers en route to the front, camp life, refugees departing, general pictures of the location of the conflict, and so on. They offered, one might argue, a more palpable and authentic impression of the circumstances of the war than a drawing could do.<sup>21</sup> Thus within the space of some fifteen years, a tradition of photographic

war reporting had been established, alongside the existing practice of the war artist.

The actual dissemination of photographs, however, lagged some way behind, for, until later in the century there was no way to mass produce photographs as half-tones in print. At this early stage (say in the 1870s) images could only be reproduced in publications in the form of line drawings. So the photographs of the wars that I have mentioned had a relatively small audience, restricted to the limited number of actual prints which could be made and distributed (though sometimes photographs were traced as line drawings for publication). Even so, souvenir (and some other) photographs depicting soldiers were circulated quite widely, and had some impact: an overview study by Henisch suggests that through such images, the status in society of ordinary fighting men seems to have improved.<sup>22</sup>

By the 1890s, though, the technology became available to reproduce half-tones in print, and some publishers took up the challenge to illustrate their magazines with still photographs. In this way the dispersion and impact of such images, including images about wars and conflicts, expanded greatly.<sup>23</sup> However, the ability to reproduce photographs on the page did not mean that there was a sudden transition to conflicts being exclusively illustrated by photography. Drawings by artists continued to appear for many years (indeed, right up to the present day in some publications), for it soon became apparent that artists' impressions could represent some types of incidents which photography could not. This applied to news in general, but especially to military conflict.

## **A NEW KIND OF 'INVISIBLE' WAR**

### **'Prosaic' warfare on the expanding battlefield**

For most of history warfare has been a highly visible activity, fought hand-to-hand, eyeball to eyeball. There was no call for concealment. Indeed, in Roman times soldiers deliberately made themselves conspicuous in battle through accoutrements, gilded helmets, even jewellery, because the system of battle honours encouraged individuals to enhance their own visibility so their courageous actions would be noticed.<sup>24</sup> Aspects of this visible style of warfare were maintained through to the early nineteenth century, with brightly coloured uniforms and even musical accompaniment as soldiers went into battle. Great emphasis was placed on individual courage and valour, and skill in close-order combat.

But the nature of warfare was going through a transformation in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, some historians trace the change from as early as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. Revolutionary new equipment had been developed, including longer-range rifles and artillery, thereby reducing the need for open, close-order, man-to-man combat, and effectively stretching out the combat zone; for a small force could now hold off a much larger attacking force than heretofore.<sup>25</sup> The battlefield had been growing in size from antiquity; the expansion was particularly pronounced in the modern era. Dupuy

calculates that just from the American Civil War to World War I the 'dispersion pattern' increased such that the same number of soldiers occupied about ten times the area of ground.<sup>26</sup> Tactics were changing too, and while many still hung on to the doctrine of the offensive – arguing that aggressive, spirited attack (the glorious cavalry charges etc of old) would prove decisive – in general the emphasis was shifting to a belief in the greater value of unglamorous concealment and defence.

Opposing forces were soon at hundreds of yards distance from one another, concealed from view while exchanging sniper and artillery fire. The change surprised some observers. One correspondent at the Greco-Turkish War in 1897 noted with some disappointment that: 'Of hand-to-hand fighting it is impossible for me to speak, as I witnessed none. There was scarcely any if indeed there was any at all, during the whole war'.<sup>27</sup> Most of the action, he said, consisted of exchanges of long-range artillery and rifle fire.

As the range and accuracy of weaponry increased, so it became more crucial to conceal one's forces from the opposing fire, and at this time therefore many of the previously visible elements were being taken out of warfare. Bright uniforms were giving way to camouflage and khaki (during the Boer War the entire British military changed to 'Khaki Drill').<sup>28</sup> The military theorist Jean de Bloch remarked in 1901 that:

'The romance of war has vanished into thin air with its gaudy uniforms, unfurled banners, and soul-stirring music. Military operations have become as prosaic as ore-smelting, and far less respectable'.<sup>29</sup>

No-one noticed this change in style of warfare more than the war correspondents. Veteran Frederic Villiers had been reporting on wars since the 1870s (and, as we shall see, played a crucial role in pioneering the filming of warfare). He had his first glimpse of 'the modern style of warfare', while reporting on the Japanese march into Manchuria in 1894 during the Sino-Japanese war. Most of all he noticed that the display and ritual which he had formerly seen were now lacking:

'...there was no blare of bugals [sic] or roll of drums; no display of flags or of martial music of any sort... It was most uncanny to me after my previous experiences of war in which massed bands cheered the flagging spirits of the attackers and bugals rang out their orders through the day. All had changed in this modern warfare: it seemed to me a very cold-blooded, uninspiring way of fighting, and I was mightily depressed for many weeks till I had grown accustomed to the change.'<sup>30</sup>

### **Smokeless powder and visibility**

One of the main developments – though often overlooked – which changed the 'look' of the battlefield at this time was smokeless powder, for this reduced the clouds of smoke formerly obscuring the air. A leading British military analyst wrote at the turn of the century of the change brought about by the

combination of long-range rifle fire (the 'Mauser-swept battle-field') and this powder, stating:

'...the flat trajectory of the small-bore rifle, [i.e. its accurate aim] together with the invisibility of the man who uses it, have wrought a complete revolution in the art of fighting battles'.<sup>31</sup>

The military forces of several powers were using smokeless powder by the 1890s, including British troops in the Boer War. Again this development was not to the liking of the correspondents, and Villiers complained – during the campaign in South Africa – that war was now 'altogether different' from the style he had seen in the 1870s, and that one of the main changes came from the use of the new powder:

'This was the first time I have ever been in a campaign with smokeless powder on both sides. The sensation was most uncanny. One never knew whether one was under fire or not till the actual whistling of bullets in one's immediate vicinity notified the fact. In the old days one could get quite near to the enemy by waiting till the two forces were hotly engaged, and advance on either flank, having located the enemy by the puffs of smoke from their rifles. Now it's all changed, and is very demoralising even to the hardened war correspondent.'<sup>32</sup>

Villiers' remark that formerly one could locate the enemy by puffs of smoke was of course the reason that black (smoky) powder had been replaced, for if a war correspondent could locate a rifleman's smoking gun, so surely could the opposing gunmen. As one writer vividly put it, in firing a gun using black powder, one might just as well hoist up 'a big flag with the words, "Here we are!"'<sup>33</sup> There was another visibility issue with smokeless powder, for it not only served to hide one's own positions during battle, it also kept the air clearer for troops and commanders to see the increasingly distant enemy positions more clearly.<sup>34</sup>

But the new smoke-free battlefield was not visually pleasing, to some peoples' eyes. An American correspondent stated of the battle of El Caney in the Spanish-American War (1898) that, 'The use of smokeless powder takes all the picturesqueness out of an infantry battle'.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, early filmmakers too did not like this innovation, and frequently ignored this military development in their depictions. For example, in the fake films of the Boer and Philippine-American wars the filmmakers used very smoky powder so spectators could see the rifle fire. In later years, cowboy and war films would also use such smoky powder. Clearly the needs of the real battlefield and the needs of media people and filmmakers were diverting sharply even before the nineteenth century was over.

## REPRESENTING THE NEW WARFARE

### Photographs versus drawings

If this new 'invisible' warfare made the battlefield less picturesque for war correspondents and artists, the new weaponry also had the effect of making their work more dangerous. Bloch predicted in 1899 that, due to more accurate and longer range weapons with faster rates of fire, henceforth in warfare, 'there will be a belt a thousand paces wide... swept by the fire of both sides, a belt in which no living being can stand for a moment'.<sup>36</sup> Bloch's prediction came to pass in that same year, on the open veldt of South Africa during the Boer War, where forces were often separated by large expanses of 'Mauser-swept' no-man's-land. This was as deadly an area for correspondents as for combatants, especially for photographers who needed to be relatively close to their subjects. Of course even in traditional warfare, photographers would have hesitated from going onto the actual battlefield, but at least some elements of the fight could have been perceived from the sidelines. Now, with this kilometre-wide belt of deadly fire, almost nowhere was safe, anyone present in the war zone was at risk. A writer, C.G. Paul, put the problem succinctly in July 1900, stating that taking photographs of fighting in the South African War was impossible 'owing to the probability of the photographer himself being "sniped" by some Boer sharpshooters'.<sup>37</sup> From now on they would mainly be confined to positions behind their own lines. And, as telephoto lenses for cameras were still a rarity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, photographers couldn't yet peer very far into the expansive battlefield.

The writer just quoted, Paul, believed that, because of the danger of accurate, long-range gunfire, if combat in South Africa were to be depicted it would be by draughtsmen in the form of artists' impressions, not cameras.<sup>38</sup> This is indeed what transpired, for artists were not restricted by the optical limitations of the cameras of this era. Their task in depicting the new warfare was challenging rather than impossible, for they constructed their imagined images based on more than what was immediately visible. Artists could effectively meld several sources together: they could see troop movements in the distance using field telescopes, and could follow such developments over time; they might later find out what had taken place in battle from talking to soldiers; then they would draw their artistic impressions using a combination of this data and their previous experience of warfare.

So were the photographers therefore redundant at the front? Actually, no, for they too found a role, taking more general, complementary views of the war zone, showing the *background* to the war: troops on the move, daily routine in camp, commanders in the field, the landscape or inhabitants of the war zone. And both these forms of depiction – the photograph and the drawing – found a place on the pages of illustrated periodicals, both during the Boer War and in the depiction of other conflicts in this period (and indeed for some other news stories). Sometimes these different 'genres' of images appeared on adjacent pages or even the same page, in a kind of 'montage': the photographs provided the authentic context, while the drawings or artists' impressions showed the actual heat of the event, of battle, in dramatic style.

Some examples from the Spanish-American War show how this worked in practice. Shortly after Dewey's victory over the Spanish fleet in the Philippines in 1898, *Leslie's Weekly* published both types of image. A dramatic artist's impression of the naval battle itself, which depicted a Spanish ship exploding and burning (actually a quite brilliant image: not of course entirely realistic, but very effective). And further on in the magazine the reader could see a page of general photographic views of the Philippines, which established a backdrop for where the battle had taken place.<sup>39</sup> [Fig. 7 and 8] Later in the campaign, when US troops were in Cuba, the photographers took views of soldiers in their daily routines and so on, but generally failed to capture moments of action. So again, dramatic drawings filled the gap, in the form of Howard Christy's glorious and dramatic drawings of US troops advancing under fire. [Fig. 5 and 6]

Already by the 1890s publishers well understood the complementary value and use of the two different kinds of image. One authority at the time of the Spanish-American War opined that photography was best for men in repose, landscapes etc., but that the draughtsman had proved his value during the war with such fine depictions of military action and combat that no photographer could ever equal.<sup>40</sup> Photography might provide veracity but lacked drama.

But the simultaneous presence in magazines of both photographic and drawn depictions was not a stable consensus, and was accompanied by an intense debate about the relative merits of each medium: the argument being broadly whether the artist or the camera could best capture/represent warfare. I will describe this debate between media in some detail, for I suggest that it has some analogy with a parallel distinction and debate which was to arise in the early filmic coverage of warfare, between actuality films and fakes. What's more, the debates in both film and photographic circles were taking place at about the same time, most intensively in 1899 to 1900, at the time of the Boer War.

### **The 'intelligence of the artist' versus 'unintelligent photos'**

Part of this debate, amazingly, took place in the midst of the Boer War itself. In April 1900, as the British Army and the correspondents waited in Bloemfontein for the next push forward, the bored scribes started up their own newspaper called *The Friend*. The artist W.B. Wollen published a forthright essay in one issue entitled, 'The war artist of to-day', in which he reiterated the, by now, familiar argument that the stills camera could only effectively depict scenes 'which are more or less peaceful'.<sup>41</sup> It could not successfully represent – 'unless it is a cinemetograph' [sic], he added – scenes during actual conflict, such as an artillery battery in action with its panicking horse team as an enemy shell drops nearby.

A couple of days later the distinguished photographer H.C. Shelley, also present in Bloemfontein, put the opposing point of view, with more originality and not a little spleen. The camera could indeed capture scenes like the battery in action, he wrote, and what's more it would depict it correctly, whereas artists sometimes got the details wrong in their pictures, and worse,

imposed their point of view on their picture. This latter was Shelley's crucial point. As he put it:

'Try as he may after the actual, the man with the pencil thrusts his personality between the event he sees, and the people at home for whom he wishes to reproduce it...'

But while Shelley saw this point of view of the artist as a shortcoming, the artists themselves and their supporters considered 'attitude' to be a positive virtue. One pundit in the UK, C.K. Shorter, addressed this issue just before the war: he denied that for news reporting, photography would triumph over the artist, purely because it lacked this personal vision; it was unselective. Photography was no good, he wrote, at stressing the *significant* points of a conflict, most notably the success of our side versus theirs. The camera could give no prominence, for example, to the number of enemy dead, for it 'minimises the enemy'. By contrast the artist-correspondent of former times, 'never failed to cumber the foreground with the bodies of the foe'. Moreover, Shorter claimed, photography 'absolutely ignores personal valour, or depicts it in so tame a light that the spectator is left stone cold'. Indeed, he considered that, for depicting any kind of news, the medium of photography was unsatisfactory and too literal compared to the draughtsman:

'In the old time one found the news of the day transfigured by the bright intelligence of the artist, quick to seize the essentials only; today one finds the pages black with unintelligent photos, each a mere accumulation of irrelevant and dead-alive details, hopelessly out of proportion to the facts which they would chronicle.'<sup>42</sup>

Yet Shorter was losing the argument, for such pages, 'black with unintelligent photos', did seem to interest the public. Even some people from the art world acknowledged this, and backed away from Shorter's somewhat extreme position, especially as the human impact of the Boer War hit home. One writer, a regular columnist on the arts, considered that 'the public want the facts' and not a melodramatic, drawn version. He thought that, for example, a battle painting of a charge of the lancers 'has no chance against the much more prosaic picture by the photographer', showing the relatively humdrum activities of troops in the war zone.<sup>43</sup>

Certainly, however the proponents of the artist's vision, such as Shorter, would protest, the dual system of illustration in periodicals – photography and drawings – was changing, with the former slowly gaining the upper hand. This evolution was of course noticed at the time, but was also perceptively seen in historical context by the critic André Bazin. In an aside in one of his essays he refers to the dual system of illustration, and suggests that this was not a stable state:

'It would be interesting ... to study, in the illustrated magazines of 1890-1910, the rivalry between photographic reporting and the use of drawings. The latter, in particular, satisfied the baroque need for the

dramatic. A feeling for the photographic document developed only gradually.<sup>44</sup>

This 'feeling' for photography did develop over the following years and decades, or at least it became a dominant form, and the artists' impression slowly disappeared from magazines. What's more, the photographs which now filled the pages had gained in immediacy and 'drama' thanks partly to the introduction of more mobile miniature cameras. As Bazin suggests, 'the photographic document' was increasingly seen to have an intrinsic value, a value born of authenticity.

### **Photographic deception**

However, let us return finally to the debate between artistic and photographic representation. There has been in our discussion till now an important element missing: the element of photographic manipulation and deception. This is a theme which, also, the Bloemfontein debaters, Wollen and Shelley, had ignored. The difference between the two men was mainly about art rather than photography. The essence of their disagreement was that, while Wollen valued the point of view in artistic illustration, Shelley thought that this was a weakness of art in relation to war. But both seemed to assume that, by contrast, photography was *objective* and free of point of view (they just differed as to whether this was a good or a bad thing). This objectivity was a 'given', an assumption, by both debaters. Photographs were believed to depict an accurate and 'true' state of the events which they recorded.

I suspect that this was the general opinion about photography in the 1900 era. Of course most people by this time understood that photographs could be faked and manipulated, but this was probably considered a minor aspect of the medium. It was widely believed that the photographic document should be, and normally was, objective. This authentic document had an intrinsic value and importance to it: an 'aura' (to borrow and slightly modify Walter Benjamin's term).<sup>45</sup> Therefore any attempt to subvert it was regarded with great disapproval, and when manipulation of photographs did occur – unlike with artists' drawings – this was almost never seen as praiseworthy. Wollen named as one of the great advantages of drawings, that they could bear the personal mark of the artist.

But as far as photographs went, any such personal mark, intervention, or manipulation was not seen as a means to improve the image; it was seen as a form of deception. And any deception regarding the representation of a war in particular was likely to be resented, for it carried the implication that life or death moments were being manipulated for frivolous artistic effect or (worse) for pecuniary advantage by the photographer.<sup>46</sup> As photographs became disseminated more widely, and increasingly appeared in magazines, finally predominating in these publications, photographic manipulation eventually became a fact of media life, though, I would argue, was never accepted as legitimate. (See Appendix on 'Deception in nineteenth century war photography').



I would further argue that photographic manipulation was to be an even more controversial issue with regard to the early cinema than it had been in the illustrated magazines. As we shall see in the following chapter, early filmmakers seem to have adopted some of the traditions and practices employed in illustrated magazines in the reporting of warfare. These practices, I suggest, included the idea of using two different genres of films – actuality and staged – to represent conflicts. But the complicating factor in cinema was that both genres of images (actuality shots and staged/faked films) were recorded photographically. So in addition to the controversies about which of the two genres was best for representing war, there came a whole new layer of controversy about the deceptive use of photography as such.

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> One might also add the Russo-Turkish War (1877), Prussia's war against Austria and Denmark in the 1860s and the Mexican War (1846-48).

<sup>2</sup> 'Wars of the Queen's reign', in Henry Sell, *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press... 1900* (London, c1900), p.403, which lists 43 wars for this period.

<sup>3</sup> John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). In his introduction MacKenzie discusses this perceived 'chivalric' mission.

<sup>4</sup> This was written following the Sudan victory. Winston Churchill, *The River War : The Sudan, 1898* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899-1900), vol. 1, p.18. One might see similar motives for war persisting even into recent times, with the interventions in Bosnia and Iraq, most notably.

<sup>5</sup> The colonisers often had patronising views about the peoples they ruled and their societies. For example, as far as Egypt was concerned (and the Sudan too, one imagines) a recent historical study confirms the British disbelief in the colonial era that Egyptians could run their country for themselves. See P.J. Cain, 'Character and imperialism: The British financial administration of Egypt, 1878-1914', *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 34, no. 2, June 2006, p.177-200.

<sup>6</sup> There was considerable discussion of 'small wars' and how to fight them (notably in Callwell's 1896 book, *Small Wars*). Incidentally, a phrase used to describe the rash of small wars in the last decade of the century was 'the wars of the '90s'. (e.g. Andrew Atteridge's book of 1899, *The Wars of the 'Nineties*).

<sup>7</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Mandarin, 1991 [orig 1930]), p. 195. In the same book (chapter 9) Churchill displayed a similar 'light-hearted' attitude to the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, which he planned to cover as a war correspondent, to 'see the fun and tell the tale', as he put it.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Churchill stated of the First World War, in contrast to the earlier type of warfare: 'Most of us were fated to see a war where the hazards were reversed, where death was the general expectation and severe wounds were counted as lucky escapes, where whole brigades were shorn away under the steel flail of artillery and machine-guns, where the survivors of one tornado knew that they would certainly be consumed in the next or the next after that.'

<sup>9</sup> Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p.1-3. Jean de Bloch wrote in 1901 (see source below) that war was no longer an isolated action as of yore: armies were now composed of entire populations, war affecting whole economies.

<sup>10</sup> On such visual representations and celebrations of warfare, see essays in MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, including chapter 5, 'Heroic myths of empire'.

<sup>11</sup> See Mike Smith note in *MLS Newsletter* no.85, Sep 2006, p.9. My figure of about half comes from a rough count of the list of the world's surviving panoramas at [www.panoramapainting.com](http://www.panoramapainting.com)

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<sup>12</sup> For example, see Ian Mackley, 'More on Harry Bow', in *New Magic Lantern Journal* 10, no. 2, Autumn 2006, p.30-32: a spectator's account of attending two military-related magic lantern shows in 1893.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Thomson, *The Troubled Republic : Visual Culture and Social Debate in France, 1889-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *Napoleon and History Painting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Pat Hodgson, *The War Illustrators* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1977).

Incidentally, the term, 'white arm' is not quite as racist as it sounds: it is a translation of the French, 'arme blanche', which can mean sword or cavalry lance or cavalry in general, or even a fight with knives (Collins/Robert); in its English translation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it tended to refer to colonial conquest by cavalry.

<sup>16</sup> For example, several American war correspondents in the Spanish-American War intervened in the fighting on their country's side. See Charles Henry Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1967), p. vii; and other instances which I mention in the course of the thesis.

<sup>17</sup> Editors and proprietors had mixed views on whether the costs of war reporting were worth it. The question arose with particular force during the Spanish-American War when some newspapers spent heavily to cover the action. The *New York Journal*, for example, chartered ten boats to transport its several correspondents to the front, and issued as many as 40 editions in a day; altogether the paper was spending \$3,000 daily to cover the war. Journalist Arthur Brisbane concluded that wars were bad for newspapers due to the huge cost of covering them. See Arthur Brisbane, 'The Modern Newspaper in War Time', *Cosmopolitan Magazine* 25, 1898. Alfred Harmsworth, the British press baron, agreed, stating to his stockholders that the costs of reporting this war were 'enormous', and adding that 'the circulation of the papers did not run up sufficiently high to pay the expense.' Reported in *The Critic*, 34, Jan 1899, p.16 as a recent statement. See also on the costs of war reporting: Ray Stannard Baker, 'How the News of the War Is Reported', *McClure's Magazine* 11, Sep 1898; Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War*, p. 445-6; and Nicholas Hiley, 'Making War: The British News Media and Government Control, 1914-1916', Ph.D., Open University, 1984. War news did boost circulation, according to Kennedy Jones in 1920, and a historian, Roger T. Stearn, suggests that the Franco-Prussian, Sudan and Boer Wars all increased circulation, though the telegraph companies were the chief financial beneficiaries of foreign wars. Stearn's essay 'War correspondents and colonial war, c.1870-1900' is in MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, p.141. In any case, this high expenditure set something of a precedent, so when film companies proposed to send cameramen to cover wars from the late 1890s, they were aware that the business of war reporting was an expensive one.

<sup>18</sup> For information on early war photography, see: Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography, from 1839 to the Present Day* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, rev. and enl. ed 1964), p. 67-8; André Barret, *Les Premiers Reporters Photographes : 1848-1914* (Paris: Andre Barret, 1977), p. 48-76; Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene : A Social History, 1839-1889* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), p. 223-47; Gus Macdonald, *Camera : A Victorian Eyewitness* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1979), p. 80-90. A good summary of this subject is provided (in German) in Gerhard Paul, *Bilder Des Krieges. Krieg Der Bilder. Die Visualisierung Des Modernen Krieges* (Paderborn etc; München: Ferdinand Schöningh ; Wilhelm Fink, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Alison Gernsheim and Helmut Gernsheim, *The History of Photography - from the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 267-74; Claire Bustarret, *Crimée, 1854-1856 : Premiers Reportages de Guerre* (Paris: Musée de l'armée, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> One historian, William C. Davis, has calculated the extraordinary number of people involved in this visual documentation: 'More than 2000 photographers plied their varying processes from 1861 to 1865, covering almost every aspect of the war in every theater.' William C. Davis, *The Civil War in Photographs* (Carlton Books Ltd, 2002). However, rather than being journalist-photographers, many of these were commercial photographers, taking pictures of soldiers for mementoes.

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<sup>21</sup> For example, many of the photographs of the US Civil War show the aftermath of battle; few were taken during the battles themselves. See Arthur Goldsmith, *The Camera and Its Images* (Italy: Ridge Press, 1979), p. 80-87.

<sup>22</sup> Souvenir photographs therefore gave a rather positive image of the military, whereas other forms of photography were less predictable in their attitudes, with war itself being alternately glorified or reviled. Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch, *The Photographic Experience, 1839-1914: Images and Attitudes* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 388, 393. One study finds a similar change in attitude to ordinary soldiers in paintings, with a major change occurring in the 1870s to a type of painting in which the conduct of the ordinary soldier on campaign was the focus, and the authority of the officer no longer imposed, but articulated by the soldiers themselves. See essay by Paul Usherwood on British battle painting in Mackenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, p.162 and 176.

<sup>23</sup> A distinction must be made here between the relative swiftness with which magazine publishers took up photography and the hesitation among their newspaper cousins. While the first halftone photograph appeared in a newspaper in 1880, photographs caught on slowly, and only from 1904 was a paper (the *Daily Mirror*) exclusively illustrated with photographs, and some other papers only changed to all photographic illustration much later. Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston, Mass.: David R. Godine, 1980), p.103-08.

<sup>24</sup> See Kate Gilliver, 'Display in Roman Warfare: The Appearance of Armies and Individuals on the Battlefield', *War In History* 14, no. 1, January 2007, p.1-21. Sculptures and commemorations in Roman cities were a means of bringing distant, invisible war to the attention of the population. See Sheila Dillon and Katherine E. Welch, *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> 'Is the art of war revolutionised? 1. Infantry', *The Friend*, 24 Mar 1900.

<sup>26</sup> Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Evolution of Weapons and Warfare* (London: Jones Publishing Co., 1980), p.312. He calculates the number of square meters of battlefield per man in the Civil War era at 257.5 and for World War I at 2,475. Dupuy also finds that percentage casualty rates per day also have fallen from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: see p.314.

<sup>27</sup> Wilfred Pollock, *War and a Wheel: The Græco-Turkish War as Seen from a Bicycle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1897), p.107. Pollock observed that in general the Greeks retreated as the Turks advanced.

<sup>28</sup> 'Khaki' (drab) uniform had first been introduced in British units in India in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 'make them invisible in a land of dust'; by 1885 the rest of the army in India followed suit, and for the Boer War the entire British military changed to KD (Khaki Drill). S. Hodson-Pressinger, 'Khaki', *MI*, no.122, 1998, p.7. A Major Hodson had been the pioneer of khaki in India in 1848. Queen Victoria was not a fan, describing 'kharkee' clothing as 'hideous' and hoping never to see it in England. (Reported in a letter from Sir H.F. Ponsonby, 16 Jan 1884, in Wolseley Collection, Hove Library.) This quest for invisibility even affected naval forces. In the late 1890s, the US Navy Department directed that all vessels should be painted a dull gray 'to diminish as much as possible their visibility'. (*Harper's Monthly*, 37, Jan 1899, p.175.)

<sup>29</sup> Jean de Bloch, 'Wars of the Future', *Contemporary Review* 80, Sep 1901, p.305-332.

<sup>30</sup> Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure* (New York & London: Harper & Bros., 1920), vol. 2, p.134.

<sup>31</sup> Lt. Colonel Henderson, an intelligence officer on Roberts' staff during the Boer War, as quoted in: Jean de Bloch, 'Wars of the Future', op. cit. Henderson believed too that the cavalry were played out, being, in his words, 'as obsolete as the Crusaders'. Bloch notes that British officers had been alerted to the radical impact of Mauser fire during the Tirah campaign in the mid 1890s.

<sup>32</sup> Raymond Blathwayt, 'Fresh from the Front... a Talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers', *Daily News*, 19 April 1900, p.7. Villiers went on to say he had sometimes been astonished at the reckless bravery of photographers at the front.

<sup>33</sup> George F. Kennan, *Campaigning in Cuba* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1971 [1899]), p. 145. Speaking of big flags, some officers wanted to retain 'visibility' for some aspects of the battlefield, and at the battle of Atbara in 1898 General Gatacre took a hands-on role at the centre of his regiment, 'his position indicated by a large Union Jack'. Churchill, *The River War*, vol. 1, p.430.

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<sup>34</sup> Whissel discusses the issue of visibility on the battlefield. Kristen Whissel, 'Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: The Battle Re-Enactment at the Turn of the Century, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Early Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 3, Aug 2002, p.225-243.

<sup>35</sup> He could, though, see its advantages, and was indignant that some American troops had rifles firing the old black powder while some Spaniards possessed the smokeless variety (and the Spaniards used the best rifle in Europe, the Mauser). He called it 'governmental murder' to supply the US forces with such outdated gunpowder. See H. Irving Hancock, *What One Man Saw : Being the Personal Impressions of a War Correspondent in Cuba* (New York: Street & Smith, 1900), p. 82, 100. It was the most important innovation of this war, states Jerry Keenan, *Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American & Philippine-American Wars* (Santa Barbara, Calif. ; Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2001), p.402-5. While some American soldiers in the Cuba and Philippines campaigns still used the old smoky powder, the British used smokeless powder in the Sudan campaign at Omdurman and in the Boer war. Regarding its use at Omdurman, and its advantages, see Owen Spencer Watkins, *With Kitchener's Army : Being a Chaplain's Experiences with the Nile Expedition, 1898* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1899), p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> Bloch, p.xvi in his 1899 *Is War Now Impossible?*, quoted in John Gooch, 'Attitudes to War in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', in *War and Society*, edited by B. Bond and I. Roy (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p.88-102. The process that Bloch delineates would culminate in the trench warfare and no man's lands of the Great War.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Peter Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', in *Sudan : The Reconquest Reappraised*, edited by Edward M. Spiers (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> For the artist's impression see LW 12 May 1898, p.304-5, and for the photographs (showing a Philippine village, etc) see p.306 ('Views in the Philippine Islands, where brave Commodore Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet').

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Harrington, *ibid.* It is worth adding that one writer of the time, Robert Machray, made a distinction in modes of representation of war by artists. He distinguished between the *war artist* who had actually been at the war, and the *battle painter* who had not. While the former 'sends us pictures of incidents at the front', the latter 'puts on his canvas battle-scenes not actually observed with his own eyes'. Robert Machray, 'A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists', *Windsor Magazine* 12, Aug 1900, p. 264. Interestingly, two historians of war art make a similar distinction, dividing artists of the Boxer events into those who did their drawings on the spot and those who did them back home. Frederic Alan Sharf and Peter Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective* (London: Greenhill, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> 'The war artist of to-day' in *The Friend* 11 April and 13 April 1900, and reply by Shelley on 16 April. Wollen claimed too that the camera can't give a bird's eye view of a battle, which Shelley also refuted. The bound copies of *The Friend* in the British Library (at 'File 565') were originally the property of Rudyard Kipling, who was in South Africa as a correspondent during the war. (There were only 27 issues of *The Friend* in all).

<sup>42</sup> Shorter also noted two other shortcomings of photography: that the camera was both untruthful and incapable of capturing the key moments of a battle, which he summed up in this way: 'For action of any kind the camera is impossible, not alone because it lies, but also because it can never be used at the critical moment'. The article by C.K. Shorter was reprinted in *BJP* 28 April 1899, p.264, citing the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Contemporary Review* for April. This debate about the different types of representation is here seen to apply to general news stories as well as to war news, though war is usually the most urgent and important type of news story.

<sup>43</sup> See 'Art notes', *Pall Mall Gazette* 31 Jan 1900, p.1. He mentioned photographs of such subjects as troops preparing their meals in the war zone, or starting to advance against the enemy. Another writer suggested that the more realistic depictions due to photography were themselves exercising a useful influence on war art, by taking some of the melodrama out of it. Though this writer also saw the drawbacks of photography in that the camera has no power of selection, a particular drawback when the battle is in a huge open area. *BJP* 9 Nov 1900, p.705-6.

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<sup>44</sup> André Bazin, in a chapter entitled 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', in André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p.11. This comes a small aside in Bazin's discussion of spiritual versus psychological reality in painting. A similar dramatic style was seen in drawn lantern slides of battles or in salon paintings/drawings.

<sup>45</sup> See Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

<sup>46</sup> The writer Brugioni has made a study of this field, and lists four types of 'faked' photographs, distinguished by the different techniques to accomplish them: removing details, inserting details, photomontage and false captioning. Strangely he only covers post-production manipulation in this categorisation, and doesn't consider the issue of 'arranging'. Dino A. Brugioni, *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 1999).

## Chapter 2 EARLY CINEMA AND NEWS OF WAR Authenticity, artifice and deception

### INTRODUCTION

The cinema emerged in the mid-1890s during an era of widespread militarism and ongoing warfare. Conflicts in various parts of the world were one of the chief subjects for news reports and presentations in the existing media, such as lantern shows, panoramas, newspapers and illustrated periodicals. So almost by default, the new medium of cinema had to follow suit. But how? The illustrated periodical (see previous chapter) was the most obvious model, and I would argue that, whether it was by direct influence or otherwise, this was indeed the model which cinema followed in its representation of war.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with the difficulties of photographing modern warfare, the illustrated periodical had hit upon a working consensus of presenting war news in two visual formats: photographic images to show the overall context, and artists' impressions to show the all-elusive moments of action. Within the space of a few years, the cinema came up with a similar bicameral solution: to use war-related actuality shots to show the context, personalities, etc; and staged scenes including fakes to represent actual conflict and to make more pointed comments on the war.<sup>2</sup> I discuss some theoretical aspects of these practices below.

But this was not a stable state of affairs. As we have seen with the illustrated periodical, a gradual shift took place towards the photograph and away from the artist's impression (a shift which Bazin calls a growing 'feeling for the photographic document'). I suggest that a similar evolution took place in early cinema. A 'feeling' for photographic realism or authenticity developed, indeed had governed actuality filming of warfare from the start. In contrast, staged war scenes were by definition 'artificially arranged' and, while such films were popular in the period I cover, one can detect a current of unease at this type of scene.<sup>3</sup> This unease was reinforced by reports of various kinds of war films being fraudulently presented as the real thing. Within a few years, dramatised war films and fakes virtually died out as genres, and a new orthodoxy was established, with news – including war news – being covered almost exclusively in actuality footage.

### THE EARLY WAR FILM: CONTEXT & DEVELOPMENT

#### The militarised world of early cinema

As I have noted in the previous chapter, the nineteenth century was an era of almost continuous small colonial wars and conflicts. By the time the cinema arrived on the scene in the 1890s this imperialist militarism had reached its zenith. At the end of 1895 (at about the same time that the Lumière films were

first screened to the Paris public), the *New York World* was summarising the past twelve months as a period racked by 'wars and bloodshed', listing conflicts from Abyssinia and Madagascar to Haiti, Lombok, Samoa and all across Latin America. Evocative maps showed the numerous parts of the world where these wars, massacres, native uprisings, riots and bloodshed had taken place.<sup>4</sup> [Fig. 1 and 2]

The ensuing few years, as the cinema was emerging and developing, were just as violent. This was a time of changing global patterns of power. The waning of the Ottoman and Spanish empires (and others), and the resurgence of British, American and Japanese spheres, were played out from the 1890s to the First World War in a series of small wars in various parts of the world.<sup>5</sup> Back home too there was a pervasive militarism, with the armed forces and uniforms being ubiquitous in everyday life.<sup>6</sup> The cinema therefore began and developed in a world of war and conflict.

What's more, a relationship between the military and the photographic and moving image was well established even before the cinema came along, and some of the earliest photographic representations of war were instigated or commissioned by national war ministries.<sup>7</sup> These ministries in several countries also helped to sponsor research in chronophotography (several of Anschütz' and Marey's series photographs were for war research, for example), and when cinema itself arrived, films were used to record the effectiveness of munitions. Connections between cinema and the military quickly flourished. Films were employed as part of national publicity or recruiting campaigns, to offer the public a positive view of the way of life of the soldier or sailor, and to show the efficiency and readiness of the nation's forces (military propaganda in effect). Examples include the film work of the German naval league or Robert Paul's series of 1900, *Army Life*.

Furthermore, from soon after the première of the cinématographe in 1895, the armed forces and warfare became one of the major commercial film genres. Many of the Lumière films depict soldiers training or parading or on exercises, with 'Vues militaires' forming substantial catalogue sections from their first catalogue in 1897. Several of the other early film companies were equally keen on filming war and soldiery, none more so than Biograph, and the genre 'Military' took up no less than 33 pages in their catalogue (the second biggest category after 'Comedy'), including scenes at military bases and the like.<sup>8</sup> In short, cinema and the military were intimately acquainted from the very first.

### **The problems of reporting war on film**

As well as these general scenes of the military in training or on exercises, some people proposed or hoped to capture moving images of military adventures in faraway lands. Conflicts in various parts of the world were already one of the leading subjects for reports and exhibits in the existing media: as we have seen, panoramas, battle paintings, lantern shows, as well as newspapers and illustrated periodicals, all featured representations of current wars.

But as stills photographers had discovered, capturing warfare would not be a straightforward proposition. By its nature war is dangerous and difficult to record in any medium, let alone film, and in the late nineteenth century was getting harder, for two reasons. I have mentioned the first in the previous chapter: the nature of war was changing (at just the time cinema arrived). All the early filmmakers were frustrated by this change, and early war cameramen, with their large, noisy cameras and without telephoto lenses (see Appendix), were constantly frustrated.<sup>9</sup> The other problem was that official regulation and censorship were becoming stricter, again at just the time of cinema's beginnings, and this had an important and negative effect on all kinds of reporting. As we shall see, cameramen like Bitzer in Cuba and Dickson and Rosenthal at the Boer War were much hampered by official regulation and interference.<sup>10</sup> As a result of these problems, few of the films taken in war zones in the first decade of cinema captured any actual battlefield action.

Yet filmmakers had to show something related to the war. 'War is news', as journalists say, for war evokes intense interest in readers or viewers.<sup>11</sup> War on screen promised big profits to those exhibitors who could come up with something. But given the problems of filming at the front, how could filmmakers represent war in the most relevant, vivid, but also authentic form?

### **Early war film genres**

Newspapers, illustrated periodicals and other pre-cinema news media reported on news and war using a range of sources and images. If one looks at the pages of an illustrated periodical of the pre-First World War era, one can see this spread of different types of news images to cover an important story. There are photographs, featuring stories about people and places related to the event, as well as artists' impressions and caricatures. What is most interesting from our point of view is how quickly filmmakers arrived at a similar solution; soon they started presenting war on screen in an analogous manner, employing a combination or mixture of genuine and 'artificially arranged' images.

This solution which they had come across broadly entailed using actuality images to provide the context of the war and authentic background detail, and staged scenes to illustrate the conflict dramatically – more than an actuality film could ever do. Several different types of war-related actuality films emerged in this era, as well as fakes and symbolic films.<sup>12</sup> Sometimes the two different kinds of films – actuality and staged – were programmed together in a rich mixture or 'montage', serving to portray the war in a fairly rounded manner.

As I will show in this thesis, several sub-categories of war films soon emerged. Three kinds of actualities may be identified: films shot in the conflict-zone (the rarest); 'war-related films', which show people, places or events connected with the war; and arranged films, which were shot in the conflict zone with genuine troops, but in which the action was 'set-up' to be filmed. Staged films I divide into re-enacted (fake) films, which depict particular incidents or battles using costumed performers or scale models; and symbolic



films, which use costumed actors in allegorical scenes, mainly of national triumph. In my Introduction I have listed these types of early war films in more detail.

## ACTUALITIES

### Event and representation – a theory of visual news

To date, though some fine historical work has been done, neither media theorists nor historians have paid much attention to analysing the *stylistic features* of the early (or indeed later) news film, and its close relation, the war film. As far as I am aware, there is no ‘theory of visual news’, which would help explain how film news material is selected. In the absence of such a theory I would like to offer my own analysis of some principles which seem to have governed the filming and selection of shots for early war and news production and exhibition. (And I suspect that similar principles govern almost any news medium: newspapers, photography, or film.) I warn readers that this is quite a theoretical section, and those who wish to avoid such abstractions may move straight on to the ‘Staged Films’ section.

In representing an event, I suggest that visual news journalists (including non-fiction film producers and exhibitors) try to obtain news images which are as ‘conceptually close’ to the original event as possible. ‘Close’ in this context means with a factually strong, ‘indexical’ connection to the original event. (See **Box** below for more on this type of connection).

### Box:

#### Signs of war: the special, ‘indexical’ character of actualities

News images are, in the language of semiotics, ‘signs’ for the events they represent. This theoretical approach helps to clarify what is special about actualities (and why they are of more news-value than, say, faked films). Semiotic theory puts visual signs into three main categories: icon, index and symbol. An ‘index’ is a sign which is a sample of, or is contiguous with, its signified. An ‘icon’ is a sign which looks the same as (has a ‘topological similarity to’) its signified. A ‘symbol’ is a conventional link between the signifier and signified (without similarity or contiguity).<sup>13</sup>

Staged films fall into the two latter semiotic categories. Fake films are iconic, in that they look roughly the same as the signified event, the battle, but have no actual, physical connection with it. Staged allegorical films are symbolic, for they represent ideas/themes such as national ideals, and do not depict the specifics of the war.

Actualities, including war-related actualities, are indexical, for they depict people or places which were *physically present* at the events of the war.<sup>14</sup> It is this indexical property of actualities – the film effectively being a *sample* of events/people/places from the war – which makes these films so special, so authentic.

How do we gauge the strength of an 'indexical' connection between an event and its representation? The connection is conceptually stronger where the representation includes authentic elements, 'markers', from the original event. Any news event may be described by a minimum of four 'markers' or descriptors: participants, action, place and time. In other words, the event involved specific participants who went through certain actions at a given place and time. (These are the equivalent of the reporter's mantra, 'who, what, where and when'.) The aim of the filmmaker in trying to represent the event in actuality images, is to obtain films which match on at least one of these four markers.

In the case of a battle, the minimum conceptual distance, and therefore the 'perfect' news film representation, would be to have cameras rolling at the battle itself. In this case we would be making a faultless match in all four respects or markers: showing the original participants taking part in the actual event at the original place and time. This was the reason why newspapers and film companies spent such a lot of money sending war correspondents and cameramen to the front to try to capture the 'perfect' representation. And cameramen occasionally did manage to film shells exploding and the like; but for the reasons we have gone into earlier, they were rarely able to do even this much.

Thus, in the absence of a 'battle film', a series of secondary possibilities would confront the film producer or exhibitor. He would be searching for, or commissioning, what one might call 'related' footage or 'close substitutes'. That is, films which are as 'close' to the original event as possible, in terms of including any of the four descriptors or 'markers' as the original event – the same participants or space or time or action. An example of the *same participants* would be a shot (filmed anywhere) of the soldiers/commanders who fought in the war. An example of the *same location* would be shots of the conflict zone (filmed at any time). An example of the *same action* would be a film of charging troops (any troops) to give an idea of the genuine charge.<sup>15</sup> (See **Table**). Incidentally, producers might well use existing films for these purposes, so long as they fulfilled the requirements.




### **Strengthening connections to the events**

Of course, if a match could be made on two or more descriptors together, so much the better: for example, a film of the participants (i.e. troops) filmed near the time and place of battle would be better than those same troops filmed in a different time or place (e.g. a shot of troops en route to the war is better than a shot of troops filmed a few months before war broke out). Ideally the process would begin in the war zone with a cameraman on location, and if he couldn't obtain footage of actual conflict, then as a second priority he could at least film general activity of troops in the war zone, such as soldiers in camp or marching to the front line, or artillery being moved into position.

**Table:**

**WAR-RELATED ACTUALITIES: connections between various kinds of war footage and the war itself.**

Listed in the left-hand column, A to E, are some common types of war-related actuality footage shown in the early era. The next column gives an example of that type of film; and the final four 'marker' columns list whether that type of film depicts/matches the original place, time, personnel or events of the war.

Type of film ▼	Example ▼	Filmed at or near site of battle?	Filmed at or near time of battle?	Featuring the actual troops?	Depicting the events of battle?
<b>A. Action during/near actual battle</b>	Rosenthal's film of fighting outside Pretoria (Boer War)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>B. Troops, refugees, etc in war zone</b>	 The day before Omdurman (Sudan War)	Yes	Yes/No	Yes	No
<b>C. Troops or commanders, elsewhere or en route</b>	 Troops en route to Cuba (Spanish-American War)	No	No	Yes	No
<b>D. View of the country/place where battle occurred</b>	 Chinese street view (to illustrate the Boxer uprising)	Yes	No	No	No
<b>E. Similar event to the battle</b>	A parade-ground charge (to represent the charge of the 21 <sup>st</sup> Lancers)	No	No	No	Yes

The following are three brief examples of actual war-related films screened in the early era, which illustrate some of these principles. (1) A film of the region of the Nile: this was appropriate to illustrate the Sudan War, as it depicted the same or a similar location. (2) Shots of American troops training: this was suitable to depict the Spanish-American War, as these same troops would later go to fight in Cuba. (3) A shot of troops in the Philippine War: this comes nearer to the 'ideal' of a film of 'the war itself', for it shows the participants in

the war zone, near the time when skirmishes were actually taking place.

The point about all these kinds of images is that they had a direct, indexical connection under at least one of the markers, to the original event; thus they were in a sense a part of, sample of, what had taken place. The **Table** illustrates my main points, showing how these various kinds of shots were connected to a war, and their differing 'closeness' to it.

In addition to markers within individual films, another factor which added to this sense of 'connection' to the original event was when several such films were programmed together. This was being practiced by showmen by the time of the Spanish-American War, when various kinds of war-related films as well as lantern slides were all programmed together. The aim was to present a rounded account of the war in one programme, by building up various images related to it (which had markers from the original event): troops on the march, commanders being feted, the country where it happened, etc. Some showmen added to the authenticity effect by having the films presented by someone who had been an eye-witness or participant in the war. And music and sound effects provided an extra emotional resonance to the presentation.

In summing up this section I would re-iterate that war-related actualities were chosen based on their close or indexical connection/relationship with the events of battle. Even if the connection was only on one marker – for example, showing the same troops on parade – it was still valued as an 'authentic' document related tangibly to the war. I would further argue that as the news film developed in the early years, this indexical, authentic quality was increasingly valued, as opposed to the staged or fake film – much as the 'photographic document' was increasingly favoured in the pages of illustrated periodicals in preference to the 'artist's impression'.

## **STAGED FILMS, INCLUDING FAKES**

As I have described above, early producers and showmen, in making a selection of actuality films to represent a war, would try to commission or select shots which had some kind of indexical connection with the events. But in addition to these films they also had another option, to choose 'artificial' or staged films. Such films still had a 'connection' to the war, but it was a different kind of connection, of an 'iconic' or 'symbolic' kind. This threw up some interesting issues about authenticity, issues which I will discuss below.

### **Staged war films in context**

Let me initially describe the two main kinds of staged war scenes – fakes and symbolic films – in some more detail. The first category of early staged war film was the 'fake'. Such films depicted events such as battles or skirmishes by staging them with actors or with scale-models.<sup>16</sup> They might be based on real events (usually the case with scale-models ) or made-up battlefield incidents. Such kinds of films had some forerunners in other media: in life-model magic lantern slides, in plays and other performances. In these earlier forms, a war event was staged, often in story form, usually with 'our' side

being the victor.

As we shall see in Chapter 3, the first fake or re-enacted war scenes were produced in 1897, depicting the Greco-Turkish War, and in the following years several other wars were similarly dramatised in this type of film. These films varied in their level of realism: some – notably the scale-model re-enactments – were relatively convincing; others, with their theatrical explosions, smoke, hand-to-hand fighting and heroic and dramatic deaths were not. But realistic or not, such fakes were a way of offering news-hungry cinema audiences a dramatic representation of the current war, which, unlike the actualities, included some visible conflict. Such fakes could be very popular: one contemporary writer stated that the only successful battle scenes he had seen were staged scenes, adding that, ‘these have been received with thunders of appreciative applause by music-hall patriots’.<sup>17</sup>

The second category of early staged war film – which is often left out of the discussion in favour of fakes – was the allegorical or symbolic film. Such films often made a pointed comment on the events, depicted through national figures such as ‘Britannia’ or ‘Uncle Sam’: usually it was a message of national pride and/or imperial conquest. One sees an analogous use of such symbolic figures in other media leading up to and including this period, which might well have been an influence on this film genre. For example, a London stage spectacle of 1885 entitled ‘Britannia’, has the eponymous figure roused from her well-earned rest (following years of empire building) to protect Britain from competitor nations. By the 1890s and later, pageants and so-called ‘patriotic extravaganzas’ staged in Britain regularly featured symbolic figures representing the home nation as well as the colonies.<sup>18</sup>

These kinds of national figures are also to be seen in magazine illustrations. For example, in the run-up to the Spanish-American War, *Leslie’s Weekly* regularly enlisted the figure of Uncle Sam: the cover of the 17 March 1898 issue has a cartoon of Sam menacingly checking the sharpness of his sword, captioned, ‘Uncle Sam is ready’. And at the end of April the cover has Sam standing determined before the Stars and Stripes, captioned, ‘Remember the *Maine*’. [Fig. 3 and 4] So when symbolic films were first shown, the public would have been familiar with the style and characters, for these elements mirrored what had been appearing for years in other media.

### **The advantages of fakes**

While genuine films could effectively depict the physical details of a war zone, staged films could help audiences to experience some of the emotions of the conflict. Some people in the film industry in the 1900 era were strongly in favour of staged war films, especially fakes, and believed that these films were a boon. The most forthright in this matter was the film dealer, John Wrench & Son. The Wrench company released many of the Mitchell & Kenyon enactments of the Boer War and Boxer uprising, and boasted that these were not only ‘very entertaining’, but were ‘an excellent substitute for the real thing’, being ‘more sensational and exciting’ than genuine films.<sup>19</sup> The company published a clear and candid statement (perhaps the first) of the advantages of faking as a means to represent war. Their text simultaneously

explained why modern warfare was un-filmable, promoted the fake genre, and denigrated actualities:

'We intend issuing from time to time a number of these so-called 'Faked War Films'... as we find from our experience that they are infinitely more exciting and interesting to an audience than the so-called 'Genuine War Films', as the latter will never be anything more than scenes of soldiers or sailors parading &c., before the camera in time of peace. It would be more appropriate to call them 'Genuine Peace Films', for it is a sure thing that the times were never more peaceful than when the films were taken. It is absolutely impossible to take a film of a genuine battle scene or any film of fighting, as, apart from the danger, modern warfare is carried on with the armies or navies miles apart, and therefore the subject does not lend itself to cinematography.'<sup>20</sup>

With this landmark statement extolling the benefits of 'faked war films', and in openly describing such films as fakes, Wrench was being very straightforward. There was no attempt to hoodwink customers into thinking these might be genuine films. Some other companies too (though not all, as we'll see) presented their fake films clearly labelled as such. In this way, these re-created war scenes were not seen as a *deception*, for they were labelled for what they were: mere representations. As Frank Kessler puts it:

The connotation of "fraudulent intention to deceive" that [the word fake] carries with it, is certainly inappropriate when a staged scene is labelled as a "representation".<sup>21</sup>

Thus on the face of it, these films, if presented for what they were (fakes), might be seen as a perfectly legitimate, honest way to illustrate or bring to life the otherwise un-filmable moments of battle, not as a fraud on the public. However, while that might have been the theory, the actual reputation of these films was somewhat different. I would suggest that such films were not entirely regarded in a neutral fashion, and were not universally considered an entirely 'legitimate' genre. Indeed, there was considerable unease about such films (especially about re-enacted or fake films, rather than the symbolic kind). The disquiet was, I would argue, on two related matters: the acted, artificial nature of these films, and issues of deception.<sup>22</sup>

### **The problem of artificiality**

One might wonder why fakes were regarded in an ambivalent fashion, when their 'equivalents' in illustrated magazines – artists' impressions – had been accepted without demur?<sup>23</sup> I suspect that it was because there was a belief, naïve perhaps, in the basic 'truth' of film: that it could and should be used to record the real world, and that it was or should be more objective than other media. One author in 1900, comparing written accounts of warfare with actuality films of the same, noted:

'A written description is always and forever the point of view, more or less biased, of the correspondent. But the biograph camera does not

lie, and we form our own judgment of this and that as we watch the magic screen.<sup>124</sup>

This idea that the 'camera does not lie' indicates this belief that the cinematograph was or should be a mirror of the real world, whose basic mission was to record real life as it really was. I suggest that when this photographic process became the bearer of fakes and manipulated scenes – particularly in relation to the emotive subject of war – it was as if a category had been transgressed. This is reflected in terminology.

The very word 'fake' is not neutral; it implies an intent to fool, to deceive; it suggests a somewhat disreputable activity. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* gives one meaning as, 'alter so as to deceive'. And it is not as if this disparaging word 'fake' in relation to these films was a later term: it was used at the time to mean this kind of re-enacted film. In August 1900 both Wrench and Philipp Wolff stated openly in their ads that they could supply 'faked war films' of the Boer conflict. These were different companies placing separate ads, showing that this term 'fake' was indeed a current one.<sup>25</sup> [Fig. 5]

But while Wrench and Wolff in this context might have used the term in a relatively dispassionate and 'unashamed' fashion, this attitude to fakes remained a minority position. Others were more judgmental. Charles Urban of the Warwick Trading Company defined 'fakes' (Boer War staged scenes for example) as 'counterfeit' films.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a few years later, *Cinematography and Bioscope Magazine* in an article on this subject, defined the word 'faked' in relation to films as meaning, 'any attempt of deception'.<sup>27</sup> All this suggests that there was some suspicion and mistrust of these films, despite the evident benefits of the fake genre which Wrench had enunciated. And attitudes were even more critical when it came to how fake films were presented.

### **The problem of deception**

Fake films would probably have been acceptable to many people if they were presented (as Wrench did) straightforwardly, for what they were: as artistic, artificially-made, *illustrations* of the events. The real problem arose if they were advertised, sold or introduced dishonestly, with the claim or implication that they were genuine recordings of war.

Some film companies, and probably most, were perfectly frank and honest when describing fakes in their catalogues. As we have seen, the Wrench company presented their war fakes with some pride – 'an excellent substitute for the real thing'. R.W. Paul headed his list of Boer War fakes in his catalogue as, 'Reproductions of Incidents of the Boer War', so there was no doubt that these were fakes. But some manufacturers' film catalogues and ads were vague about the nature of their war films: for example, Walter Gibbons' ad listing 'the latest Chinese war pictures' failed to mention that these were fakes, and only the dramatic action described in some of their synopses would have enlightened purchasers.<sup>28</sup> The Warwick Trading Company, under Charles Urban, regularly warned customers about such vague descriptions, and that such vaguely described films were usually fakes.<sup>29</sup> In relation to the Boer events for example, Warwick stated:

'Beware of so-called sensational war films of the Chinese crisis. These films are only representations, photographed in France and England. Don't be misled into the belief that they are genuine.'<sup>30</sup>

Some people were indeed being misled about such films. In December 1900 a lantern trade journal published an answer to a puzzled correspondent, one E. Anderson, who had sent in a circular which advertised a film of the Boxer uprising (probably the M&K film, *Attack on a Mission Station*).<sup>31</sup> He seems to have been under the impression that this was a genuine film record of an attack, but the journal quickly disabused him of this idea:

'We have received the circular which you enclosed and note that you think it wonderful that some cinematographic artists should be on hand to photograph the attack on a Chinese mission house or station. You appear to take matters too seriously, for the whole thing is a fake picture – a sort of pantomime scene enacted in this country with scenic backgrounds. We think makers of fake films should state so on their circulars.'

But it was not necessarily in the immediate interests of producers to state on their circulars that theirs were fake films ('pantomime scenes') for the following reason. It is likely that, all other things being equal, an exhibitor and his audience would prefer a genuine film record, so if the nature of the film could be kept vague on the circular, more exhibitors might be tempted to purchase (though, as I discuss below, there were risks in this strategy). The deception might then move one stage along, for the exhibitor in turn might be tempted to mask the nature of the film from his customers, the audience.

Audiences were indeed being deceived on this basis, and in some cases were taken in by fakes, or at least were left in some doubt. We have examples of this, notably for films of the Greco-Turkish War and Spanish-American War, which I'll quote in the respective chapters. Leyda suggests that Boxer fakes, 'were presented to audiences as authentic records of those events', and while I have seen no firm substantiation of this, I think it likely. Further evidence comes from the fact that experts at this time were offering advice on how to tell if a film were a fake or not: often the counsel was that spectators should ask themselves if the action depicted were *plausible*. (See **Box**) I submit that such advice wouldn't have been offered had spectators not been expressing doubts about the matter.



## Box:

### How to spot a fake?

In the early years of cinema, advice was sometimes offered in periodicals about how to spot fake films. This strongly suggests that viewers – and perhaps exhibitors – were sometimes unsure whether particular films were genuine or otherwise. The nature of the advice varied, but one theme emerged from a number of commentators: the principle of *plausibility*. In particular, these writers pointed to fakes which were filmed from implausible battlefield positions where the cameraman would have been caught in the gunfire.<sup>32</sup>

This implausibility point was made by filmmaker G.A. Smith in 1899, who commented that because ‘people want to see battle-scenes’, filmmakers turn them out ‘by the dozen’, but that such films were often manifestly detectable as fakes on the grounds of camera position:

*‘You see, you can’t take a picture of a battle without getting into the thick of it, – the range of the cinematograph is not large, – and if an enemy saw you turning the handle of a machine on three legs, pointing a long muzzle at them, they, being wholly illogical and unscientific, might conclude that you were practising [sic] with some new kind of Maxim and smokeless powder. The chances that you would be alive to take the pictures back to an admiring British audience would not be hopeful.’<sup>33</sup>*

A similar point was made in 1900 by an American newspaper in challenging the authenticity of a film purporting to show US troops charging Philippine rebels. In order to have filmed it, the paper pointed out, the cameraman would have to have placed himself in the direct line of fire.<sup>34</sup>

In an important article on film fakes in the *Photographic Chronicle* in 1902, the writer used this same idea of the impossibility of the camera position to puncture the reputation of several specific films, exposing them as fakes. For example, he mentions a fake film of the Boer War, filmed in Britain and depicting an armoured train in Natal with soldiers firing from the interior. He notes:

*‘It is quite certain that no such picture could be taken during a real armoured train skirmish, for the operator with his camera must have been outside the armoured train, and exposed to the cross fire of friend and foe. The same remark applies to some of the pictures of infantry in action in a trench, where the point of view is from the front.’<sup>35</sup>*

In one case, some more general advice, again based on plausibility was offered, in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner. In a trade journal of 1900 a correspondent asked how he could distinguish genuine films from sham war films using ‘life models’ (a term from the lantern world, meaning actors). The journal’s pundit replied to the effect that this could largely be done by common sense:

*‘... for instance, in one film we have heard about, there is a hand-to-hand encounter between Boers and British, all realistic in its way, but the effect is somewhat spoilt by reason of the fringe of an audience appearing on the picture occasionally. Thus, when one sees gentlemen with tall hats, accompanied by ladies, apparently looking on,*

*common sense would at once pronounce the film of the sham order. The same may be said of films showing soldiers lying and firing from behind "earthworks," composed of nicely arranged straw.*<sup>36</sup>

I suspect that the number of films which did actually show ladies and gentlemen watching, or which featured 'nicely arranged straw', would have been fairly minimal, so this response was probably not completely serious. However, the general point was valid, that viewers should look critically at films, and one further piece of advice or opinion from the time makes this point well. A writer in mid 1900 stated that he believed some of the so-called war films then being shown were not filmed in South Africa and added: '...it may be generally assumed that the more thrilling the incident depicted the less amount of truth there is in it'.<sup>37</sup>

In this regard, we need to remember that these audiences in the early years of cinema included many of what one might call 'untrained spectators'. These early spectators might not have had the experience or knowledge to perceive the difference between a genuine and a fake war film. This is firstly because most people had never seen an actual war so they wouldn't know exactly what the real event looked like; and secondly, even if they knew about war, spectators had no way of knowing how such real events would translate into moving images. While in some cases the faking would probably have been evident even to the most naïve spectator – some of Méliès' more fanciful war re-enactments, for example – in the case of other less stylised, more naturalistic fakes (e.g. Amet's model-based naval reconstructions) the signs would be less evident.

## **DECEPTION OF VARIOUS KINDS**

Such innocent spectators constituted a customer base that was ripe for exploitation. And it is clear that several forms of deception were practiced in this era, both in regard to fakes and other kinds of war films. One activity which was probably fairly widespread was false or misleading description.<sup>38</sup> We have seen that this applied to fakes, in that these were sometimes announced as genuine films, and it also applied to actualities. A new or existing film might be re-titled or mis-described at the distribution or exhibition stage to pass it off as something more war-related than it really was. For example, a shot of troops filmed at manoeuvres might be claimed by an exhibitor to have been filmed in the war zone. A specific instance of misleading description occurred during the Spanish-American War when a film of a battleship was exhibited, and claimed falsely to be the celebrated *Maine* (I discuss this incident in Chapter 7).

A similar instance was the case of a spectator who found that a film, announced by the compère as 'Boer Artillery in Action', was in fact a shot of one artillery piece manned by an inexperienced crew, filmed in a location that clearly wasn't Africa. The viewer later concluded that probably this was a shot of some volunteers on a training exercise in England. Actually it is quite likely

that it was a shot of artillery firing (advertised in December 1899), which had been filmed at a French company before being supplied to the Boers.<sup>39</sup>

A related, though even more subtle example of this effect of wording on the meaning of shots, occurred at about this same time in the context of shows of West's 'Our Navy', in films relating to the siege of Ladysmith in the Boer War. West's shows were advertised in the *Times*, to include shots of 'Naval guns in action as at Ladysmith'. This wording, 'as at', made it clear that these shots were not the real thing. But then, from 19 to 22 December the wording changed to miss out the 'as', so becoming simply, 'Naval guns in action at Ladysmith'. This change might have been a typo – and from the 23<sup>rd</sup> December it was back to the original wording – but this instance shows what a difference a single word can make, and perhaps some customers did indeed turn up expecting to see a film of battles in Ladysmith itself.<sup>40</sup>

Another practice which went on at this time, analogous to faking, was what I call 'arranging'. In the war zone, rather than shooting regular military operations, the cameraman would 'set-up' actions with troops specially for filming: for example, troops might be asked to pretend to charge or shoot at an off-screen (non-existent) enemy for the benefit of the camera. A variation on this was where an earlier military operation which hadn't been filmed, would be re-enacted for filming purposes, and then presented as if it were the original operation. For example, during the Philippine War, cameraman Ackerman filmed a re-enacted infantry expedition across a mountain range, 'performed' by the same regiment which had been on the genuine mission. This filmed version was then presented in exhibition as authentic.

All in all, by 1900 there were several kinds of deception taking place in war films, including faking, arranging and mis-description. Deception was therefore being practiced in several genres of both staged films and actualities, and at several points in the film production / exhibition process. How seriously did the public regard such practice? Jonathan Auerbach has written about audience attitudes to fake and mis-described films, and suggests that their false status was less important to audiences than how thrilling they were. He argues, with respect to the re-titled film of the *Maine*, that for audience and makers:

'...the quest for sensation tended to render the opposition between fact and fiction relatively moot. Whether the projection on the screen was the actual battleship *Maine* or another ship posing as the *Maine*, the phantom image was immediate, vivid, and powerful, capable of invoking intense patriotic responses from the cheering vaudeville audiences.'<sup>41</sup>

Auerbach may be right, that for some spectators the nature of the film – genuine or otherwise – was less important than its effectiveness as cinema; but I do not believe that this applied to all spectators. And in most of these cases of mis-description or re-titling – including the *Maine* example – audiences never discovered that the film presented to them was a fraud. They might have *suspected*, but that was all. If they had discovered for sure that they had been misled it's likely that they would have objected. But in the years

around 1900, increasing numbers of exhibitors and spectators did discover that they had been misled, and their concern, as expressed in the press was growing.

## **THE FATE OF FAKES**

Earlier in this chapter I tried to answer the question: why did staged representations of war become such a common genre in early cinema?<sup>42</sup> My answer was that they answered a need, which non-fiction could not meet, for a more dramatic representation of war. The obvious question to ask at this point is: if they were 'needed', why then did these films, especially fakes, disappear as a genre? And disappear they did. From soon after the turn of the century, fakes and other staged war films progressively vanished from the film catalogues and showmen's programmes. There was a brief rally for fakes during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05, but the next major conflicts, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, were little faked, and the same applies to the First World War, apart from isolated instances.<sup>43</sup>

I would suggest two major reasons for the eclipse of fakes. Firstly, a realignment and increasing rigidity in the balance of film genres meant that fakes were increasingly out of place in the film business. I will discuss this in more detail in my Conclusion. But I believe that there was another, perhaps more fundamental reason, and this is to do with the subject I have been discussing above: the question of authenticity, reliability and trust.

### **Trust, deception and authenticity**

As I have mentioned here and in my previous chapter, there was a growing tendency and desire in this era for authenticity in the media – the 'feeling' for the photographic record which Bazin mentions. Yet, in defiance of this trend, through the proliferation of fakes and the publicity surrounding them, early war films were becoming associated with deception. In a 1900 interview with the filmmaker G.A. Smith, the interviewer noted, in a very telling phrase: 'The topic of war-pictures naturally led up to the interesting subject of "fakes".'<sup>44</sup> This implies that by this point films of war were inextricably associated with faking in the popular mind. Compounding the problem were the issues of misdescription and other cases of deception regarding war films which I have detailed above. All this meant that cinema was becoming associated with misrepresentation and a lack of authenticity, and there was some danger of losing the trust of customers, and therefore damaging the entire business.

Let us look at this issue of trust in relation to fakes. Wrench, above, made the case for film fakes, and one can make a more general case too. I will start with an analogy. One might think that no-one likes a 'fake' of any kind, everyone wants the real thing, but this is not always so. We may prefer to buy a fake diamond ring, for example, for it costs so much less than the genuine article. And in so doing at least we end up with a ring of *some* kind, which is almost as good as real. But what if we were misled; what if we wanted and expected (and paid for) a real diamond, yet received the fake? If and when we

find out, we are likely to feel very aggrieved, especially if we have been charged the cost of the genuine jewel.

Truthful description is equally important with respect to the motion picture business (or indeed any other business). And here we come back to the problem we discussed earlier: fake films presented as genuine, and actualities mis-described to make them seem to be real war films. The mis-labelling, mis-description is the key problem.<sup>45</sup> The description and/or title given to a film are crucial; audiences buy tickets on the basis of what they are told they are going to see. If the film does not live up to the advertised description they are likely to feel dissatisfied. In the case of a re-enacted film (fake), if the film is advertised/promoted or introduced by the showman as such, an audience would likely accept it, but if it is fraudulently presented as genuine – or similarly if an actuality is re-titled as something else – the audience might well object if they discover the deception. If the deception were publicised, the likely negative reports would undermine the trust of customers, and therefore have an injurious effect on his show, and perhaps on the wider film business.<sup>46</sup>

Trust is the key point. As a number of economists and business historians have argued in recent years, trust between individuals is an important factor in the overall success of business (and of the wider national economy). Trust, as economists see it, is a bond which reduces transaction costs and helps create a more frictionless economy; where it is absent, businesses tend to remain small and isolated, and fail to develop wider links.<sup>47</sup>

As far as the early film industry went, it seems that leading figures saw that a betrayal of trust between film industry and public was taking place. Charles Urban, as we have seen, warned his customers about fakes or 'representations'. He saw that such deception ultimately would have a detrimental effect on the reputation and future of the business. Of course one cannot know that these issues were being discussed among film companies at this time, for such discussions would have remained private, but I think it very likely, for faking and deception were receiving critical comment in the press. And if discussed in the press then film companies would realise that this was a concern among the public too.

I would suggest that the growing institutionalisation of the film industry might have channelled and focused a growing concern about faking and deception. Business historians tell us that trust is associated with the rise of voluntary and business organisations. In the years after 1900 a number of film trade associations were formed, informal at first and then on a more official basis, and these helped to regularise good practice.<sup>48</sup> Such bodies might well have helped to discourage or root out the more blatant forms of misleading advertising and indeed faking as such. In any case, whatever the mechanism, fakes did progressively disappear, and war news started to be presented through actualities alone.<sup>49</sup>

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In the remainder of this thesis I trace the origin and development of filmed war news in the half dozen years from 1897. In this brief period, staged war films, including fakes, initially blossomed as a form, before disappearing a few years later. By today's standards, these 'artificially arranged' movies seem like a bizarre kind of film to depict warfare. Yet at the time they filled a need, and became quite popular with audiences.

But we should also bear in mind that in this period too, all the wars which were faked were also covered by actuality cameramen, involving these pioneer operators travelling to the war zones to film what they could with the basic camera equipment of the day. It is these cameramen who are in a sense the main players of our story, for while fakes disappeared, actuality filming of wars continued, in an ongoing quest for the authentic image, right up to the present day. Filming warfare is almost certainly the most difficult and risky type of location filming, and it was these early cameramen who pioneered this kind of reporting, thereby laying the groundwork for news cameramen ever since.

#### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth adding that sometimes magic lantern shows too mingled photographic and drawn/painted slides, but I suspect that the lantern was less of a model for the early war film than the illustrated periodical, for the lantern was not such a *topical* medium. In any case, the drawn images that lantern shows employed were sometimes adapted from those in periodicals.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Frank Kessler for this insight that the staged film is the cinematic equivalent of the artist's impression on the page, while the actuality film is analogous to the photograph.

<sup>3</sup> Méliès' phrase, 'artificially arranged scenes' is a useful term for describing dramatised films in general (including staged war films), as are two other shorthand terms used in the early cinema period: 'posed' or 'made-up' films.

<sup>4</sup> Coloured supplement to *The World* 15 Dec 1895. The maps/illustrations were by the artist Outcault, and are a fine example of the high quality of art which often appeared in America's newspaper supplements in this period (though many of these newspapers have now been discarded).

<sup>5</sup> Just from 1895 to 1899 there were nine wars involving Britain, including four small wars in Africa, and campaigns in Sudan, South Africa (Boer) and the Indian frontier. See 'Wars of the Queen's reign', in Henry Sell, *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press... 1900* (London, c1900), p.403. Various imperial powers were considered to be on the wane in the period running up to the First World War, including Spain, China, Russia, Mahdist Sudan, and the Ottoman empire. Lord Salisbury in a famous speech called these former powers the 'dying nations', notably Spain after 1898, and Turkey.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 2, Autumn 1976. Summers is referring to the turn of the century in Britain, but the same militarism was seen in other western nations too, as well as in Japan.

<sup>7</sup> The British military authorities were experimenting with photography from the mid-1850s, and other countries followed. See section 13, 'The Camera at War', in Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget Ann Henisch, *The Photographic Experience, 1839-1914: Images and Attitudes* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 364-93. The French military, for example, by the late 1850s was employing commercial photographers to document specific military projects, and by the following decade photography was being used by French forces for reconnaissance and map-making. Donald E. English, *Political Uses of Photography in the Third French Republic, 1871-1914* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 8.; Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 306-7.

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<sup>8</sup> *Picture Catalogue* (AM&B, 1902). The 'Military' section is from pages 155 to 187. On Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*. Regarding Biograph's military films see: Stephen Bottomore, "'Every Phase of Present-Day Life": Biograph's Non-Fiction Production', *Griffithiana*, no. 66/70, 1999/2000, p.147-211.

<sup>9</sup> One writer in 1902 noted that the contending forces kept moving out of range of the camera and that the cameramen were targeted, which was why, he stated, fake films were made away from the front line, 'when no enemy was near to make things unpleasant'. 'Moving pictures, how made', *The World Today* 3, Nov 1902, p.2081-2. A modern scholar has put this in a different way. Kristen Whissel writes: '...at precisely the historical moment that the cinema's panoramic perception and documentary capacities held forth the promise of actuality footage of such battles, the cinema encountered a limit case.' To which the fake or re-enactment emerged as some kind of solution. Kristen Whissel, 'Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: The Battle Re-Enactment at the Turn of the Century, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Early Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 3, Aug 2002, p. 235-6.

<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, General Otis in the Philippines drove correspondents to distraction through his strict regulation of reporting. Little has been written about the regulation of cameramen in early wars, though Hiley discusses this issue. See Nicholas Hiley, 'Making War: The British News Media and Government Control, 1914-1916', Ph.D., Open University, 1984. Suid notes that from about 1913 there were increasing controls on filmmakers trying to portray the US military and warfare. See Lawrence H. Suid, *Guts & Glory: The Making of the American Military Image in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), p.13-14.

<sup>11</sup> The quality of *significance* is relevant in this context, based on various factors, some subjective, but clearly involving the scale of human/economic impact of the event. This in turn influences the amount of space allocated to it in the media. If one can posit a 'scale of significance', military action and warfare – especially involving the host country – would be at or near the top, because war can affect the destinies of, and lead to the deaths of, thousands of people, and change the boundaries of states.

<sup>12</sup> The 'war shows' during the Spanish-American War offer an example of this practice.

<sup>13</sup> See Winfried Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990): on p.108 he summarises Sebeok's six species of signs, which include the three kinds which I've described.

<sup>14</sup> Nöth, op. cit., p.113-114. Pierce stated that an 'index' is physically connected with its object, making an organic pair: e.g. weathercock, photograph, a rap on the door, etc. Pierce though (p.461), was ambivalent about the status of photographs, and characterised them as both icons and indices, for they both resemble and have some physical connection with their object. Barthes believed that photographs were indexical, as they imply 'an emanation of past reality'.

<sup>15</sup> Note that one might even categorise staged films in this system, for they may be said to show the same *action* as the original events, albeit *re-enacted* action and not real. However, for my purposes, I prefer to use this typology solely for actualities.

<sup>16</sup> André Gaudreault notes that a main reason for re-enacting is if the events portrayed are inaccessible to the camera, and points out that this applies to past historic events as well as to current unfilmable ones. See André Gaudreault, 'Re-enactments', in Richard Abel, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> BJP 7 Mar 1902, p.183.

<sup>18</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Patriotism and Empire: Music Hall Entertainment 1870-1914', in John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.28-9. Colonial symbols included 'the pearls of Ceylon', 'the ermine of Canada', etc.

<sup>19</sup> 'Faked War Films', PD Aug 1900, p.35. The explanation of why the company had made the faked films begins with this: 'Our readers are, doubtless, aware of the great difficulty of taking animated views on a battlefield. Apart from personal danger it is almost impossible under modern conditions of warfare to obtain anything like a satisfactory picture of a battle.'

<sup>20</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.108-09, from 'Important Notice' in *The Era* 21 July 1900, p.24. This was at the time when then the films were released.

<sup>21</sup> Kessler states: 'Film historians thus should be very careful when using the term "fake" and make sure to explicitly state what exactly one wishes to refer to.' See *KINtop*, no. 15, 2006.

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<sup>22</sup> Though the first grounds for criticism which I will cover – issues of artificiality – certainly applied to symbolic films too, but fakes made an easier target. I am grateful to Frank Kessler for having clarified my thinking on this, particularly with regard to false claims by exhibitors.

<sup>23</sup> The debate which I outlined in the previous chapter concerning periodical illustrations was about whether they could represent warfare as well as photographs; not a criticism of them as a form *per se*.

<sup>24</sup> 'Pictures that will be historic', LW 13 Jan 1900, p.18. Interestingly, this was written in relation to Carl Ackerman's Philippines filming, which was, as we shall see, anything but a straightforward record of events.

<sup>25</sup> *The Era* 4 Aug 1900, p.24: ads for John Wrench and Son and for Philipp Wolff. Both also listed 'genuine war films' of the Boxer events. The term, 'fake', is consistently used in the article, 'Faked War Films', PD Aug 1900, p.35.

<sup>26</sup> OMLJ Dec 1900, p.154. He noted that such films were made in London, France and New Jersey, and added that, by contrast, all Warwick's films of the war were real, 'taken at the occurrence of the various events in Africa'.

<sup>27</sup> From *Cinematography & Bioscope Magazine*, no. 3, June 1906, published by the Warwick Trading Company. Courtesy F. Kessler in *KINtop*, no. 15, 2006. Film historian Terry Ramsay, in a well chosen phrase, called such faking, 'the synthetic process of making news pictures'. Terry Ramsay, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1964 [1926]), p. 403. It was not only war fakes which were regarded in some quarters with distaste, as introducing unwanted artifice into the cinema: in certain quarters, especially in Britain, it was felt that there was something rather inappropriate about the cinema being used for any kind of fiction, whether it be faked war/news or indeed story films. Producer Will Barker was quoted as late as 1914 saying that fiction was, 'a prostitution of cinematography'. See Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film, 1906-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948), p.146.

<sup>28</sup> Gibbons ad in the *Era* 17 Nov 1900, p.30.

<sup>29</sup> Warwick clearly identified in their catalogue the few fakes they carried. In the wake of the Boxer uprising, the company specifically differentiated between their films shot in China (by Rosenthal) and the few faked films which they distributed: Rosenthal's films were described as, 'genuine Chinese films, taken by our photographic staff now operating in China'. On the other hand, Warwick stated about their 'War in China' series (Pathé fakes) that: 'The films listed in our catalogue under numbers 7204 to 7206, are only representations, photographed in France'. WTC catalogue Apr/May 1901.

<sup>30</sup> *The Era* 10 Nov 1900, p.30. See also WTC catalogue Apr/May 1901, pp.180 and 181; and the mention of the Pathé fakes comes in the supplement to their September 1900 catalogue. To emphasise the genuine nature of the films, Warwick added a comment: 'The following Series are the only Animated Pictures taken in China since the trouble began, and were secured by us at great Expense and much Risk to our Photographers...'

<sup>31</sup> OMLJ Dec 1900, p.168. In this same issue is the first ad for Williamson's new film, *Attack on a Chinese Mission Station*, though I do not believe this to be the film referred to by Anderson, as it had probably been produced too recently. The M&K film on the other hand, had already been advertised and available for three months.

<sup>32</sup> In recent years, film historian Kristen Whissel has written about this issue, referring to the 'impossible position' for the camera in the middle of the disputed territory. She suggests that this position would have given such films away to urban spectators of the time as obvious fakes. But if so – if most people knew these were fakes – why do the articles of the time, which I quote, feel it necessary to explain the implausibility of these films to their readers? My view is that sometimes viewers were genuinely unsure if war films were real or not, hence the advice. Kristen Whissel, 'Placing the Spectator...', *op. cit.*, p. 234-6.

<sup>33</sup> 'A Brighton Kinematograph Factory', *Brighton Herald* 14 Oct 1899, p.2d: this section of the interview is headed 'Making up a battle scene'.

<sup>34</sup> From a Rochester newspaper of May 1900, quoted in George C. Pratt, "'No Magic, No Mystery, No Sleight of Hand": The First Ten Years of Motion Pictures in the Third Largest City of New York State', *Image* 8, no. 4, Dec 1959, p.206. Cited in David Levy, 'Re-Constituted Newsreels, Re-Enactments and the American Narrative Film', in *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, edited by R. Holman (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), p.247.



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<sup>35</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', *Photographic Chronicle* 14 Aug 1902, p.517-8. In the same article the writer criticised other fakes for implausibility, including *The Dispatch Rider*. I mention further examples from this article in the course of some of my chapters.

<sup>36</sup> 'Sham war cinematograph films', OMLJ Mar 1900, p.30.

<sup>37</sup> This comes in the course of a piece about sham films of the Oberammergau passion play in *Church Times* 3 Aug 1900, p.128.

<sup>38</sup> Brugioni calls it 'false captioning' in the context of stills photographs; or Kessler calls it, 're-using and re-labelling existing footage'. Dino A. Brugioni, *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 1999).; Kessler op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> Anonymous letter, 'Was it a fake?' in *Cambridge Daily News* 7 Sep 1938, p.4 (reference from Nick Hiley). The writer was recalling the first films he/she saw in a small Welsh town in the early years of the century. The French guns referred to were two films 'taken (i.e. filmed) by permission before being supplied by the French': advertised as 'War films' by Harrison and Co. Ad in OMLJ, Dec 1899. These were probably Creusot artillery pieces, as this French firm supplied the Boers with several big guns. Several other films of Boer artillery, etc, appeared in 1899, e.g. *Disappearing Gun*. See Barnes 1899 volume.

<sup>40</sup> These examples are from the *Times* on given dates in the 3rd or 4th columns of the classified ads (1st page). Thanks to Frank Kessler for having spotted this subtle difference in wording.

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Auerbach, 'McKinley at Home: How Early American Cinema Made News', *American Quarterly* 51, no. 4, Dec 1999, p.797-832.

<sup>42</sup> I suggested that they emerged in response to the increasing difficulty of reporting from the modern battlefield, and that their form was partially modelled on the drawn illustration.

<sup>43</sup> It is interesting that M&K, who had been one of the major producers of fakes of the Boer War, did not make fakes of the Russo-Japanese War. Regarding the First World War, one instance of faking occurred when D.W. Griffith, in making *Hearts of the World*, eventually abandoned most of the footage he had shot at the Front and re-enacted or faked it on Salisbury Plain. See Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West and the Wilderness* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978). Some important news events were staged in this slightly later period, but as full-blown dramas, not fakes as such: for example, the *Titanic* sinking in 1912. See my book, *The Titanic and Silent Cinema* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> From V.W. Cook, 'The humours of 'living picture' making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488.

<sup>45</sup> See the examples I cite of mis-description in Stephen Bottomore, *The Titanic and Silent Cinema* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2000). I cite cases of audiences objecting to a substitute *Titanic* film where they were told to expect a genuine one. If the faked images were sufficiently plausible to avoid being detected, the mis-labelling might be said to have worked.

<sup>46</sup> A more specific concern might have been that non-fiction and news films were thought to attract the somewhat higher class patrons, so if the reliability of such films were laid open to question, this might put off these better classes and so impact on profits.

<sup>47</sup> See Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (London: Penguin, 1996). See also Samuel P. Huntington and Lawrence E. Harrison, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); and Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza and Luigi Zingales, *Does Culture Affect Economic Outcomes?* (London: Centre for Economic Policy Research, 2006); these books cite works by Landes and Banfield.

<sup>48</sup> On this role of business organisations, see Fukuyama and other works cited in the endnote above.

<sup>49</sup> In a sense this eclipse was 'unfair' on fakes, for if presented straightforwardly such films might have been little more controversial than artists' impressions in magazines. But the sense of deception which had surrounded these films took its toll, and fakes, it seems, became the 'fall guy' for sharp and dishonest behaviour in the industry.

### Chapter 3

## THE GRECO-TURKISH WAR (1897)

### The first war to be filmed and faked

Until relatively recently it has been thought by most historians that the first war films (i.e. news films about war) were shot in 1898-1900 during the Spanish-American and Boer Wars. But more detailed research now reveals that the first scenes filmed on or near a battlefield were taken during a small war in the Spring of 1897 in Greece, a year before the Spanish-American War had even started. What makes the filming of the Greco-Turkish War doubly interesting is that this was also the earliest war to be *faked* on film. But if filmmakers proved remarkably prescient in producing both actuality and reconstructed or fake films of this war, exhibitors were equally quick to make exaggerated, sometimes dishonest, claims for such films. The issues seen here in 1897 for the first time, notably those of truth, artifice and deception, were to dominate the representation of war in the visual media for years to come, and this war therefore may be seen as setting something of a pattern for all future coverage of warfare by the moving image.

#### INTRODUCTION

By the 1890s Greece and Turkey were old rivals. Part of Greece had gained independence from Turkey in the 1820s, but two thirds of Greeks still lived in lands under Turkish control, including in Crete. The Greek majority on the latter island were subject to brutal Turkish rule, and the efforts of Greek nationalists to help them only increased Turkish repression. In early 1897, following massacres of Greeks in Crete, the major powers in Europe (the 'Concert of Nations') sent forces to the island to control the situation. But conflict continued, because many Greeks in Crete and in the other Greek-populated lands still under the Turkish yoke dreamed of freedom from Turkey, desiring incorporation in a greater Greece – the so-called 'Megali idea'.<sup>1</sup> Matters reached a head when forces from the two sides faced each other on the mainland frontier, and following hostile incidents, full-scale war was declared on 18 April.

The disorganized Greek army was militarily no match for the German-trained Turkish forces which began a push southwards through Thessaly. Despite a few successes, the Greeks were generally routed. The entire conflict was brief and was brought to a close through an armistice arranged by the European powers (which didn't want Greece to be swallowed up as a province of Turkey) on 18 May, exactly a month after it began – hence it soon became known as the 'thirty days war'.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks were forced to pay reparations and lost some small areas of territory to Turkey; but later that year, after British pressure, Crete became an autonomous province with a Greek governor.<sup>3</sup>

## **The press**

There had been enough warning of coming war for many of the European and American newspapers to send correspondents to cover hostilities, and a considerable number of these scribes and adventurers (mainly men, but also two women) descended on Greece in April 1897.<sup>4</sup> They were present in force, excessively so on some occasions: one observer, for example, noticed some 30 war correspondents in Larissa after the Greek retreat there.<sup>5</sup> Hearst's *New York Journal* alone despatched three reporters to the front to cover this small war.<sup>6</sup>

Press photographers too were quite active, and the stereographic firms in particular released a number of stereo photographs of the war.<sup>7</sup> One intrepid photographer 'obtained some really wonderful pictures of the Greek troops in action', claimed a colleague, and among his images was one depicting, 'a skirmish at Tyrnovo on the Turkish frontier', as Greeks sheltered behind a barrier from the Turkish bombardment. This anonymous photographer, 'necessarily underwent great risks, and sustained several narrow escapes' but his success, we are told, inspired his colleagues to try to cover future wars with cameras.<sup>8</sup> There were also magic lantern slides produced of the war, and lantern lectures given later in 1897.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a Pooles Myriorama show on the 'Turko-Greek War' could be seen, promising, 'Blockade of Crete. Bombardment of Canea. The Great Battles of Melouna, Mati, and Velestino.' [Fig. 1] In Germany a showman advertised that he would exhibit a panorama of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> In short, the media coverage was quite extensive, including, for the first time, in films too.

## **FILMING THE WAR: FREDERIC VILLIERS**

By the Spring of 1897, though the film medium had been in existence for only a year, both fiction and non-fiction films were being produced. Some news events too, such as public ceremonies and sports events (like horse races), were starting to be filmed. It is scarcely surprising therefore that the idea was mooted that this coming war too should be filmed. In March and April 1897, two British photographic journals, in listing some of the many possible uses to which the new cinematograph might be put, suggested filming this war. 'Why', asked the *Photographic News*, should not one of the film producers 'furnish a special war correspondent with an instrument, and give us animated photographs of the Turco-Hellenic war? These would certainly be a big draw'.<sup>11</sup>

### **Villiers: The first war cameraman?**

But did anyone actually go to film the war? There is no indication of this in any standard history of early cinema or in any accounts of the history of the war film. About the only clue in a later source that someone did film this war appears in an article published in 1950 about the history of news filming written by the newsreel pioneer, Kenneth Gordon, who refers to: '...the London *Times* report of filming the action in Crete in 1897 by the war-correspondent, F. Villiers [sic]'. He notes that this constitutes 'the first coverage of war news'.<sup>12</sup>

This name 'F. Villiers' is not listed in any of the traditional books covering the early cinema, neither can one find any appropriate reference in *The Times* (even by searching the recent digital version), but I eventually tracked him down in *Who Was Who*. It turns out that his name was in fact Frederic Villiers (1851-1922). He was a war artist and special correspondent for the *Illustrated London News* and the *Standard* (among other periodicals) in what might be called the 'golden age' of war correspondents, when this profession was dominated by a number of adventurous Britons. Of this group, Frederic Villiers was among the most colourful and the best known. The character Dick Helder, a war correspondent in Kipling's novel and stage play *The Light that Failed*, is said to have been based on him, and Forbes-Robertson came to Villiers for advice when playing the role on stage.<sup>13</sup>

Villiers began as a war correspondent in 1876, working for *The Graphic*, and by the eve of World War I he had covered more campaigns than any other correspondent and 'seen more battles than any soldier living and endured more privations'.<sup>14</sup> His obituary in *The Times* said: 'Although not one of the best, he was one of the most prolific and ubiquitous of the old school of war correspondents, and he always carried with him into the lecture room that air of the swashbuckler which was at one time considered the correct comportment for the soldier of the pen'.<sup>15</sup> Pat Hodgson, in *The War Illustrators*, is more candid, describing him as a 'poseur', contributing much to his own legend.<sup>16</sup> Villiers was indeed something of a showman, and would appear at his lectures in full battle-dress, with his collection of medals and ribbons prominently displayed. His friend and fellow correspondent, Archibald Forbes, complained that in the field Villiers would go to bed wearing his spurs, believing that this 'contributed to his martial aspect'. As an artist he was only 'of moderate ability' (*The Times* obituary), and he found figure drawing 'tiresome and uninteresting'.<sup>17</sup> But despite, or perhaps because of, this limitation, in 1897 Villiers pioneered what was to become a more important means of reportage than the drawing.

As the first signs of conflict rumbled in Greece, Villiers set off to report on events, representing the *Standard* newspaper and the illustrated weekly, *Black and White*.<sup>18</sup> Apparently he was initially forced to stay in Athens for some time because the European powers were blockading the Greek ports,<sup>19</sup> but on 24<sup>th</sup> April Villiers arrived at the port of Volo in Thessaly, near the battlefield. Perhaps because he knew the region (he had been in the Balkans before as a war correspondent) and anticipated only a minor war – he later called it 'the little flare-up between Greece and Turkey' – Villiers felt that he could afford to take chances. So he brought with him two novel pieces of equipment: a bicycle for the first time in a European campaign, and a newfangled cinematograph camera for the first time in any war. He wrote:

'When this little war broke out I had ingeniously thought that cinema pictures of the fighting would delight and astonish the public. The cinema camera was then in its infancy, so at considerable expense I took one to the front.'<sup>20</sup>

As the war raged above his base at Volo, Villiers was perfectly placed to reach the action, and could soon put the film camera to good use:

'I was well housed during the fighting in front of Volo, for the British consul insisted on my residing at the consulate. To me it was campaigning in luxury. From the balcony of the residence I could always see of a morning when the Turks opened fire up on Velestino Plateau; then I would drive with my cinema outfit to the battlefield, taking my bicycle with me in the carriage. After I had secured a few reels of movies, if the Turks pressed too hard on our lines I would throw my camera into the vehicle and send it out of action, and at nightfall, after the fight, I would trundle back down the hill to dinner... It was a laborious business in those early days to arrange the spools and change the films; and I sweated a good deal at the work...'<sup>21</sup>

In his account of the war, Villiers doesn't say much more about the process of filming or the subjects he shot, but we will look at what he managed to film a little later. In any case the passage just quoted is interesting from another point of view: for his use of the term 'our lines', as if Villiers was taking sides in the war. In fact most correspondents from western countries who reported on this war had an instinctive sympathy for little, Christian Greece, struggling against the powerful Ottoman state.<sup>22</sup> Some correspondents even fought for the Greeks, as well as reporting for the press.<sup>23</sup> As we shall see in other wars, it was not unusual for war correspondents to take sides (especially if they were reporting on a war involving their own country), and even temporarily to take up arms.

Villiers' himself soon became actively involved in the war in a diplomatic role. Early in May, with the Turks pressing their advantage, Volo was abandoned by the Greek military forces. In order to save the Greek population from Turkish reprisals, Villiers suggested to the British Consul an audacious plan, that together they should 'go boldly into the Moslem lines to intercede with Edhem Pasha on behalf of the remaining inhabitants'.<sup>24</sup> This mission of mercy, involving French and British consular staff and four war correspondents, succeeded, and the townspeople in Volo were not attacked further.

Returning to a now-occupied Volo, Villiers met the newly appointed Turkish Military Governor, Enver Bey, who granted him a safe conduct to Athens, and also apparently informed him that the next battle would take place at Domokos the following Monday noon.<sup>25</sup> Villiers arrived in Domokos 'on the exact day and hour to hear the first gun fired by the Greeks at the Moslem infantry advancing across the Pharsala plains'.<sup>26</sup> This was to be the final defeat for the Greeks, and only an internationally arranged armistice saved Greece from further humiliation. Soon after this – probably in early June – Villiers headed off to cover events in Crete, where the European powers had stationed troops and naval vessels.<sup>27</sup>

### **Confirmation of Villiers' claims**

Villiers' account of his experiences is dramatic enough, but is his a true claim that he took a motion picture camera to Greece and filmed scenes from the war? If so, this would be the first war ever to be filmed, so it is worth examining the evidence with some care. There are several reasons why we should question Villiers' own claims. Firstly, he is inaccurate about aspects of his involvement in the war. For example, he seems to imply that he had a scoop in being at Domokos for the hostilities (through the tip-off from Enver Bey), but in fact he arrived with the Reuters correspondent W. K. Rose (see the latter's book *With the Greeks in Thessaly*) and several other correspondents were also present. Similarly, his possession of a bicycle at the front was not as unique as he implies: his colleague René Bull, who was also covering the war for *Black and White*, had one, as did the *Morning Post's* correspondent, Wilfred Pollock, and at least two other journalists.<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, Villiers' claims are mainly based on his own assertions, for none of the accounts of the campaign by other correspondents that I have seen mention Villiers' movie camera – though, to be fair, most of these other accounts do not mention Villiers at all (unsurprisingly, for war correspondents rarely refer to the achievements of their rivals in the field).<sup>29</sup> Most of the descriptions of Villiers' filming activities come from his autobiographical works, published years later, though I have found some more contemporary corroboration: his entry in *Who's Who*, from the 1899 edition onwards, states that he 'used the cinematograph [sic] camera for first time in history of campaigning during the war'. But this entry was probably based on information from Villiers himself, so cannot be regarded as independent.<sup>30</sup>

So was Frederic Villiers the first war cinematographer? He probably exaggerated parts of his account for posterity – though, to his credit, I have found that his later reminiscences generally match his more contemporary reports – but would he actually have *invented* basic pieces of information? When I originally wrote an article on Villiers for *Sight and Sound* in 1980, there was no way of knowing for certain. However, since this original article, evidence has come to light which proves beyond doubt that Villiers really did film at the war and its aftermath, and moreover that his films were subsequently shown in public.

Corroboration that Villiers did film during the war comes from the later reminiscences of two separate individuals who actually saw him filming. Firstly, from fellow war correspondent Frederick Palmer, who was riding into Lamia with the retreat after the battle of Domokos, and noted: 'There I saw Frederic Villiers turning the crank of the first motion-picture camera'. (This ties in with Villiers' own claim that he was present at the Lamia retreat).<sup>31</sup>

And secondly, a soldier who was present during the events in Crete in the aftermath of the war, saw Villiers filming on that island. This soldier, William Coyne, wrote a letter to the press in the 1930s recalling that on 22 June 1897, during the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (her 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the throne) the bay of Candia in Crete was full of warships, and troops were formed up ashore. As war correspondents gathered to watch,

the ships and troops all fired the Royal salute and Coyne observed 'Fred Villars', as he calls him, 'with his tripod and camera filming the marvellous scene'.<sup>32</sup>

There is one footnote to add to my account of Villiers in Greece: I found a brief and enigmatic reference in the *Photographic News* in June 1897 to someone who planned to take a film camera to the conflict. The journal reported that this camera was:

'... built for a well-known and famous war correspondent, on his departure for Greece recently, to take views of the fighting between the Turkish and Greek troops, but he found at the last moment that he could not take it with him, as it made excess of the luggage allowed on the frontier.'<sup>33</sup>

Who was this war correspondent? There are two possibilities: either it was Frederic Villiers, and this was a garbled report about his filming (perhaps he did intend to take a second camera?); or it was one of the other correspondents in the field who hoped to film the war. If the latter, one likely candidate (though scarcely 'famous') would seem to be Villiers' colleague on *Black and White* magazine, René Bull, who was also in Greece reporting on the war, and as we shall see in the following chapters, was to try his hand at war filming in the ensuing years.<sup>34</sup>

### **The films shown in Brighton and elsewhere**

Another piece of evidence has now come to light which proves conclusively that Villiers filmed the war both in Greece and Crete, and that the films were shown. On 2 August 1897 a Brighton newspaper published an advertisement for a screening of 'Animated Photographs', presented by Lewis Sealy's company at a venue called Mellison's Grand Skating Rink, West Street, Brighton.<sup>35</sup> (Sealy was a well-known British music-hall actor.) As further confirmation, a postcard in the Frank Gray collection shows West Street and the exterior of Mellison's, and advertises the film show. With the help of some enlargement and enhancement we can read the sign on the front of the building. The letters are slightly cut off, but would read in full: 'Animated Photographs', 'Greco Turkish War'. [Fig. 2]

The Mellison's film show was in two parts: the first part consisting of films of the Diamond Jubilee, and the second comprising films of the Greco-Turkish War. I reproduce below the section of the ad which lists the war films. This list is exactly as it appears in the newspaper, apart from the film numbers which I have added for clarity.

**Advertisement for Villiers' films in the *Sussex Daily News*, 2 Aug 1897**

WAR PICTURES ! FIRST EVER TAKEN.  
THE GRÆCO-TURKISH WAR. ANIMATED PHOTO-  
GRAPHS, taken on the FIELD OF BATTLE by  
MR. FREDERICK VILLIERS,  
The Celebrated War Artist and Correspondent.

SCENES AND INCIDENTS:

- 1) Relieving Guard on the Bastian – Crete.
- 2) The “Bersigliere” Italian Contingent – to the Front !!!
- 3) French Guard at the Custom House – Crete.
- 4) Street Scene near the Suda Gate – Crete.
- 5) The Commander of H.M.S. “Bruiser” Landing with Despatches.
- 6) Seaforth Highlanders taking Mountain Battery out of Action.
- 7) Greek Irregulars (Brigands).
- 8) English War Correspondents with the Greek Troops.
- 9) Reception at the British Consulate (Volo) after the Surrender.
- 10) “An Alarm” – The Greeks open Fire.
- 11) In the Trenches.
- 12) The Capture of Domoko.
- 13) Inhabitants in Flight.

Notes about these films:

- a) The Bastian or Bastion, above Canea, was the location for the camps of the British and European forces (see *Black and White*, 13 Mar 1897).
- b) The Seaforth Highlanders were one of the principal British regiments stationed in Crete. After this posting they were sent to the Sudan where they participated in the campaign which culminated in the battle of Omdurman.
- c) The ‘Greek irregulars’, ostensibly a part of the Greek fighting forces, are described with contempt by Villiers in his autobiographies as ‘the scum of Thessaly’ – a bunch of murderous brigands, equally content to rob from fellow Greeks as to fight the Turks.

Of these thirteen films or scenes – each one probably only a minute or so in duration – the first six or seven were filmed in Crete (providing confirmation for Coyne’s testimony that he saw Villiers filming there), and the remainder filmed on the Greek mainland during the actual hostilities. The Crete scenes are listed first (and so were presumably shown first) even though they were apparently filmed after the mainland scenes, i.e. during the armistice after the war. Presumably this a-chronological programming was designed to climax with the scenes taken during the actual war. (Crete incidentally was of some



significance in the war, for it had been one of the flashpoints, due to Turkish atrocities on the island).

The screenings in Brighton continued though August and well into September (with a few days of no showings), but Villiers' films became less dominant though this run as other films were added to Sealy's programme.<sup>36</sup> The war films were therefore screened for about a month, with diminishing prominence, a pattern which hardly suggests that they were a major success.

Villiers himself may have presented the films in person during the Brighton run – he was a regular lantern lecturer in Brighton and elsewhere – though this is not confirmed by the press ads. But evidence has now emerged that later in 1897 he was indeed presenting his own films – this time at venues in London. Announcements for lectures by Villiers appear in the journal of the National Sunday League (an organisation which promoted educational activities, especially lectures) during the Winter of 1897-98 to be in town halls in Shoreditch and Battersea (suburbs of London).<sup>37</sup> The brief notices state that Villiers would lecture about the Greco-Turkish conflict and would show 'special animated photographs of scenes of the war'. The films may have been shown in other parts of Britain too (further evidence of this is probably hidden in regional newspapers). However I have found no evidence that the films were actually distributed by any film companies in the UK.<sup>38</sup>

None of Villiers' thirteen films survives, as far as we know, and the nearest idea of what they might have looked like comes in the form of still photographs which illustrate an autobiographical volume he published in 1902. It is even possible that some of the stills in his book were blow-ups of frames from his films (though Villiers regularly took a stills camera with him on his assignments). Some of these photographs are captioned, and a couple of the descriptions are similar to titles of Villiers' films listed in the Brighton newspaper. Possible matches of these photographs are to film numbers 8, 9 and 13.<sup>39</sup> [Fig. 3 and 4]

In the absence of the actual films surviving, it is the newspaper list which provides our most precise indication of what they depicted. On first inspection these film titles appear to be quite neutral and unvarnished records of the war. But in fact this is not so. For a start there is bias: Villiers gives little or no coverage to the Turkish side, as only the Greeks are filmed. Furthermore, a closer look suggests that in some cases there may have been intervention by Villiers as filmmaker – what I call 'arranging'. Of course it is hard to draw firm conclusions, as this very basic list is all that remains of the films, but I think that even the bare titles raise some questions in this regard. For example, consider the film entitled *The Capture of Domoko*. Could Villiers really have been present as the town fell to the Turks, or did he set something up, or at least mis-describe a film showing a somewhat less specific event? Or what about his film, "An Alarm" – *The Greeks open Fire*: was this action really filmed as it happened, or did Villiers set the soldiers up in position and then ask them to fire their guns? A savvy trade writer in 1899 almost pointed a finger of suspicion at Villiers for doing such arranging when he wrote:

'I went over the Greek battlefields shortly after the war, and I should have found it a very easy matter to have "squared" a few natives to lay as dead upon the field had I needed such pictures, but I did not. Moreover, the guide I employed was the one that accompanied one of our most famous war correspondents to the front, and I value his little tricks too highly to give them away.'<sup>40</sup>

If it is Villiers who is referred to (and possibly meaning his film, *In the Trenches*), such 'intervention' would not be out of character, given his known talent for self-promotion and showmanship. What is clear from these titles is that Villiers' films scarcely showed any of what one might call battlefield action. (Even though he later claimed that he '...managed to get touches of real warfare'.) One might think that this lack of battlefield action could help explain why the films were not shown and appreciated more widely, though few early war films show any action, and one might expect that even somewhat dull scenes from a contemporary, albeit distant, small war, would be in some demand. Yet, as we have noted, the films were little screened and not distributed by a film company as far as we know. Why this lacklustre history? One reason is that the films may not have been of very good quality: correspondent Palmer, who as we've mentioned saw Villiers filming during the war in Greece, also noted briefly that 'the results of his pioneer film exposures were foggy'.<sup>41</sup> An even more likely reason for the poor exhibition history is that the films faced competition, for by the time Villiers returned to the UK in the Summer, another filmmaker had produced films of the war which were by now on the market.<sup>42</sup>

## **FAKING THE WAR: GEORGES MÉLIÈS**

### **Villiers faces competition**

In his memoirs, Villiers gives us the following account of what transpired when he tried to air his war films after his return to the UK:

'It was a great disappointment... to discover that these films were of no value in the movie market, for when I returned to England, a friend... said to me:

"My dear Villiers, I saw some wonderful pictures of the Greek war last night."

By his description I knew they were certainly not mine. I wondered at this, because my camera was the only one to pass the Greek customs during the campaign. Then he described one of the pictures:

"Three Albanians [Albanians fought with the Turks during the war] came along a very white, dusty road toward a cottage on the right of the screen. As they neared it they opened fire; you could see the bullets strike the stucco of the building. Then one of the Turks with the butt end of his rifle smashed in the door of the cottage, entered, and brought out a lovely Athenian maid in his arms. You could see her struggling and fighting for liberty. Presently an old man, evidently the girl's father, rushed out of the house to her rescue, when the second Albanian whipped out his yataghan from his belt and cut the old

gentleman's head off." Here my friend grew enthusiastic. "There was the head," said he, "rolling in the foreground of the picture." Nothing could be more positive than that.<sup>43</sup>

This comes from Villiers' 1920 autobiography, and one might think that it could be an unreliable recollection after so many years had passed. But in a 1900 interview Villiers recounted his friend's description of the faked film in very similar terms.<sup>44</sup> However, both accounts rely on someone else's description of the film (i.e. by his friend), and should therefore be treated with some caution. Nevertheless, this is one of the first ever descriptions of a faked film by a spectator of the time, and one of the first discussions of the faking issue in relation to war filming, so it is interesting as an anecdote. Villiers adds that the film had been made by 'a famous firm outside Paris ... and since then many others of a similar nature have delighted the movie "fan"'. There can be little doubt that the 'famous firm' referred to was that of Georges Méliès.

### **The four films**

Georges Méliès, who had been making films since 1896, was based in Montreuil-sous-Bois (which is just outside Paris, as Villiers correctly states). But even if Villiers had not given the firm's French location, the style and content of this film as described by his friend – an attack on a cottage and beheading of an old man – would immediately have suggested the identity of its author. As Paul Hammond has noted in *Marvellous Méliès*, decapitation was a recurrent theme in Méliès' work (and in the stage acts of various magicians before him).<sup>45</sup> At least a dozen of his films involve heads being severed from bodies, and many more are concerned with other kinds of fanciful 'maiming'.

To carry out such camera tricks successfully required a fine control of all aspects of the shooting, which was much easier to accomplish in a studio, and, at about the time of the Greco-Turkish War, Méliès' first studio was just finished (it was probably the first specially-built film studio in the world). He moved into this building on 22 March 1897, and here, as he grandiloquently stated, he believed he would 'meet his destiny'. His granddaughter suggests that the Greco-Turkish War films were Méliès' first productions in the new studio, and indeed they were some of the earliest films by any filmmaker shot in a studio.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, arguably, they were the first ever films to reconstruct a current news event; and as we shall see, one of them was the first film to use an articulated set. They were, in short, pioneering, 'landmark', films in several senses.

It seems that Méliès made four separate films about this war. I list them here, with both English and French titles (and with arbitrary numbers, added by me):

1. *Mohammedan inhabitants of Crete massacring Christian Greeks; Massacres en Crète*
2. *Turks attacking a house defended by Greeks (Turnavos); La Prise de Tournavos par les troupes du Sultan*
3. *The Greek man-of-war "George" shelling the Fort of Previsa; Combat Naval en Grèce*

#### 4. *Execution of a Greek Spy at Pharsala; l'Execution d'un Espion*

[For a more detailed list of these films, with alternate titles, see **Table**.]

Méliès' Greco-Turkish War films were probably filmed during early May, given that the war took place the previous month, and the first announcement that I have found of the films in a trade ad was at the end of May.<sup>47</sup> Each of them was between 65 and 75 feet long.<sup>48</sup> One contemporary claimed that the Méliès films were shot in a 'Parisian garden', and a French film historian makes the same claim for films 1 and 4, saying they were filmed in a Paris suburb or in Méliès' Montreuil garden.<sup>49</sup> This suggestion may hold some credence given the location of one of the films, as described by Villiers' friend, taking place on a road near a cottage. But films 2 and 3, which survive, were shot in Méliès' studio.

The four films were released in various countries. Initially only films 2 and 3 were released on the British market, and 1 and 4 would seem to have come slightly later (the Pharsala events depicted took place near the end of the war). A list of the films is given in an advertisement of an early film distributor, Philipp Wolff (based in London and Germany) and the titles closely match listings in Méliès' own Star Film catalogues and other catalogues. (See **Table**).

In Britain they were well received, one trade journal calling them a 'most striking series'.<sup>50</sup> Another trade writer was also impressed and thought that the films would be of the greatest interest to the public; he added, curiously, that they would also be of the utmost practical value as an inspiration for war painters.<sup>51</sup> It would seem most likely that it was film number 1, *Massacres en Crète*, which roused the enthusiasm of Villiers' friend.<sup>52</sup> This may be the same film released in July in Ireland with the title, *The Greeks Last Stand in the Melina [or Maluna] Pass*.<sup>53</sup> Méliès' Greek war films were also widely shown in Europe, screenings taking place, for example, in the Wintergarten, Berlin, from as early as May 1897, and at the Théâtre des Variétés in Neuchâtel in early June.<sup>54</sup> The films also appeared in Christian Slieker's travelling shows in the Netherlands, and as far afield as India.<sup>55</sup>

One interesting aspect of these Méliès films is that considering that they were depicting a news event, they had a surprisingly long exhibition history. They were still being shown in at least one London theatre in December 1897, prompting a music hall critic to write, 'we are getting rather tired' of such outdated films as 'Views of the Turko-Greek war'.<sup>56</sup> In some locations Méliès scenes were shown even later. They were still being advertised in the trade press as late as February 1898, and one spectator recalled that he had seen 'passable' moving pictures of the Greek war in a town in the north of Scotland in that year.<sup>57</sup> They were exhibited in New York in March 1898 at the Metropolitan, and at least two of the titles – *Defence of a House* and *Execution of a Spy* (corresponding to my films nos. 2 and 4) – were screened as late as June or July 1898 at the Eden Musee, also in New York City.<sup>58</sup>

We can get a sketchy idea of Méliès' Greek war films through their titles, plot synopses and from spectators' descriptions, but we are also in the fortunate position that two of the four Greco-Turkish War films survive. I will describe these in the following two sections.

**The defence of a small walled courtyard: *La Prise de Tournavos***

In a British trade journal, *Photograms of the Year*, of 1897 two Méliès films, claimed to be of the Greco-Turkish War, were described as showing: (A) 'the defence of a garret room' and (B) 'the defence of a small walled courtyard'.<sup>59</sup> As I suggest below, film A, the garret room, was not in fact a Greek war film (though was screened as one). But film B, the courtyard, was indeed one of the series, though this brief description – 'the defence of a small walled courtyard' – is the only contemporary description which we have of the film, and (unlike A) there is no frame still of it in *Photograms*. However, I believe I have identified a copy in the National Film and Television Archive (NFTVA) in London. Because I believe that this is a new identification/discovery, and because it is an important film related to this war, I will describe the NFTVA print in some detail.

The film is clearly staged, and shows a skirmish in a courtyard. The courtyard is clearly Ottoman in design, but in a recognisably 'Méliès' style. There is a fancifully Ottoman-style inner doorway on one side, leading into the house, and on the other side an external door to the street outside. Over the walls of the courtyard can be seen a stylized view of the town beyond (meant to be Turnavos, presumably, as I argue below) with towers and minarets, as befits a Greek city in the Ottoman empire.

At just 59 feet long, and running less than a minute at sound speed, the action is so complex that one has to see it several times to appreciate what is going on. As the film starts, three presumably Greek soldiers, soon joined by a fourth, stand in the courtyard on barrels and fire over the wall. As they do so, we can just see the top of a ladder being put up on the wall outside as part of a Turkish assault. Then four Turkish(?) soldiers and their leader enter by climbing over the wall or kicking the outside door in, whereupon the Greeks flee from the courtyard into the house through the other door, locking it behind them. One Turkish soldier places an explosive on this door, which blows open and the Turks rush inside. Then a couple of Greeks(?) storm over the wall from outside and shoot the leader of the Turks as the film ends. Interestingly, during the action, characters pass quite closely past camera, giving the film a three-dimensional quality, unlike Méliès' usual frontal, theatrical viewpoint.<sup>60</sup>

The film is clearly identifiable as Méliès' work by its style, and I believe that this film is indeed one of his Greco-Turkish War titles principally because of the Ottoman style of the architecture, which makes sense for a Greek location, and also is from a found collection of films of about the right date.<sup>61</sup> Assuming it is one of his Greek war films, I feel that the only title in the list of four which it could match is *Turks Attacking a House Defended By Greeks (Turnavos)* also known as *Troopers Last Stand*, and in the French original, *La Prise de Tournavos par les Troupes du Sultan*.

### **The innovative 'naval' film: *Combat Naval en Grèce***

Another of the four Méliès Greco-Turkish War films is also extant, though it was initially misidentified. A film survived in the NFTVA with the attributed title, 'Action on Deck of Warship', and was dated to about 1904. The NFTVA's description reads:

A studio reconstruction, showing the central section of a warship which moves up and down. An officer looks through a telescope and binoculars, while sailors fire a deck gun. An explosion occurs on deck, one of the sailors falls down, and the others attempt to put out a small fire.

The hitherto anonymous film was positively identified by John Barnes some years ago as one of Méliès' Greco-Turkish War series, *Combat Naval en Grèce*, based on comparison with a frame from the film in a contemporary photographic journal.<sup>62</sup> [Fig. 5] Another, slightly more complete copy has since turned up in the Will Day collection at CNC.<sup>63</sup> Incidentally, one of the performers in the film may be Méliès himself.<sup>64</sup> The film portrays one of the few naval actions in the Greco-Turkish War, and has proved to be of more than academic interest, especially for one important technical innovation: the set of the warship moves as if rocking on the ocean. This was, says John Barnes, 'the first articulated set to appear in films', and largely because of this remarkable early use of a moving set, Barnes calls this 'a key film in the history of the cinema'.<sup>65</sup> The innovation was also commented upon at the time. One writer noted in 1902 that 'elaborate preparations' had been necessary to make this film, and stated that the set of the 'section of a deck', complete with its large gun, was '...pivoted so as to roll with a swaying counter-weight below it, while canvas waves rose and fell beyond'.<sup>66</sup>

This film and the other which survives (the courtyard film) are made with the care and lightness of touch so typical of Méliès. It is only Méliès, I submit, who could bring such charm and humour, tastefully, into films about war.

## **ISSUES OF DECEPTION**

### **Faking, believability and plausibility**

The attitude of early audiences toward fakes is an important issue for us – and for the wider field of early film studies – so it is worth examining the evidence of how the Méliès Greco-Turkish War films were received. The questions I wish to ask are: to what extent were these Méliès war films marketed as realistic, and did audiences believe they were genuine?

In *The American Newsreel*, Raymond Fielding has written that 'apparently there was not a single major film producer in the period 1894 to 1900 that did not fake news films as a matter of common practice'. He divides the fakes into categories: Méliès' being among those 'not intended or likely to fool audiences'.<sup>67</sup> Sadoul also suggests that these Greek war films should be called 'reconstructions', made as post-factual *illustrations* of the real events, and not 'fakes' as such.<sup>68</sup> The implication from these writers is that

'reconstructed' films were rather like the drawings by artists in illustrated periodicals, giving a flavour of what happened, and not likely to be thought by any reader/viewer to be a photographic recording of the real events (see my discussion of this issue in the Introduction). Historian René Jeanne has a slightly different take on it, suggesting that Méliès' war series were filmed with the 'exactitude' of news illustrations in *l'Illustration* or *Le Petit Journal*, but that the public were taken in by them.<sup>69</sup> Who is right?

My conclusion, based on looking at surviving accounts of the reception of Méliès' Greco-Turkish War films, is that it was a mixed response. A few people might have believed that some of the films were genuine, especially if, as sometimes happened, the showmen proclaimed that they were so. Other viewers had doubts on the matter. An American reviewer assumed the scenes were genuine, writing admiringly of how 'the man with the camera will risk his life in the midst of a fierce battle to secure subjects'.<sup>70</sup> From India comes a detailed report of a screening of the Méliès views, which in tone suggests that the reporter thought the films to be genuine. He describes the 'ghastly' killing of Greeks by Turks, of smoke from guns and ammunition, and of the Turks breaking open a gate with an explosive charge.<sup>71</sup> (The latter seems to be a reference to the surviving 'courtyard' film that I described earlier, while the 'ghastly killing' incidents suggest another of the Méliès films, *Massacres en Crète*). Perhaps the best comment on the ambiguous nature of Méliès' films came from a contemporary journalist who, while describing the films as 'wonderfully realistic', also stated that they were artistically made subjects.<sup>72</sup>

An important theme in discussions at the time about the genuine or otherwise nature of these films, hinged around aspects of *plausibility*. As we shall see, in 1897 a spectator in Nottingham, Sidney Race, went to a fairground show including Méliès' films, which the showman proclaimed were genuine views of the war. Race noted sceptically that the films were 'said to have been taken during the Greek and Turkish war – but I very much doubt it'. He adds that his instinct was to 'doubt the truthfulness of the picture', because of the implausibility of some of the action: for example, that one fallen soldier immediately had his head bandaged 'by some unseen and extraordinary quick agency'.<sup>73</sup> (We shall return to Race's description later).

Arguments from plausibility were also used by a number of other writers to try to prove that these Méliès Greek war films were fakes. The fact that they felt it necessary to make these arguments implies that some spectators had indeed been taken in. A photographic journalist, Richard Penlake, recalled seeing the films at a large music hall in Liverpool, where 'the hall was crowded nightly by an enthusiastic audience, who applauded and encored the pictures of the Greeks and Turks in mortal combat'. Penlake was dubious:

'Knowing well the difficulty of photographing, let alone cinematographing, like pictures at such close quarters, I wrote to a well-known authority, and asked him if these war pictures were genuine. He replied that he "thought" they were. I, however, had my suspicions...'

Suspicious which were confirmed when, as he states, he later went to the Continent and actually met and worked with those who had made the films – presumably meaning Méliès and colleagues.<sup>74</sup> Another commentator of the period also used an argument from plausibility, suggesting that the naval film could not have been genuine, for if it were it must have been shot from another boat and so the camera itself and the resulting image should have been moving about unsteadily, rather than being a stable shot. As he put it:

'In the photos the illusion was complete, except for the few who realized that to obtain such a record the camera must have been mounted on another steamer running alongside of the torpedo-boat, and unaffected by the motion of the waves.'<sup>75</sup>

Villiers himself also used an argument based on the practicalities of filmmaking, when talking to his friend who had seen the Méliès film of the attack on the Greek cottage (quoted earlier). Villiers attempted to disillusion the friend by describing the complications of cranking an early movie camera:

'...you have to fix it on a tripod ... and get everything in focus before you can take a picture. Then you have to turn the handle in a deliberate, coffee-mill sort of way, with no hurry or excitement. It's not a bit like a snapshot, press-the-button pocket Kodak. Now just think of that scene you have so vividly described to me. Imagine the man who was coffee-milling saying, in a persuasive way, "Now Mr. Albanian, before you take the old gent's head off come a little nearer; yes, but a little more to the left, please. Thank you. Now, then, look as savage as you can and cut away." Or "You, No. 2 Albanian, make that hussy lower her chin a bit and keep her kicking as ladylike as possible." Wru-ru-ru-ru!<sup>76</sup>

The evidence that I have quoted – limited, admittedly – suggests that some viewers really believed that the films were genuine. Villiers' friend did, for example, as did the writers from America and India whom I have quoted, and Penlake's 'well-known authority'.<sup>77</sup> While to the modern viewer's eye, these films are clearly dramatised, we should bear in mind that this was a very early period of cinema, and in some cases these were the first films that spectators had seen. In this situation there may have been a number of 'naive viewers' who would look at films in a much more trusting and awed fashion than a modern viewer, who has had years of experience of seeing various different kinds and genres of films, both dramatised and actuality.<sup>78</sup>

For example, an obvious giveaway to the modern eye of the artificial nature of the two surviving films, is that the acting is somewhat broad: however this might not have struck earlier viewers who had yet seen few dramas or actualities with which to compare it. Furthermore, the two lost Méliès Greek war films (possibly made slightly later) may have been more realistic than the surviving pair, for contrary to his image as a purely 'fantastic' filmmaker, Méliès was capable of working in both stylized and fairly realistic modes.<sup>79</sup> In subsequent wars a number of different kinds of fakes were produced, by Méliès and others, varying in degree of stylisation. But these four Greco-



Turkish War films certainly constitute the first examples not only of re-enacted (fake) war films, but also the first time that the issue of believability arose. Surprisingly, perhaps, this issue was not to be such a common theme in subsequent discussion of re-enacted war films, and instances of spectators believing such films were genuine also seem to decline after this war. Perhaps the naive viewer wised up fairly quickly; or perhaps some spectators didn't care if films of some distant war were real or otherwise.

### **Faking by mis-description; re-titled films**

One crucial factor in determining whether viewers thought a film was genuine or not was what they were told to expect by the exhibitor. A mendacious description, commentary or sales pitch could establish a film as genuine, and thus the element of fakery could be as much a creation of the exhibitor as of the producer.<sup>80</sup> It seems from the accounts I have quoted that in some cases the showmen, keen to attract a public, told spectators that the Méliès faked films were genuine records of war. The mendacity of the showman or distributor could also include renaming, to make the film more saleable.

This naming or renaming of films could be done for purposes of propaganda – indeed this occurred in subsequent wars – and there are pioneering examples here. While Méliès' film, *Massacres en Crète*, by its subject matter condemned the behaviour of Turkish forces on the island, a Dutch showman, Slieker, went further by re-titling it, *Cruel murders of Christians in Turkey*. A tantalizing piece of information from Germany offers an even more instructive example of propaganda by re-titling.<sup>81</sup> In May 1897 a film with the title *Erschiessen eines Türkischen Spions* was released on the German market; a while later the same film was released as *Erschiessen eines Griechischen Spions*.<sup>82</sup> Distributed by Philipp Wolff, almost certainly this was Méliès' *L'Execution d'un Espion*, and the two title options – the shooting of a Turkish or of a Greek spy – might mean that the German distributor was hoping that the film would sell equally to audiences with Turkish or with Greek sympathies.<sup>83</sup> There was a point to this: while Germany generally supported the Turkish side, some regions or communities might sympathise with the Christian Greeks, and much of the rest of western Europe would also side with the Greeks.<sup>84</sup>

Similar re-titling took place with films about this war which were not made by Méliès. An Australian source reveals an example of a pair of films supporting the opposing sides in this conflict, from an unknown producer. A film entitled *Charge of Turkish Cavalry* was screened in the 'Salon Cinematographe' in August 1897, while the following month a film of Greek cavalry on the march was shown at the same venue.<sup>85</sup> It is likely that these were pre-existing films of troops, taken before the war. Probably a Lumière film released at this time was also of this kind: *Turkish Troops leaving for the Turko-Grecian War*. This was advertised by Maguire and Baucus in the USA, and while it presumably did show genuinely Turkish troops, who could say if they really were 'leaving for war' or had been filmed well before the war?<sup>86</sup> Here we seem to have another example of mis-description to improve a film's appeal. It is also an instance of another (not necessarily mendacious) practice: the release of 'related films' at the time of a major news event. The practice was also seen

during the Sudan war in 1898, and in film coverage of other early wars – as we shall see. It became quite a common phenomenon in later newsreel history, as a way to supplement or replace the lack of films of the actual event. For example, after the *Titanic* sinking in 1912, old films of the ship, or films of other great liners similar to the *Titanic*, were spliced into newsreels to ‘bulk out’ the sketchy news coverage about the sinking itself.<sup>87</sup>

It is worth adding that in many cases descriptions by showmen or in film catalogues were honest, specifically identifying real or faked war/news films as such. This was often the case in subsequent wars,<sup>88</sup> but there is one example for the Méliès’ Greco-Turkish War fakes. In the Warwick Trading Company catalogue the naval film was described as ‘a humorous subject’, acknowledging, if only implicitly, that the film was not genuine.<sup>89</sup>

### **The wrong war: the re-titled room interior film**

An even more egregious example of mis-description occurred when one distributor sold a film of the wrong war as being the Greco-Turkish War. As I mentioned above, a British trade journal, *Photograms of the Year* of 1897 publicised the Méliès Greco-Turkish War films, including one it described as ‘the defence of a garret room, in which one of the defenders is wounded and tended by a nurse’. The journal reproduced some frames from several Méliès films, including this one, and from one of the four Méliès Greco-Turkish War films, *Combat Naval en Grèce*. These were captioned respectively as *Graeco-Turkish War, Ashore* and *Graeco-Turkish War, Afloat*.<sup>90</sup> The films were being distributed in the UK by the Philipp Wolff company. (I reproduce in Fig. 6 a section of the *Photograms* frames, including the room interior film, but not *Combat Naval*).

Frames from the so-called *Graeco-Turkish War, Ashore* match a surviving film in the Will Day Collection, CNC, France, and the action in the CNC print matches the brief description given above of a garret room scene with one of the defenders tended by a nurse.<sup>91</sup> [Fig. 7] This room interior film turns out to be Méliès’ film no.105 of 1897, *Les Dernières Cartouches (The Last Cartridges [or Bullets])*, a film about the Franco-Prussian war – not the Greco-Turkish War! We know it is a Franco-Prussian war title because the scene and action is based on a celebrated painting by Alphonse de Neuville depicting soldiers at Bazeilles in 1870, defending a house to the death from Prussian attacks: in this painting the soldiers with their swords and rifles peer through the windows, and the house has a shell-hole in the ceiling. [Fig. 8] All of which is reproduced in the Méliès film, except, with typical exaggeration the magician/filmmaker makes the shooting from the windows more intense and the ceiling hole much bigger than in the painting!<sup>92</sup>

As well as being shown mendaciously, the film was sometimes shown for what it was, a recreation of the 1870 war, or just as a generic war scene. In France it was apparently also known as *Bombardement d’une Maison*, and Sadoul cites a description of this film from 1897 by Georges Brunel: ‘a spectacular battle scene with exploding shells, falling walls, etc.’ [my translation].<sup>93</sup> The same(?) film was shown in Britain under the title, *The Last Shot*, in August 1897, described as despairing soldiers firing from the windows

of a shattered house (i.e. the windows mentioned again, confirming that it was this same film).<sup>94</sup>

Most interesting for us are screenings of this film in which it was claimed as a supposed Greco-Turkish War film, and there seem to have been quite a few, from Britain and Germany and perhaps elsewhere.<sup>95</sup> The principal 'faker' in both the UK and Germany was the distributor Philipp Wolff. Apparently Wolff, thinking that it might attract more customers, sold the film as depicting an episode of the current Greco-Turkish War, rather than as a historic film about the 1870 war.<sup>96</sup>

The deception began in Germany in late June 1897 when Wolff advertised *The Last Cartridge-Belt* as a 'Scene from the battle of Larissa' (Larissa was one of the well known sites of fighting in the 1897 Greek war). Most likely it was in fact the Franco-Prussian War film we have just described, *Les Dernières Cartouches* (as the title matches). It was among four 'Scenes from the Greek-Turkish War (Highly interesting)', including three of the four actual Méliès Greco-Turkish titles (all but the naval film).<sup>97</sup>

As we have seen, Wolff also advertised this film in Britain later that year in *Photograms* as a Greco-Turkish War film. I have found some contemporary descriptions of screenings of this, and in each case the film had been introduced by the showman or in the programme as a Greco-Turkish War scene. A writer in 1902 stated that this film depicted 'the defence of a farmhouse by Greek troops', and described it as showing the interior of a room, where he noted: 'Riflemen were firing from a window. Suddenly one of them staggered with his hands to his face, badly wounded. A comrade supported him, and a doctor supplied first aid'.<sup>98</sup>

Another description comes from the diary of the aforementioned Sidney Race, who saw what was evidently this same film at the Nottingham Goose Fair in October 1897 exhibited in Randall Williams' Cinematograph show.<sup>99</sup> Race gives a quite detailed description, and, as I have mentioned above, clearly had his doubts about whether the film was genuine:

'In Williams I saw pictures said to have been taken during the Greek and Turkish war – but I very much doubt it. It represented the interior of a house into which the soldiers came running in great haste to begin firing out of windows. There was much smoke knocking about, then fire and then the place began to fall to pieces. Several soldiers fall down apparently dead and (what made us doubt the truthfulness of the picture) one immediately had his head enveloped in a bandage by some unseen and extraordinary quick agency. A nurse came running in and commenced to attend to her work with unusual celerity and calmness, and altogether there was a great sense of confusion when the picture vanished.'<sup>100</sup>

It is worth noting the common factors among these separate eye-witness descriptions, confirming that they all refer to the same film – they mention a room interior, shooting out of windows, and one of the defenders being

wounded in the face or head. The description of *Bombardement* by Brunel notes that this was a battle scene with 'falling walls' – and this point matches with Sidney Race's description that the attacked house 'began to fall apart'. Incidentally, later in the year Wolff was continuing his deceptive behaviour in relation to this war: advertising films of the Indian mutiny accompanied by frames from *Combat Naval en Grèce*.<sup>101</sup>

All of which suggests that Wolff's deception was systematic, practiced in both Britain and Germany with regard to different wars and films. In this very early period of cinema it seems that if certain film distributors and showmen thought they could get away with false claims to improve saleability they would do so. Mis-titling of films was not uncommon in this era, and Wolff is probably only the most detectable perpetrator.

### **CONCLUSION: The origin of the war film**

I have suggested, above, that the Greco-Turkish War is a crucial point of origin for all subsequent history of the relationship between warfare and the moving image. It was almost certainly the earliest war to be filmed by an actuality cameraman, but also the first to be faked, by staging and by mis-description. In other words it stands at the source of both the recording of warfare and also the point at which the apparently simple relationship between event and filmic representation-of-event started breaking down.

Méliès' reconstructions of the Greco-Turkish War were landmarks in the 'fake genre'. Even in the early era they were seen in this light, and a writer in 1902 stated that these Méliès productions had been the first ever re-enacted or fake films. He decried this genre, noting with distaste that several other reconstructed news events had been released, and mentioning films of the Martinique volcano, Edward VII's coronation, and the crash of the air ship 'La Paz'.<sup>102</sup> The writer might have added that the first two films in his list were Méliès titles, and that by the turn of the century the French magician had made several other reconstructions of current news events: including scenes of insurrection in British India, events surrounding the Spanish-American war and a multi-scene version of the Dreyfus Affair. Méliès was truly *the* pioneer in this genre of the reconstructed or faked news film, and specifically the stylised fake war film.

In this way, Méliès clearly made a significant contribution to the history of the war film, as did the other main filmmaker of the Greco-Turkish war, Frederic Villiers, who had filmed aspects of the war for real. But they were working in very different modes, and the films made by Villiers and Méliès seem to offer a strong contrast – a binary opposition, in the jargon – between the straight recording of war as pioneered by Villiers, and the unashamed faking/fictionalisation as practiced by Méliès. Yet perhaps the situation is a little more complicated than this, for as we have discussed above, Villiers may have 'arranged' some of his films shot in Greece. So both filmmakers were practicing some degree of intervention, in turning complex events into understandable images with a message. Thus within a couple of year's of

cinema's invention the challenges of representing a distant news event on screen were pushing the medium towards a more complex relationship with the real world than mere recording.

However, the genuine films that Villiers had taken at the front in 1897 were, in his own words, 'of no value in the movie market'. Despite having been shot at the seat of war, and so in principle being highly 'newsworthy', they were effectively unsaleable, while Méliès' reconstructions, with dramatic action and heads being severed, were sold all over the world. Méliès in short produced more diverting representations than Villiers of this war, versions which found a ready global audience. According to Villiers himself, the conclusion to be drawn was that the public wanted entertainment, not truth, and he ruefully observed: 'Barnum and Bailey, those wonderful American showmen, correctly averred that the public liked to be fooled'.<sup>103</sup> Actually it was not so much that audiences *liked* to be fooled, but more that either they didn't know these films were faked, or that they didn't care. After all, the Méliès fakes were entertaining and well-made films in their own right, which vividly illustrated the war, and which spectators enjoyed watching. In any case, as we have seen, probably Villiers himself was not above a bit of battlefield 'rearranging', and in so doing he too, like Méliès, was pioneering another way of representing war for the cinema.

Extraordinarily, therefore, in depicting this brief war for the screen, filmmakers at this very early stage in the history of the medium, within little more than a year of its arrival, had swiftly discovered a number of techniques which would be used in coming years. Events in the war-zone, such as troop movements, could be filmed as they happened (Villiers); actions on the battlefield could be arranged and posed using actual soldiers and participants (Villiers); events could be re-staged far from the battlefield with actors (Méliès); and related events could be shown as a visual substitute for war scenes (various showmen). And finally, any of these kinds of films could be mis-described or re-labelled to make them more relevant to the war (Wolff), and thus imbue them with greater audience appeal or propaganda value.

In these different ways filmmakers were exploring techniques of presenting war on screen with varying levels of authenticity and honesty. As practiced by Méliès and Villiers this reconfiguration of reality was relatively innocent - little more than a distillation and simplification of the key events of this small war. But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to come, in much greater wars, others would use these techniques of manipulating the filmic image by faking and selection for purposes of outright deception and propaganda. In retrospect, the filming of the Greco-Turkish war had been something of an early warning.

However, even at this early stage, the film professionals didn't have it all their own way, in that they could not show audiences any kind of image with impunity. A few spectators, like Sidney Race, were starting to question what they were seeing, and wondering about the plausibility of some of these so-called images of war. They were realising that films might not always be what they seemed, or what they were claimed to be.

**Table: Variant titles of Méliès' four Greco-Turkish War films (1897)**  
(in screening date order, with catalogue numbers where known)

	<b>Film 1</b>	<b>Film 2</b>	<b>Film 3</b>	<b>Film 4</b>
<i>Source</i>				
<b>Méliès French catalogues</b> <sup>104</sup>	108. <i>Massacres en [or de] Crète</i>	106. <i>La Prise de Tournavos</i>	110. <i>Combat Naval en Grèce</i>	107. <i>Execution d'un Espion</i>
<b>Philipp Wolff</b> (Germany, June 1897) <sup>105</sup>	4. <i>Massacre of the Christians on the Island of Crete</i>	2. <i>Capture of a House in Turnavos</i>	[Not listed]	3. <i>The Shooting of a Turkish Spy</i>
<b>Ireland screening</b> (July 1897)	<i>The Greeks Last Stand in the Melina [or Maluna] Pass</i>	[Not listed]	[Not listed]	[Not listed]
<b>Philipp Wolff ad</b> (UK, Aug? 1897) <sup>106</sup>	18. <i>Mohammedan inhabitants of Crete massacring Christian Greeks</i>	19. <i>Turks attacking a house defended by Greeks (Turnavos)</i>	20. <i>The Greek man-of-war "George" shelling the Fort of Previsa</i>	21. <i>Execution of a Greek Spy at Pharsala</i>
<b>Nijmegen: Sliker</b> (Oct 1897) <sup>107</sup>	<i>Wrede christenmoord in Turkije</i> [Cruel murders of Christians in Turkey]	<i>Het innemen van de vesting in Tessalië door de Turken</i> [Capturing the fortress in Thessaly by the Turks]	<i>De oorlog tusschen Grieken land en Turkije</i> [The war between Greece and Turkey]	<i>Het fusileren van een spion door de Grieken</i> [The shooting of a spy by the Greeks]
<b>Warwick Trading Co. catalogue</b> (UK, 1897-1898) <sup>108</sup>	4108. <i>Turks Massacring Christians in Crete</i> ('sharp and clear', adds the catalogue)	4105. <i>Troopers Last Stand</i> – 'an incident of the Turko-Grecian war'	4110. <i>Naval Combat at Greece</i> – 'a humourous subject full of action'	4107. <i>Execution of a Spy</i> – (Turko-Grecian war)
<b>Eberhardt Schneider</b> (USA, 1898)	[Not listed]	<i>Defence of a House, Turco-Grecian War</i>	[Not listed]	<i>Execution of a Spy, Turco-Grecian War</i>
<b>Star Film Catalogue</b> (USA, 1903) <sup>109</sup>	108. <i>Massacre in Crete</i>	106. <i>The Surrender of Tournavos</i>	110. <i>Sea Fighting in Greece</i>	107. <i>Execution of a Spy</i>
<i>Notes</i>	This is probably the film seen and described by Villiers' friend.	Extant in NFTVA and in CNC. The 'courtyard film'.	Extant in NFTVA	-
<i>Historical notes</i>	Several risings by Greeks took place between the 1860s and 1897, with subsequent repression by Turkish rulers. Massacres took place among both communities. <sup>110</sup>	Tournavos or Turnavo, a town on the plain of Larissa, was the site of an early defeat for the Greeks, 20-23 April 1897, after which the town was abandoned by their forces. <sup>111</sup>	The Greek navy shelled Previsa or Prevesa, 18-20 April, one of the few naval actions of the war. <sup>112</sup>	The Greeks fell back on Pharsala or Phersala, 23-25 April, which was in turn attacked by the Turks, from where the Greeks retreated to Domokos, 5 May.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Theodore George Tatsios, *The Megali Idea and the Greek-Turkish War of 1897 : the Impact of the Cretan Problem on Greek Irredentism, 1866-1897* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). For an evocative illustration of street-fighting in Canea, Crete, between pro-Greek and pro-Turkish residents, events which some say helped lead to the Greco-Turkish War, see *Le Petit Parisien*, 21 February 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Woodd Nevinson, *Changes and Chances* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1923), p. 173 – his chapter 9 is entitled ‘The thirty days’ war’.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Dakin, *The Unification of Greece, 1770-1923* (London: Benn, 1972), p.149-54.

<sup>4</sup> As ever the British sent the largest number of war correspondents, though there were also Americans, Frenchmen and representatives from several other nations.

<sup>5</sup> Wilfred Pollock, *War and a Wheel: the Græco-Turkish War as Seen from a Bicycle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1897), p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Henry Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1967), p. 94. These and other Americans were especially well provisioned and equipped. Incidentally, a young Winston Churchill returning from India, had considered reporting on the war (from the Greek side) – to ‘see the fun and tell the tale’, as he put it – but by the time his ship reached Port Said the Greeks had already been defeated. This indicates, as I mentioned in my first chapter, the attitude of ‘war as escapade’ in this era before the horrors of the Great War. Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Mandarin, 1991), chapter 9.

<sup>7</sup> Some journalists took photographs: see Henri Turot, *L'insurrection Crétoise et la Guerre Gréco-Turque* (Paris: Hachette, 1898) which is illustrated from numerous photos by the author. Also prominent during the war were Greek-based photographers: in early May the *Photographic News* noted that during the Greek anti-dynastic riots (‘last week’, it states) a Piræus photographer had had his photographs of the Greek Royal family smashed up (due to the unpopularity of these royals among certain factions). See ‘Photographic perils’, PN 7 May 1897, p.290. Stereographers and stereographic firms represented at the war included Underwood and Underwood, Keystone, and Kilburn. See William Culp Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Nashville, Tenn.: Land Yacht Press, 1997), p.194. Some of these stereographs are copyrighted in the Library of Congress and held in their Prints and Photographs Division.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Ray, ‘Following a War with the Camera’, *Royal Magazine* 3, no.18, April 1900, p.475-481. The photographer referred to may have been either Bert Underwood, René Bull, E.M. Bliss or even Richard Harding Davis. See Bert Underwood, ‘Five Days in Thessaly’, *Harper's Weekly* 41, May 1897, p.523-25. See also William Culp Darrah, *Stereo Views. A History of Stereographs in America and Their Collection* (Gettysburg: Times and News Publishing Co., 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Correspondent W. Kinnaird Rose, who had been present at the hostilities, lectured on the war with lantern slides at St. Georges, Langham Place, London and in Bermondsey Town Hall in December 1897. (See *The Free Sunday Advocate* Nov 1897, p.92 and Dec, p.97.) Burton Holmes lectured on ‘The wonders of Thessaly’ in the Autumn of 1897. See Burton Holmes, *The World Is Mine*: (Murray & Gee, 1953), p.175-6.

<sup>10</sup> A leaflet detailing the Pooles show is in the National Fairground Archive, Sheffield at NFA 200672148. It seems to date from the early 1900s, and, though it details shows about several conflicts, it is somewhat surprising that the Greco-Turkish War should still be offered at this late date. Karl Gocksch, a panorama painter of Schöneberg bei Berlin, advertised his latest panorama paintings, including ‘All battles of the Greek-Turkish War’ in *Der Komet* no. 641, 3 July 1897, p.16. This and other references to *Der Komet* come via Deac Rossell and his German colleagues.

<sup>11</sup> PN 30 April 1897. The article went on to say that films could also be valuable archival records, and mentioned such subjects as the signing of a peace treaty between Greece and Turkey, or the ‘carving’ up of the latter country by other European powers. Another suggestion for filming the Greco-Turkish War came in BJP 26 Mar 1897, p.196, noting as precedent that other violent activities had been filmed, such as boxing. Some war correspondents had cinema on their minds too, one of them noting that during a suffocatingly hot day of battle ‘the heat waves danced and quivered about them, making the plain below flicker like a picture in a cinematograph’. Richard Harding Davis, ‘With the Greek Soldiers’, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 34, Nov 1897, p.824; and in his *Notes of a War Correspondent* (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1911) in the chapter on the battle of Velestinos. A news report from Paris in April

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1897 spoke of films capturing, for the first time, war 'in all its movement, all its horror' – it is unclear which films they have in mind. The story was derived from a news report in a Paris periodical, and seems to have mentioned Lumière cameramen. It was first reported in Spanish newspapers on 30 April, headed, 'Cinematógrafo greco-turco'. See J. M. Folgar de la Calle, "Aproximación a la Historia del Cine en Galicia (1896-1920)". Thesis, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela, 1985, p.23.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Gordon, 'The early days of newsreels', *BKSTS Journal*, August 1950, p.47-48. In another source Gordon repeated this claim and added (correctly) that 'Villiers [sic] used these and other war films to illustrate his lectures'. He also noted that 'The late Henry Sanders, newsreel "ace" and late editor of Pathe Gazette used to project for him.' Kenneth Gordon, 'Forty Years With a Newsreel Camera', *The Cine-Technician*, March-April, 1951, p.44-45, 48 etc. Gordon began in the film industry around 1912, and had latterly worked for Associated British Pathé. His information on Villiers probably came from a fellow film pioneer, maybe Sanders, or from the Coyne letter cited below. My attention was first drawn to Gordon's claim by Patrick Hickman-Robertson, for whom I was then working as a researcher, and he encouraged me to pursue this theme, as well as generally inspiring me to do further research.

<sup>13</sup> Much of this information comes from Pat Hodgson, *The War Illustrators* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> F. Lauriston Bullard, *Famous War Correspondents* (Boston ; London: Little, Brown & Co./Pitman, 1914).

<sup>15</sup> 'Death of Mr. Frederic Villiers', *The Times* (London) 6 April 1922, p.14.

<sup>16</sup> Hodgson, 1977, op. cit. A major source for information on Villiers is his own autobiography: Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure* (New York & London: Harper & Bros., 1920).

<sup>17</sup> His son disagrees with this assessment, and draws attention to his father's fine figure work in Villiers' book, *Days of Glory* (NY: Doran, 1921); he also scotched the rumour that Villiers only did rough sketches and others polished up his work for publication. Letter from his son, G.F. Villiers of Tonbridge, Kent, to author, 7 Nov 1980 (contacted via Villiers' granddaughter, Ann Towers of Bexhill).

<sup>18</sup> Villiers took a train for Marseille, from where presumably he took a ship for Greece, he states in Frederic Villiers, *Peaceful Personalities and Warriors Bold* (London & New York: Harper & Bros., 1907), p. 321-3. Taking a train through France was the fastest way to go from Britain to the Mediterranean and onto the Far East, rather than taking a ship all the way from the UK round the Iberian peninsular.

<sup>19</sup> Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades*, op. cit., vol 2, p.159. Unless otherwise noted, all the Villiers quotes in this chapter are taken from the second volume of his autobiography. See also an article on Villiers in *Brighton Society* 10 Dec 1898, p.13. This source notes that 'he was in Athens during the blockade [sic] of the Greek ports'.

<sup>20</sup> *Villiers, His Five Decades*, p.181.

<sup>21</sup> *Villiers, His Five Decades*, p.170 and 181.

<sup>22</sup> There were some exceptions, such as the notably pro-Turkish Ellis Ashmead Bartlett, who covered this war (and the later Balkan war) from the Turkish side, as did George Steevens, Bigham of the Times, H. Weldon, and Pierre Mille, who denied claims of Turkish massacres against Greeks. In terms of national support, most European populations sympathised with Greece, apart possibly from in Germany, where the government had invested heavily in the Turkish state and her military.

<sup>23</sup> Henry Nevinson, war correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* was in a pro-Greek 'batallion of Englishmen' fighting for the Greeks. Henry Woodd Nevinson, *Scenes in the Thirty Days War between Greece and Turkey, 1897* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1898); and chapter 9 of Nevinson, *Changes and Chances*. One American war-correspondent (John Bass) was photographed actually 'directing the fire of the Greeks'. Davis, 'With the Greek Soldiers', *Harper's Monthly* 34, Nov 1897, p. 828.

<sup>24</sup> This event took place on 8 May and Villiers' on-the-spot account of it was filed the same day and appeared in the *Standard* on 11 May. See also the *Standard*, 20 May, p.4. Villiers' involvement in the mission is confirmed by another correspondent in the *Standard*, 2 June, p.5.

<sup>25</sup> Villiers makes this claim in his later recollections, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure*, and it is confirmed in his *Standard* account of 20 May, p.7.



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<sup>26</sup> The two day battle began on 17 May which was indeed a Monday. On 20 May Villiers' telegraphed report of the Domokos engagement appeared in the *Standard*.

<sup>27</sup> *Who's Who*, 1899 edition, states of Villiers' work in the Greco-Turkish War that: 'During armistice visited Crete'. It would have been at this time that he filmed the international forces at their duties – see below.

<sup>28</sup> See Wilfred Pollock, 'A War Correspondent on Wheels – an Interview with Mr. Wilfred Pollock of the "Morning Post"', *Ludgate Magazine* 4, July 1897, p.308-10: he notes that 'the Standard man' (i.e. Villiers) and the *Daily Graphic* man (Bull?) also had bicycles. See also Pollock's book, Wilfred Pollock, *War and a Wheel: The Græco-Turkish War as Seen from a Bicycle* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1897). John Bass and Bouillon of the *Journal* of Paris also had bicycles at the war: see *Gli Avvenimenti D'oriente. La Guerra Greco-Turca 1896-97. Cronaca Illustrata* (Milano: Treves, 1897), p.203. There are several books on the history of bicycles in war.

<sup>29</sup> I have checked through almost a score of contemporary books about the war, as well as articles and later accounts.

<sup>30</sup> Villiers described his pioneering filming of the war in various accounts from 1900 onward. The most detailed account is in *Villiers: His Five Decades*, op. cit., 1920. An earlier autobiographical book mentions that he had a cinematograph camera and bicycle at the front, though contains none of the anecdotal material about these innovations. See Frederic Villiers, *Pictures of Many Wars* (London: Cassell & Co., 1902), p.76. Villiers gives some details too in: Raymond Blathwayt, 'Fresh from the front... A talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers', *Daily News* 19 April 1900, p.7. (I found this interview via the BL's experimental OCR programme. Blathwayt was a well known interviewer and writer of biographical portraits, active between around the 1890s and the Great War).

<sup>31</sup> Frederick Palmer, *With My Own Eyes. A Personal Story of Battle Years* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1932), p.63. This was sometime after 19 May. In his 1900 interview with Blathwayt Villiers stated that: 'I took the trouble in the Greek war to take a cinematograph out with me, and I took actual scenes of troops marching into trenches, Turks opening fire, the famous retreat of the wretched Greek peasantry at Lamia, incidents of our troops in Crete...'

<sup>32</sup> 'First pictures': letter from W. Coyne of Derby in *Radio Times* 2 Aug 1935, p.9. My correspondence with Coyne's descendants shows that he really was who and where he claimed to be, that his first name was William (b.1891) and that this Seaforth soldier was a reliable witness (Letter to me from R.E. Williamson of Derby, 15 June 1992, who noted that William was his maternal grandfather). Coyne's 1935 press letter was reprinted in the *BJP*, and then as 'The first war cameraman' in the *Journal of the Association of Cine-Technicians*, Nov 1935, p.66. This letter may also be the source of Kenneth Gordon's information which I quoted above (from August 1950) because Gordon misspells Villiers as 'Villiers' – and Coyne's published letter uses the similar 'Villars'. For more on Coyne, see my chapter on the Sudan War. Incidentally, this description of the Jubilee scene does not match any of the Villiers titles mentioned below – perhaps the film did not come out well. The troops and warships represented several nations, an early example of international intervention in a conflict.

<sup>33</sup> PN 4 June 1897, p.355.

<sup>34</sup> Bull reported from the Greco-Turkish War for *Black and White*, and is better represented on its pages for coverage of this conflict than Villiers, being credited with many snapshot photographs of events in the field of battle, compared with relatively little by Villiers about the war. Bull might also have filmed in the Sudan and/or Boer Wars, as I discuss in later chapters.

<sup>35</sup> *Sussex Daily News* 2 Aug 1897, p.1. Frank Gray very kindly sent me xeroxes of this and the other ads from the SDN. Before receiving this information, I had independently found one newspaper ad which suggested but did not prove that Villiers' genuine war films were shown in Brighton. See *Hove Echo, Shoreham and District News* 7 Aug, 1897, p.12. This is an ad for Lewis Sealy's film show of the Jubilee series and 'Græco-Turkish war pictures – the first ever taken' – with no further details. Sadly we have not yet found any reviews or descriptions of the shows, but only the ads.

<sup>36</sup> See *Sussex Daily News* for 7 Aug, p.8; 9 Aug, p.1; 18 Aug, p.1; 24 Aug, p.1; 30 Aug, p.1; 4 Sep, p.8; 6 Sep, p.1. Barnes, 1897 volume, p.165, reports these Sealy shows but assumes (as I had) that these films were the Méliès versions of the war. He cites reports in the *Hove Echo* 7 Aug, p.12; 14 Aug, p.12; 21 Aug, p.1; 28 Aug, p.12; 4 Sep, p.12; 11 Sep, p.1; 18 Sep, p.1.

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<sup>37</sup> Tony Fletcher found these references and kindly passed them on. Villiers' lectures were at Battersea on 21 Nov 1897 and 30 Jan 1898, and Shoreditch on 28 Nov 1897 and 6 Feb 1898. (Notices in *The Free Sunday Advocate and National Sunday League Record* Nov, 1897, p.89 and 90; Jan 1898, p.5; Feb 1898, p.12).

<sup>38</sup> John Barnes lists no other venues in his books.

<sup>39</sup> There is a still of Larissa refugees in his 1902 book, which could correspond to film 13, though we also know he filmed a retreat at Lamia (unless the book caption is a mistake – a confusion of similar words). The mention in the interview of a film of 'Turks opening fire' may be a confusion for film 10, 'The Greeks open Fire'. Additional stills (by Villiers?) of the Greco-Turkish War are reproduced in a published interview with him: Roy Compton, 'Mr. Frederic Villiers', *The Idler* 12, Sep 1897, p.237-255.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Penlake, 'Bogus war and other pictures', *BJP* 46, 1 Dec 1899, suppl. p.92. He added: 'I did, however, bring a Greek soldier's uniform back with me, and, should ever another Greek war break out, I shall probably be the first to send to the illustrated papers an illustration of a Greek in ambush, dead upon the field, and so on, ad lib.' Penlake was discussing faked films in the light of the current Boer War fakes. The phrase 'one of our most famous war correspondents' may well refer to Villiers.

<sup>41</sup> Frederick Palmer, op. cit., p.63.

<sup>42</sup> I suggest that the date of Villiers' return to the UK was not before the end of June, as according to Coyne, above, he was filming the Jubilee in Crete which was on 22 June. The Méliès films were released in late May, so Villiers' account does make sense that Méliès beat him to it for films of this war.

<sup>43</sup> *Villiers, His Five Decades*, p.181-82. A slight doubt must remain (given what I mention below about other films screened as if Greco-Turkish War films), as to whether this film seen by Villiers' friend, really was one of the Méliès Greco-Turkish War fakes, though the mention of the yataghan seems to confirm an Ottoman location.

<sup>44</sup> See Raymond Blathwayt, 'Fresh from the front... A talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers', op. cit. In the interview Villiers notes of his own, real films of the war that '... these true pictures were absolutely worthless from a commercial point of view, because of the much more dramatic pictures 'faked up' elsewhere. One subject was an Albanian carrying off a girl...'; and his description of the film which follows is similar to his 1920 account.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Hammond, *Marvellous Méliès* (London: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1974) p.23-25.

<sup>46</sup> Madeleine Malthête-Méliès, *Méliès L'enchanteur* (Paris: Hachette littérature, 1973), p.191. The studio was an important advance for Méliès, and this book quotes his alleged remark that he would meet his destiny with this building ('rendez-vous avec mon destin'), and adds: 'In any case, for the moment it was merely a meeting with history, for Méliès intended to reconstruct in this studio some striking current events. The Greco-Turkish War had broken out in February 1897 and still continued, and Méliès reconstructed some of its most sanguinary incidents' (my translation). The date of February is incorrect, though the Turkish repression of Greeks which led to the war had been taking place for some months before hostilities began.

<sup>47</sup> Ad by distributor A. Rosenberg and Co., *The Era* 29 May 1897. Cited in Barnes 1897 volume, p.49. Also films 2 and 4 were advertised in Germany by Wolff in *Der Komet* no. 636, 29 May 1897, p.30 (and again in *Der Komet* no.639, 19 June 1897, p.20). A earlier production date than May is not feasible because the actual events depicted in the films happened between April and early May.

<sup>48</sup> Both the Maguire and Baucus listing in June (see below) and the Warwick catalogue give the length of 75 ft. The cost per film from Warwick was £2.10s. The 1903 Star Film catalogue gives their length at 65 ft. and cost \$8 each. Sadoul gives the titles a length of 65 feet and Malthête gives 20 meters (approx 65 ft). Possibly the extra 10 feet for the British release was leader. See Georges Sadoul, 'An Index to the Creative Work of Georges Méliès (1896-1912)', *Sight and Sound. Special supplement. Index series* no. 11, 1947.

<sup>49</sup> *Photograms of the Year*, Nov 1897, p.37 and 38, quoted in Barnes 1897 volume, p.117 and 121; René Jeanne, *Cinéma 1900* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), p.108.

<sup>50</sup> PN 1 Oct 1897, p.655.

<sup>51</sup> 'Der Kinematograph im Kriege' in *Photographisches Wochenblatt* no.38, 21 Sep 1897, p.301. This states that the news item was taken from the *Photographic Dealer* (PD) for July 1897, p.150, but this issue of PD does not survive in any known collection, hence my reliance on the German source. Additionally, a report in a surviving issue of PD Oct 1897, p.218,

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states that the films were in great demand, and would be very popular in military regions of Britain.

<sup>52</sup> The list of four films, each 75 ft. long, is in Philipp Wolff's catalogue of July-Aug 1897 [reproduced in James Offer et al, eds., *Victorian Film Catalogues* (London: The Projection Box, 1996)]. The films are credited to 'Robert Houdin' (Méliès' theatre was the Théâtre Robert-Houdin). The titles are also in PD Aug 1897, p.xiii; and the series is listed in an ad in the *OMLJ* for August (p.xiv). The same list of films, though not credited to Robert Houdin, is in *Magic Lantern Journal Annual 1897-1898*, p.xcviii (published Oct 1897).

<sup>53</sup> Shown at Cork Opera House in mid-July 1897, according to Tony Fletcher's researches.

<sup>54</sup> See Birett reference below regarding the Berlin screening. Caroline Neeser, (ed.) 'Neuchâtel: Aux Premiers Temps du Cinéma', Issue of *Nouvelle revue neuchâteloise* 9, no.35, automne 1992, p.21. A film of the guerre turco-grèque was shown: the exact title is not clear but it was screened along with *Les Manoirs du Diable*, a known Méliès title (made at the end of 1896).

<sup>55</sup> Adriaan Briels, *Komst En Plaats Van de Levende Photographie op de Kermis : Een Filmhistorische Verkenning : Tussen Kunstkabinet 1885 - 1910 en Kinematograaf - 1896* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), p.30-32; additional information from Karel Dibbets. Haimanti Banerjee, 'The Silence of a Throng: Cinema in Calcutta, 1896-1912', *New Quest* 65, Sep-Oct 1987, p.261-3.

<sup>56</sup> *The Music Hall* 31 Dec 1897, p.24. Footage of the Jubilee procession was also being shown – another outdated series, according to this critic. Wolff was still advertising the Greco-Turkish series in *OMLJ* Oct 1897, p.173.

<sup>57</sup> The Méliès films were advertised in the *Photographic Dealer* by Wolff as late as February 1898 (on page xxv; see also Dec 1897, p.viii). The Scottish reference is from a talk by Hilton Brown, 'The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of motion pictures', broadcast by the BBC in 1946. (BBC Written Archives, Caversham). This recollection may be suspect due to possible lapse of memory by the spectator.

<sup>58</sup> Metropolitan: 'scenes from the Graeco-Turkish war'. See *Variety* 26 March 1898, p.3. The Eden Musee screening by exhibitor Eberhardt Schneider conspicuously stressed variety rather than continuity, as Charles Musser points out perceptively, mixing up film subjects rather than making a themed series/programme (unlike some other shows at this time). Thus the two 'Turco-Grecian War' films were not shown as a pair, but with an unrelated film, *Storm at Sea* spliced between them. See Charles Musser, 'The Eden Musee in 1898: The Exhibitor as Creator', *Film & History* 11, no.4, Dec 1981, p.83; and Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, p.137.

<sup>59</sup> *Photograms of the Year*, Nov 1897, op. cit., in Barnes 1897 volume, p.117 and 121. I originally thought that film B, the room interior, was also a Méliès' Greco-Turkish War film, but because it did not match any of the other three titles in Méliès' list, that it could be part of one and the same film, *Turks Attacking a House Defended By Greeks*, but I now believe it depicts the Franco-Prussian War film (mentioned below).

<sup>60</sup> In another reconstructed actuality Méliès similarly employs this style of action coming past camera – in the scene of journalists in the court in his *l'Affaire Dreyfus* of 1899.

<sup>61</sup> The NFTVA's copy of this film was acquired as film no.13 in the Ray Henville Collection: there were a total of 17 or 18 titles in this collection of very early films, most it seems dating from 1896 and 1897. The only other of Méliès' titles of this time which matches the action is his *Attack on an English Blockhouse* released later in 1897, but that is presumably set in India, which would not match the décor in the NFTVA print.

<sup>62</sup> *Photograms of 1897*, p.37 and 38, op. cit., in Barnes 1897 volume, p.117 and 121. It is Méliès catalogue no.110.

<sup>63</sup> The NFTVA copy is 56 ft. or 59ft long, depending what one includes (or 54 ft, says Barnes). That in CNC is 19 m. (or 1010 frames). A copy also survives in the University of Wisconsin film archive, Madison. See John Barnes, 'Early Méliès discovery', *Domitor Bulletin* Jan 1989, p.9-10: his source for comparison was the *Photograms* article, mentioned earlier.

<sup>64</sup> Madeleine Malthête-Méliès makes this suggestion. See Madeleine Malthête-Méliès, 'Trois films de Georges Méliès retrouvés en 1988', *1895*, no.5-6, Mar 1989, p.49.

<sup>65</sup> The same articulated set appears in another Méliès film of the same year, *Entre Calais et Douvres*, listed in his catalogue as the next but one entry at no.112.

<sup>66</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', *The Photographic Chronicle*, op. cit. The writer recalled that the film showed: '...a quick-firing gun in action on the deck of a torpedo-boat in chase of a Turkish

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ship... One saw the crew of the gun working it, on the rolling deck, with the waves rising and falling in the back-ground of the picture'. Georges Sadoul in *Histoire Générale du Cinéma: vol. 2. Les Pionniers du Cinéma (de Méliès à Pathé) 1897-1909* (Paris: Denoël, 1978), p.49-51 reproduces a still from the wrong film, another Méliès naval scene, with model ships. The 1902 description and a viewing of the print confirm that the effect in *Combat Naval en Grèce* was indeed achieved using a full-size articulated set.

<sup>67</sup> Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), p.39 and 37 respectively.

<sup>68</sup> Georges Sadoul, *Histoire Générale du Cinéma: vol. 1. L'invention du Cinéma, 1832-1897* (Paris: Denoël, 1977 [orig 1948]), p.395.

<sup>69</sup> René Jeanne, *Cinéma 1900* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), p.108. The term 'exactitude' for such illustrations is surely wrong – 'poetic license' would be nearer the mark.

<sup>70</sup> Elbert Chance, 'The Motion Picture Comes to Wilmington', *Delaware History* 24, no.4, Fall/Winter 1991-2, p.237: this screening of the Méliès war films was in September of 1897, by Philipp Wolff's cinematograph. It's not clear if this spectator had actually seen the films which were being shown in his city, or just reporting that they were listed in the programme.

<sup>71</sup> Banerjee, op. cit., p.269: this article quotes the report, presumably from the 1890s, as reproduced, it would seem, in: Anupam Hayat, 'Silent era of Dhaka cinema', *Dhruvadi* 5, August 1985, p.14 etc. I have been unable to trace this periodical.

<sup>72</sup> *Photograms of the Year*, Nov 1897, op. cit., p.117.

<sup>73</sup> In her commentary on Sidney Race, Vanessa Toulmin stresses his scepticism about this film, and notes that early film spectators were not all naive. Vanessa Toulmin, 'The cinematograph at the Nottingham goose fair', op. cit.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Penlake, 'Bogus war and other pictures', *BJP* 46, 1 Dec 1899, suppl. p.92. Unfortunately Penlake does not name the 'well-known authority' who thought the films were genuine. In the article he makes a claim of 'getting into the circle of workers who produced such pictures', and he adds that 'I actually assisted in producing many other bogus war scenes'.

<sup>75</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', 1902, op. cit., p.517.

<sup>76</sup> Villiers, *His Five Decades*, p.182-83. As I've noted above, many years earlier in an interview (a mere three years after the Greco-Turkish War) Villiers' description of the Méliès film and his comments on the implausibility of such films is very similar to his 1920 account. See Raymond Blathwayt, 'Fresh from the Front... a Talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers', op. cit.

<sup>77</sup> Though it is possible that some of these, Penlake's man, for example, might have been relying on hearsay; or if he was a showman would want to maintain the fiction that these films were genuine.

<sup>78</sup> Regarding the naive viewer, see my essay, 'The Panicking Audience?: Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect'', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19, no. 2, June 1999, p.177-216; see also the work of Yuri Tsivian referred to in that article.

<sup>79</sup> Note for example the scene of journalists in the courtroom in *l'Affaire Dreyfus*, which is surprisingly realistic, with a set based on the real courtroom; by contrast, elsewhere in the film some settings are utterly stylised.

<sup>80</sup> I am indebted for this idea to Frank Kessler.

<sup>81</sup> The printed press was also guilty of exaggeration and propaganda. One writer stated that when his reports arrived back home they were exaggerated by his editor, and that other correspondents invented battles before they happened. See Frederick Palmer, *Going to War in Greece* (New York: R. H. Russell, 1897), p. 32 and 181-2.

<sup>82</sup> Herbert Birett, *Lichtspiele: Der Kino in Deutschland bis 1914* (Munich: Q-Verlag, 1994), p.39. The film is listed as film number 3642 in Herbert Birett, *Das Filmangebot in Deutschland, 1895-1911* (Munich: Filmbuchverlag Winterberg, 1991). Another visual medium – still photography – was also used for propaganda at this time, such as a controversial photograph of a massacre of Muslims by Christians in Sitia. See *BJP* 19 Mar 1897, p.187.

<sup>83</sup> The execution film was distributed in Germany by Philipp Wolff, who also distributed the film in London, as one of the four Méliès Greek war titles. This is my reason for believing the film in Germany was one of the Méliès Greek war films.

<sup>84</sup> In France, for example, people tended to support the Greek side, and there were even fundraising events, such as a 'matinée artistique' at the Théâtre de la République on 4 April, to aid the Greek and Cretan wounded. (On the same programme was the Cinématographe de Normandin.) See programme of the event in Roger Viollet picture library, image no.889392.

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<sup>85</sup> *Bulletin* (Sydney) 28 Aug 1897, p.8 and 11 Sep 1897, p.8.

<sup>86</sup> Maguire and Baucus ad, *The Phonoscope* June 1897, p.4. This may be the same Lumière-shot film of a march of Turkish cavalry at Constantinople noted in a Lyons newspaper on 25 April 1897, but this film was probably shot earlier in the year, as the Lumière operator had most likely left the city by the time war broke out in April. See Jean-Claude Seguin, *Alexandre Promio, ou, Les Énigmes de la Lumière* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), p.85. Warwick released the same subject as two films, showing Turkish infantry/artillery leaving Constantinople for the Graeco-Turkish war, the infantry preceded by 'a native band'. They claimed it was filmed during the recent war. (Warwick catalogue nos. 1414 and 1415). See *Descriptive List of New Film Subjects* (London: The Warwick Trading Co Ltd., 1898), op. cit., p.21-2.

<sup>87</sup> See my book: *The Titanic and Silent Cinema* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2000).

<sup>88</sup> Robert Paul, for example, proclaimed some of his fake films as 'reproductions of incidents of the Boer War'.

<sup>89</sup> Warwick Trading Company, *Descriptive List of New Film Subjects Issued by the Warwick Trading Company, Limited* (London: The Warwick Trading Co Ltd., 1898).

<sup>90</sup> *Photograms of the Year*, Nov 1897, op. cit., in Barnes 1897 volume, p.117 and 121.

Interestingly, these two films both turned up in the Will Day Collection – identified by myself and colleagues – suggesting that these two films may have been screened by the same showman from whom Will Day obtained them. Perhaps this showman was also screening both as being Greco-Turkish War films.

<sup>91</sup> CNC's description reads (courtesy of Nadine Dubois): *Bombardement d'une Maison* (Méliès, 1897) 18.6 m (981 frames). 'This film shows troops under fire in a house. While a few soldiers are climbing a ladder (probably to get onto the roof) on the opposite side of the room, other soldiers are firing from a window. A bomb falls through the roof and explodes in the room wounding a soldier. A missionary nurse rushes towards him.' In fact, nurses from Britain and elsewhere played quite a role in this war, tending the wounded. At the Pordenone festival of 1996 apparently this film was screened, identified as Méliès' *La Prise de Tournavos*, showing Turks attacking a house defended by Greeks. I believe that this was my mis-identification and that this was really the print of *Les Dernières Cartouches*. The film also survives in the Bruxelles Royal Film Archive, apparently. (See also Baj citation below).

<sup>92</sup> The film was described as, 'Un épisode de la guerre franco-prussienne. On assiste au bombardement d'une maison à Bazeilles. Il s'agit de la reproduction du célèbre tableau de [Alfred de] Neuville.' From Jacques Malthête, *158 Scénarios de Films Disparus de Georges Méliès* (Paris: Les Amis de Georges Méliès, 1986), p.12. In the film the soldiers are dressed in the French military uniform of the 1870 era, not uniforms of the Greco-Turkish War.

<sup>93</sup> See Georges Brunel, *La Photographie et la Projection du Mouvement* (Paris, 1897), p.98-9; and Georges Sadoul, *Lumière et Méliès* (Paris: L'herminier, 1985), p.254.

<sup>94</sup> Barnes 1897 volume, p.162. For more on the print of *Les Dernières Cartouches* in the Bruxelles archive, see: Jeannine Baj, 'Vers une approche intégrée de la notion d'identification. Le cas de L'IIC745/12 ou du PX20282', in Thierry Lefebvre, et al., *Les Vingt Premières Années du Cinéma Français* (Paris: AFRHC/Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1995), p.281-290. Another film title or titles from the Méliès Star catalogue from this period may also have been to do with the Franco-Prussian war: *Épisodes de Guerre* (Star Catalogue numbers: 103/104), possibly titled, *La Défense de Bazeilles*, [i.e. also set in Bazeilles] – and was probably not about the Greco-Turkish War, despite what Paul Hammond (op. cit., p.34) and Sadoul suggest. See Sadoul, 'An Index to the Creative Work of Georges Méliès ...', op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Historian Pierre Leprohon suggested that this film was screened at the time as a Greco-Turkish War film, though it's not clear what evidence he bases this on, and whether he means in France. He writes: '... *Les Dernières Cartouches*.. [de] G. Méliès d'après le tableau d'Alfred [sic] de Neuville. Ce film aurait été présenté d'abord comme un épisode de la guerre gréco-turque qui sévissait alors'. Pierre Leprohon, *Histoire du Cinéma Muet 1895-1930* (Paris: Cerf, 1981), p.106. Cited in footnote 20 of Baj, op. cit., who also quotes from *Le Nouvel Art Cinématographique* of 1930 (via Deslandes and Richard) which gives a vague description of the film, mentioning the explosions etc, and stating that the film was quite realistic, apart from at the end when the actors grouped themselves as in the de Neuville painting.

<sup>96</sup> Thanks to Frank Kessler for discussion and citations about this film, which has greatly helped to clarify matters.

<sup>97</sup> *Der Komet* no.640, 26 June 1897, p. 20. The rest of this ad for these films reads (translated): '1. The Last Cartridge-Belt (Scene from the battle of Larissa), 2. Capture of a

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House in Turnavos, 3. The Shooting of a Turkish Spy, 4. Massacre of the Christians on the Island of Crete. Projected with great success in the Wintergarten Theatre, Berlin, by Wolff's Vitaphotoskop, to be seen directly through Philipp Wolff, London-Paris-Berlin.' Larissa had been reported in the news as a battle site.

<sup>98</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', *The Photographic Chronicle* 14 Aug 1902, p.517.

<sup>99</sup> It was accompanied by sound effects, it is interesting to note, for Race states: 'To heighten the reality of the picture a boy whose principal work was to attend to a barrel organ, fired three shots from a pistol – which startled the ladies into real fear'.

<sup>100</sup> Sidney Race diaries, Sat 9 Oct 1897, quoted in Vanessa Toulmin, 'The cinematograph at the Nottingham goose fair, 1896-1911' in Alan Burton and Laraine Porter, eds., *The Showman, the Spectacle and the Two-Minute Silence : Performing British Cinema before 1930* (Trowbridge, Wilts.: Flicks Books, 2001), p. 78.

<sup>101</sup> OMLJ Dec 1897, p.212.

<sup>102</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', *The Photographic Chronicle* 14 Aug 1902, p.516-7, and *The Photographic Chronicle* 7 Aug 1902, p.498.

<sup>103</sup> Villiers, *His Five Decades...*, p.183.

<sup>104</sup> See Jacques Malthête, (ed.) 'Les Actualités Reconstituées de Georges Méliès', special issue of *Archives*, no.21, March 1989, and his essay, 'Georges Méliès, de la non-fiction à la fiction' in Thierry Lefebvre, (ed.) *Images du Réel: la Non-Fiction En France (1890-1930)*, 1895 no.18 (Summer 1995), p.75; Sadoul, *Lumière et Méliès*, op. cit., p.254.

<sup>105</sup> *Der Komet* no.640, 26 June 1897, p.20. Wolff advertised Greek war films in *Der Komet* between 29 May and 12 Nov.

<sup>106</sup> Jacques Deslandes, citing an 1897 Méliès catalogue, gives three of the titles with the same catalogue numbers as Wolff, and gives the same title wording (though in French): see Jacques Deslandes, *Le Boulevard du Cinéma à l'époque de Georges Méliès* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1963), p.61-2. As I cannot find these longer French titles in any other French source for 1897 or later, I suggest that Deslandes might simply have translated the Wolff titles back into French.

<sup>107</sup> Frank Van der Maden, *Mobiele Filmexploitatie in Nederland, 1895-1913*. Thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, Nijmegen, 1981, p.34. I deduced that *De oorlog tusschen Griekenland en Turkije* is Film 3 by a process of elimination.

<sup>108</sup> Warwick Trading Co. catalogue, 1897-8, op. cit., p.55-6.

<sup>109</sup> *Complete Catalogue of Genuine and Original "Star" Films* (New York, 1903), p.11. On reel 4 of Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edision*.

<sup>110</sup> Ogilvie Mitchell, *The Greek, the Cretan and the Turk: A Short ... History of the Three Nationalities...* (London: Aldine Publishing Co., 1897), p.56; Jean Ganiage, 'Les Affaires de Crete (1895-1899)', *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* 88, no. 1-2, 1974, p.86-111. Turot, *L'insurrection Crétoise*, op. cit., p.35, claims thousands (he states 300,000!) Christians were massacred in Crete, notably in Canea.

<sup>111</sup> All dates here are derived from B. Vincent, *Haydn's Dictionary of Dates...* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1911 [reprint Michigan, 1968]). At least one war correspondent was in 'Tyrnavos' in April. See Henrik Cavling and Tage Kaarsted, *Henrik Cavling Som Krigskorrespondent; Artikler Og Breve Fra Den Græsk-Tyrkiske Krig, 1897* (Aarhus: Universitets-forlaget, 1960).

<sup>112</sup> The Greeks had a well armed navy, though it was poorly led, and its relative inactivity is 'the greatest mystery of the entire war', according to one historian, and a war correspondent had much the same opinion. See Theodore George Tatsios, *The Megali Idea*, op. cit., p.114-15. Davis, 'With the Greek Soldiers', *Harper's Monthly* 34, Nov 1897, p.816. Davis was present at the shelling of Prevesa.

## Chapter 4

### THE BATTLE OF OMDURMAN (1898)

#### Moving images of a British victory

The year 1898 was a good one for British and American imperialism. In that year the Americans toppled the Spanish from their colonies in the Caribbean and the Philippines; and then a few months later the British crushed the Mahdist regime in the Sudan. These twin examples of 'regime change' had more in common than the year in which they occurred. Both were very popular wars among the publics of their own countries, not least because they were seen as defeating corrupt and outmoded regimes which stood in the way of progress and the betterment of their populations; and also because they were very successful militarily, with both the British and American armed forces achieving rapid total-victories against their foes. For these reasons, the glorification of these conflicts in the media was 'pushing at an open door' in the sense that news editors didn't have to work too hard to show 'our side' as being both morally good and militarily unbeatable. However, actually obtaining relevant images to illustrate the events was altogether more difficult.

We will examine the Spanish-American conflict in the next chapters, but in this chapter we look at the Sudan campaign, and at how it was filmed and otherwise represented in the visual media. In the process we will meet again that pioneer of war filming, Frederic Villiers, as well as his colleague from the Greco-Turkish war, René Bull, and also a new face – the 'squire filmmaker', John Bennett-Stanford. As we shall see, these filmmakers, faced with difficult desert conditions and less than reliable film cameras, secured very little footage in the war zone, so it was down to the exhibitors to find alternatives. Indeed perhaps the greatest contribution of this war to filmmaking (as with the Spanish-American War), was in post-production: in the imaginative use by exhibitors of existing and newly-produced films, related to, but not showing, the conflict. Films of troops, flags and military celebrities dominated Britain's screens in the wake of the war, providing patriotic audiences with images to cheer.

## INTRODUCTION

### **The British versus Mahdism**

By the 1870s the British were becoming increasingly influential in Egypt and in large parts of the Sudan. The region was important strategically, not least because of the adjacent Suez Canal. But events did not go smoothly for Britain, the would-be dominant colonial power: other European powers also had designs on the region, and there were local uprisings in both territories. Egypt was becoming more closely aligned with Britain, and the country's ruler, the Khedive, became a valuable British ally in the 1890s. But in the Sudan to the south it was a different story. An Islamic regime under Muhammad Ahmad

Mahdi (1848-1885) – usually called simply ‘the Mahdi’ – came to power, and sought to expel foreigners from the region. Faced with a Mahdist uprising in 1883 the British government decided to quit the Sudan, and the following year General Charles Gordon was sent to Khartoum to supervise the evacuation. He became trapped, and in January 1885 the Mahdist forces overran his headquarters, massacring Gordon and the entire garrison. A relief expedition sent to save his mission arrived two days too late. It was a cause of both shame and indignation in Britain, but nothing could be done about it militarily – for now.

In some ways the Mahdi was a wise and far-seeing ruler, but on his death in 1885 he was succeeded by an altogether different leader, known as the Khalifa. This wilful and autocratic man was, in the words of V.G. Kiernan, ‘the architect of a crude state’, both ‘despotic and military’, and brought disaster on his country through tyrannical, ultra-Islamic rule.<sup>1</sup> A contemporary journalist, George Steevens, stated it bluntly: ‘the Sudan is the home of fanaticism’.<sup>2</sup> By the mid 1890s, claimed one admittedly partisan writer, the population of the Egyptian Sudan (‘the Mahdia’) under the Khalifa had been reduced by 75% due to war, famine and disease.<sup>3</sup>

Press stories of brutality in the Mahdist state – including the imprisonment of Europeans – helped to instil a public mood of outrage in Britain (mirroring the outrage in the American press over stories of Spanish brutality in Cuba in the mid 1890s). This provided some of the justification for the 1897-8 reconquest.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to some beliefs in our post-colonial era, colonialism/imperialism often had (and has) wider motivations than a desire to exploit natural resources, and these motivations include global interests and rivalries; as well as a general desire to topple egregiously unpleasant and backward regimes.<sup>5</sup> Probably a stronger motivation was that the British government wanted to forestall growing French and Italian colonial interests in the region, as well as desiring to avenge the humiliating defeat of Gordon, which had been a severe blow to British prestige.<sup>6</sup>

By 1896 the decision had been made to reoccupy the Sudan (coincidentally about the same date that the first film shows were taking place in London), and the efficient Horatio Kitchener, the ‘Sirdar’, was chosen to lead a joint British and Egyptian force to do the job.<sup>7</sup> This was more than anything a logistical challenge of conveying large amounts of *materiel* and thousands of soldiers up the Nile. Significantly, Winston Churchill called his book about the campaign, *The River War*, and much of the military campaign was about surmounting the problems of getting the Anglo-Egyptian force up the river to the heartland of the Mahdist state, to arrive eventually at the twin cities of Omdurman and Khartoum. The Nile is only partially navigable, and the master stroke of Kitchener’s plan was to build a railway across the desert to bypass a long stretch of un-navigable river and cataracts.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of this and other logistical feats, Kitchener commanded overwhelming firepower, and through 1897 and 1898 he won a number of victories against the Khalifa’s numerically larger forces, including the capture of Abu Hamed (August 1897) and the Battle of Atbara (April 1898). The



campaign culminated in the battle of Omdurman on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1898. This battle is such a momentous event in the history of imperialism, weaponry and – yes, cinema too – that I will take a moment to describe the events.

### **The Battle of Omdurman**

At the end of August the Anglo-Egyptian Army had reached within striking distance of Omdurman and Khartoum, and it became clear that the showdown with the Khalifa's forces would take place here. The Sirdar's army made camp on the west bank of the Nile, near the Kerreri hills, protecting their encampment with trenches and a 'zareba' or thorn hedge. The army at this point numbered over 23,000, a third of whom were British, and two thirds were Egyptians, Sudanese and from African tribes.<sup>9</sup> There had been no difficulty in recruiting men to fight against the Khalifa, for there was considerable hostility in Egypt/Sudan to him and his policies. Indeed, in Kiernan's phrase, 'in part it was a civil war of the Sudan.'<sup>10</sup> Opposing Kitchener's multi-national soldiers at Omdurman was the Khalifa's force of between 37,000 and 53,000 fighters, sometimes called dervishes.<sup>11</sup> The Khalifa's army therefore numbered about twice the Sirdar's force, though in terms of armaments the advantage was all the other way.

The Sirdar's army had 80 artillery pieces, 44 Maxim machine guns, ten gunboats, and the soldiers were armed with rifles (many firing makeshift dum-dum bullets).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, only some of the Khalifa's forces had rifles (the Khalifa, so sure of God-given victory, refused to issue many of the fire-pieces that he had available).<sup>13</sup> In general they were equipped much as their warrior forbears had been: merely with swords (and as a further anachronism, some even wore medieval armour). Even so, had the Khalifa employed more intelligent tactics, such as defence of walled towns, or night raids, there might have been some chance of limited success against Kitchener. Indeed the Sirdar's forces were expecting such raids all through the night of 1<sup>st</sup> September. Instead, the Khalifa, in a feat of generalship which Steevens described as 'a masterpiece of imbecility', played right into the Sirdar's hands.<sup>14</sup>

On the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> September at dawn, British war correspondents could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw hordes of dervishes flooding across the plain toward the Sirdar's heavily-armed encampment. The British big guns opened up, killing and wounding many of the dervishes in the distance, then as the remaining warriors approached closer the Maxims did their cruel work, along with volleys of rifle fire from the Sudanese and British soldiers. In Steevens' vivid description:

'They came very fast, and they came very straight; and then presently they came no farther. With a crash the bullets leaped out of the British rifles... Shrapnel whistled and Maxims growled savagely. From all the line came perpetual fire, fire, fire, and shrieked forth in great gusts of destruction.'... 'The dervish army was killed out as hardly an army has been killed out in the history of war.'<sup>15</sup>

But Kitchener didn't have it all his own way. After this initial one-sided episode, as his forces broke out of the zareba, other hitherto-hidden groups of dervishes attacked, hitting one of the Sudanese units under Hector McDonald, but this attack too was beaten off, with the help of fire from the British gunboats positioned in the river. The event which caused the most excitement when the public in Britain came to hear of it, was actually one of the few dubious actions on the allied side. The Sirdar gave a cavalry regiment, the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers, the task of reconnoitring ahead before commencing a general advance on Omdurman. Somewhat rashly, their commander decided to charge through any remaining dervish stragglers. What he didn't know was that there was a significant force of dervishes lying in wait in a ditch to protect the route to the city. This force broke the charge of the 21<sup>st</sup>, and in the hand-to-hand combat which followed, the British cavalry lost large numbers of men and horses.<sup>16</sup> This was the last cavalry charge in British military history.

Overall however Omdurman was an almost total victory for the Sirdar's forces, and, as a British participant noted, 'one of the most spectacular (and perhaps "safest") battles ever fought'.<sup>17</sup> Safest for the winning side, that is, because this battle marked the most clear-cut disparity ever seen between weapons of wealthier and poorer nations: the 'firepower gap' – with technology such as the Maxim machine-gun only used by one side – meant that the dominance of the West 'now knew few limits'.<sup>18</sup> It was the battle of Omdurman which inspired Hilaire Belloc's famous rhyme on the triumph of colonialism:

'Whatever happens we have got  
The Maxim gun and they have not'

The disparity in casualties after the day of battle tells the story most graphically. While the number of dervishes killed was around 11,000 (with 16,000 wounded and 4,000 prisoners), British and allies' casualties were in the low hundreds with fewer than 50 killed (and less than 30 of these British).<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to think of another land battle with such a disparity, with the possible exception of the first Gulf War in Kuwait in 1991.

Yet in some ways the British tactics, while devastating in terms of logistics and technology, had been old fashioned (even apart from the cavalry charge). Volley firing was the norm, with the British troops standing shoulder to shoulder and firing in unison as the officer gave the order, just as their forefathers had fought at Waterloo.<sup>20</sup> In the future, few enemies would present themselves for the kill in such large and defenceless numbers as the Khalifa's unfortunate drones had done. The following year in the Boer War the British were forced by the Boer hit-and-run tactics into a very different style of warfare, in which the once formal battlefield was stretched out to become an entire country with sharpshooters hidden anywhere. This would be difficult enough for the military planners, and was equally tricky for filmmakers. Omdurman, then was a last chance for the new cinema medium to record an old-style war: but, as we shall see, the war correspondents who had the chance to film here, largely failed.

### **Journalists at the front**

Already in early 1898, scenting the coming battles, war correspondents were applying to the authorities in Cairo to accompany the Sudan expedition, and the officials were having 'no end of trouble' in selecting them.<sup>21</sup> This problem may have been mainly because, while many journalists were applying, few were being accredited because of Kitchener's well-known dislike of the war correspondent 'tribe'. Indeed at one point it was rumoured that only five or six news organisations would be allowed to have war correspondents with the battlefield force, and Kitchener tried to keep even these away from the front line, supposedly due to lack of transport.<sup>22</sup> Eventually about thirty journalists covered the Sudan campaign, though little more than half that number actually went to report on the battle of Omdurman itself.<sup>23</sup> This was a small fraction of the veritable army of correspondents who covered the Spanish-American war earlier in the year.

As well as the restriction over who could go to the front, there was also censorship of the material that the journalists created in the war zone, before it could be dispatched away by telegraph or messenger. The Sirdar was very keen on this.<sup>24</sup> The immediate task of censorship fell to Colonel Wingate. Some correspondents found this censorship irksome, though others suffered it relatively uncomplainingly. Frederic Villiers, while acknowledging that Wingate expunged a lot of material from war correspondents' despatches, found him the most 'courteous and urbane censor' he had ever met, and they even dined together at the front.<sup>25</sup> A few journalists may have managed to evade the censorship.<sup>26</sup> But censorship was not the only problem. Being a war correspondent during this (or almost any) campaign was hazardous, and two of the fraternity died and two were wounded. As Watkins wrote of this war: 'Truly he who wields the pen, like the man of the sword, has his risks to run, and needs be brave'.<sup>27</sup>

As well as being writers (i.e. print journalists), war correspondents were often artists and photographers too. Several of the correspondents took photographs during the campaign, and one of these men, Hubert Howard (representative of *The Times*) was actually taking photographs when he was killed by a shell fragment.<sup>28</sup> But it was not only journalists who were photographing in the Sudan, for many military officers had provided themselves with the new snapshot cameras which were on the market in Britain by 1898, and indeed small portable Kodak cameras 'were in evidence everywhere during the campaign'.<sup>29</sup> One officer, Gregson took over 200 photos and made up several albums of these after the war, and there were several other officer-photographers.<sup>30</sup> Wingate himself, the press censor, was one of the keenest of the lens men, and in a bizarre reversal of roles, even took snaps of war correspondents.<sup>31</sup> The photographs of the Battle of Omdurman, were, however, generally disappointing, leaving it up to painters back home to offer the drama that the correspondents had caught in words but not in their cameras. [Fig. 1 and 2]

Even more than with stills photography, it was the war correspondents who dominated efforts to cover the Sudan campaign in moving images, though with equally unsatisfactory results. There are three men with a claim to have

filmed aspects of the campaign, and notably at Omdurman: René Bull, Frederic Villiers, and John Benett-Stanford. In the following sections, I will examine their claims one by one. As with much early cinema research the truth is by no means easy to establish, as the available sources are scattered, fragmentary and often unreliable.

### **CORRESPONDENT CAMERAMEN: VILLIERS et al**

What is beyond doubt is that there was at least one film camera present during the campaign at Omdurman, and probably more. There are several *general* statements (I will cite more specific ones later) which suggest this. The editor of *The Sketch* noted in early October that:

‘I am waiting to see the battle of Omdurman presented at one of our leading halls on a cinematograph. Surely it was taken! I know of more than one adventurous person who was bent on making the attempt’.<sup>32</sup>

One or more film cameras were certainly at the Sudan campaign, noticed by some of those present. The young Winston Churchill, who was attached to the 21st Lancers (and took part in the famous charge), commented on the extraordinary amount of paraphernalia being brought to the front by war correspondents, who were arriving ‘...equipped with ice machines, typewriters, cameras, and even cinematographs’.<sup>33</sup> Another eyewitness was Lieutenant Staveley, in charge of a gunboat at Omdurman. In a letter to his mother, four days after the battle he noted that ‘...two or three of the correspondents had cinematographs with them, and one of them I am told actually set it up in the firing line and photo’d the Dervishes as they came on’.<sup>34</sup>

The latter in particular seems an extraordinary claim – that someone was actually filming as the attack took place (though we should note that the Lieutenant didn’t observe this himself, but is merely reporting what he had been told). However it does receive some substantiation in a letter from an eyewitness, albeit reported many years after the event – and this letter names the cameraman in question as René Bull.

#### **René Bull**

In a letter to a British weekly in 1935, a former soldier who had served at Omdurman, W. Coyne, recalled that:

‘On September 2, 1898, at 6 a.m., we found ourselves forming the front face of ‘the Square’ [the classic British defensive formation] five miles outside Omdurman waiting for the onslaught of 100,000 Dervishes who were advancing..., and as soon as they were in range hell was let loose, and when it was at its hottest, I saw Rene Bull, the famous *Black and White* artist, calmly turning the handle of his camera; he was not satisfied with a tripod, but had a bamboo trestle 10 ft. high and was perched on the top.’<sup>35</sup>

This is an unlikely proposition, to say the least. Such a prominent platform would be highly vulnerable to fire from the enemy (though as it happened not many dervish bullets reached Kitchener's zereba during the battle). It also seems improbable that the British commanders would have allowed such a camera platform to be constructed. But the claim should not be totally dismissed, because the British war correspondents were encamped next to the British fighting units so if Bull had been doing something of this kind, Coyne could probably have seen him.<sup>36</sup> So when I read this claim I thought it was worth investigating, and as a first step decided to try to trace Coyne. After several failures, I managed to find his details through a descendant. It turned out that his name was William Coyne (1871-1950): he had been a private in the Seaforth Highlanders throughout the 1890s, and had definitely served at Omdurman.<sup>37</sup> That part was true, then – that the witness to Bull's alleged filming was indeed in the right place at the time. But I could find no further details of Coyne's sighting of Bull, so that part of the trail ran cold.

But is there anything from Bull himself which would substantiate the claim? René Bull was indeed, as Coyne says, a war artist for the illustrated weekly journal, *Black and White*, and was present at the battle of Omdurman. He'd covered the Sudan campaign since the early part of 1898 for *Black and White* and was also at the battle of Atbara. (Just before that, he, like Frederic Villiers, covered the Greco-Turkish war). He undoubtedly took stills photographs during the Sudan campaign (despite suffering problems of intense heat blistering his photographic plates), using a top-notch camera, an 'Adams deLuxe' (the advantage of which was that it was collapsible, hence portable).<sup>38</sup> Bull certainly took stills photographs during the battle of Omdurman – he had prepared 36 plates and used them all.<sup>39</sup> A number of his Sudan war photographs were published in *Black and White* magazine and in a special publication on the Sudan campaign entitled 'War Albums'. After returning to the UK he gave several lantern lectures using slides based on his own photographs, and perhaps his drawings, of the Sudan.<sup>40</sup>

So clearly Bull was present at the battle, took stills, and (given his photographic experience) probably had the know-how to take cinema films. The only problem is that he doesn't mention this in any source that I have seen. In his article about photographing the war there is no mention of filming, and Bull tells us that he was riding round on a horse taking still photographs during the battle, so it would seem unlikely that he could also have operated a film camera on the alleged bamboo trestle.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, I can find no mention of Bull's filming in the photographic press. An article about his stills photography of the war, published in a trade journal in 1899, mentions in passing the filming of warfare as if it is a future possibility, not a current fact.<sup>42</sup> One would think that if Bull really had filmed during the war, it would have been mentioned in this article, though one possibility is that he did film, but that his films weren't successful or were lost – such a failure would be reason enough to keep quiet about his attempt afterwards.

And one should add that an involvement with cinematography at the war would not have been out of character for René Bull, as he seems to have had a genuine interest in film. One of the first ever print cartoons about the new

cinema medium was by Bull, appearing in April 1896 in the British weekly, *Pick-Me-Up*.<sup>43</sup> And as we shall see, he may have filmed during the Boer war with a small-format film camera. Furthermore, René Bull was the brother of Lucien Bull the scientific cinema pioneer, so an interest in filming was in the family. Unfortunately, at present, we can draw no firm conclusion as to whether Bull filmed at Omdurman or not, and we are left, therefore, with this as an open question.

### **Frederic Villiers**

While Bull's status as cameraman in the Sudan is dubious, for the other two of our three putative film cameramen at the battle, the evidence is more positive and clear cut. Let us begin with Frederic Villiers. We last saw Villiers on the island of Crete during the early summer of 1897 in the aftermath of the Greco-Turkish War, where he was observed by our same witness Coyne filming the troops. From Crete, Coyne's unit, the Seaforth Highlanders, were transferred to the Nile, where they stayed from 1897 to 1898, engaged in Kitchener's campaign. Villiers also came to the Sudan to follow the campaign: one visit in 1897 and then again the following year when he joined Kitchener's march to Omdurman as correspondent for the *Globe* and the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>44</sup> He was not new to the Nile region, having been there before as a correspondent in the 1880s, during the early stages of conflict between the British and the various Egyptian/Sudanese factions opposed to a British presence. Villiers had clearly grown fond of the area, describing it as a 'happy hunting ground for the war correspondent' – a somewhat inappropriate description considering that no fewer than seven correspondents were killed during these campaigns.<sup>45</sup>

As in the Greco-Turkish War, Villiers was again experimenting with novel campaign equipment: his tent was 'a new idea for the desert, a glorified umbrella that could be put up in less than five minutes by tugging at a cord'. [Fig 3.] As in Greece he had a bicycle with him.<sup>46</sup> According to a fellow-correspondent, E. N. Bennett of the *Westminster Gazette*, this 'dull green' machine was not very well suited to desert conditions and as a result 'was usually to be found in the charge of his servant'.<sup>47</sup> René Bull was particularly snide in one of his columns, reproving an unnamed war correspondent with a bicycle – evidently meaning Villiers – and suggesting that it would be 'utterly impossible' to cycle in the desert due to the intense heat and the cloying sand. But another source stated that the bicycle performed quite well on the hard pan of the desert, as Villiers knew it would.<sup>48</sup> Bull's comment does suggest some animosity between himself and Villiers, perhaps due to rivalry when they had both reported for *Black and White* in Greece the previous year.<sup>49</sup> [Fig. 4]

Incidentally, Villiers was not the only person to bring outlandish items to this war. Another war correspondent, Frank Scudamore, had one of his transport camels devoted exclusively to carrying lager beer, with an extra camel for carrying an ice-making machine to cool the beer. Another *bon viveur*, George Steevens, brought tins of fine foods from Fortnum and Mason, including turtle soup. This surely speaks volumes about westerners' attitude to war in this era as being a kind of 'sport'.<sup>50</sup>

The main outlandish item which concerns us here is Villiers' film camera. After the Greco-Turkish war, as I recounted in the previous chapter, his films were eclipsed by the faked versions by Méliès, yet he decided to have another try at filming during the Nile campaign, as he explains in his autobiography: 'I thought that in this case I might get some of the real stuff before the fakers set to work, because it would be hard for them to vamp up the local color of the desert, dervish costumes, and so forth.'<sup>51</sup> Villiers kept the camera secret from his colleagues since, as he says, he wished to be 'first in the field'. Unfortunately, the size of the apparatus gave his secret away. According to Villiers' memoirs, when some of his fellow-correspondents learned of this device they all 'wanted to take movies as well'. Villiers continues:

'Why they imagined they could get the necessary camera and spools simply by wiring to Cairo, as one would for a packet of tea, I have no idea; but, anyway, the whole thing caused no little excitement in our mess. The two who were going to upset my little plans would occasionally look at me with a kind of pity for the "beat" they were making. Presently their box arrived, and the look of triumph quickly died out of their faces when they found that instead of a camera it contained a lantern projector and quite an amusing series of films of a racy terpsichorean nature to please an Egyptian audience.'<sup>52</sup>

However, Villiers' filming plans did not go smoothly either, and he relates his travails in one of his newspaper reports. On the day before the battle of Omdurman he was weak, suffering the after-effects of a very painful scorpion sting, and that night slept fitfully:

'Shortly before dawn I woke up, remembering that I had forgotten to fix up my cinematograph camera with films, and there might be a chance to get some action in the coming fight... [But the moon was out, and] ... Charging the camera could only be done where darkness reigned; so I aroused my servant, got the apparatus together, and took it down to the gunboat, the 'Melik', where I found darkness enough for the purpose in her stifling forehold.'<sup>53</sup>

He was there for a while ('the films for movies were difficult to fix in a hurry in those days'), and by the time the camera was loaded, dawn had broken. Suddenly the boat began to move. The captain (Major W.S. Gordon – who was a nephew of Gordon of Khartoum) had received sailing orders and it was now too late for Villiers to go ashore.<sup>54</sup> He recalled:

'This was annoying, but Gordon told me I could erect my tripod in the aft battery, which had been put out of action the previous day; and as his boat would be close in-shore I should see everything. I thought it was a good idea, for I had a level platform and a wonderful coign of vantage.'<sup>55</sup>

The boat took up its position and prepared to give supporting fire to the right flank of Kitchener's army.<sup>56</sup> Villiers hurriedly set the camera on its tripod, ready to start cranking. The scene was everything a cameraman could ask

for: 'The dervishes were now streaming toward us in great force – about ten thousand spearmen – just as I wanted them, in the face of the early sun and in the face of my camera.' But fate, alas, was against him:

'I had just commenced to grind the "coffee pot" when our fore battery opened fire. The effect on my apparatus was instantaneous and astounding. The gunboat had arrived on the Nile in sections and had evidently been fixed up for fighting in a hurry, for with the blast of her guns the deck planks opened up and snapped together, and down went my tripod. The door of the camera flew open and my films were exposed. However, I had no time to weep over spilt milk, for the fighting had commenced. I pulled out my sketchbook, and my only comfort was that from my vantage point I saw many things I should have missed ashore and that no camera of my kind could have registered.'<sup>57</sup>

He must have been consumed with disappointment, having so nearly filmed an epoch-making British victory, and then been let down by his camera, though as he says, the camera might not have registered much of the battle anyway. But this is all assuming that he was telling the truth about having a camera at Omdurman. Was he?

As with his claims of filming in Greece, the question again arises of Villiers' credibility. Indeed there is more to doubt here, for, in the Greek case there is definite evidence that his films were shown later. John Barnes finds his claim to have had a film camera at Omdurman suspicious, arguing that even if was true that the camera was put out of action at the battle itself, 'surely, had Villiers indeed possessed a cine camera in the Soudan, there would have been other occasions when it could have been used.'<sup>58</sup> One possibility is that Villiers brought the camera with him from England but it was lost en route, for he himself tells us that he travelled up to Omdurman with few supplies because he had lost, 'most of my kit in the Nile'.<sup>59</sup>

Certainly there was never mention of any films by him ever being shown, for example in the lectures he subsequently gave about the campaign. Villiers lectured on the war after he returned to London from mid November to early December 1898. Entitled 'Khartoum at last', the lecture covered the following subjects: 'The Dervish Attack, The Khalifa's Tactics, The Gallant Charge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers, Macdonald's Brave Stand, The Sirdar's Entry into Omdurman, Where Gordon Fell.'<sup>60</sup> The programme states that the lecture was illustrated with lantern slides – 'limelight views' – 'from snapshots taken on the battlefield by Mr. Villiers'. (In fact some of the images were sketches rather than photographs: the Sirdar's Entry into Omdurman, for example, was his sketch.<sup>61</sup>) Villiers gave a lecture of the same title in Brighton a few days later. But at neither venue is there any reference to films being shown, only slides.<sup>62</sup>

Was Villiers' claim that his camera overturned during filming simply an excuse to explain why he returned with no films? Writing of another war of 1898, that between Spain and America, Terry Ramsaye describes old-timers 'telling tales of photographic desperation and film making amid the shock of clashing battle lines and bursting shrapnel. But all these tales end with, "And then a big shell



came along and blew up my camera and I never got back with any of the film."<sup>63</sup> But despite Ramsaye's disbelief, such accidents *did* happen: descriptions by early cameramen of such misfortunes occur too frequently to be mere excuses. Kevin Brownlow quotes several cases in *The War, the West and the Wilderness*: from Jessica Borthwick, Tracy Mathewson and Urban's *Britain Prepared* cameramen.<sup>64</sup>

I feel that Villiers too was broadly telling the truth, about attempting to film the battle. Firstly, because he was a 'man of honour' and, while exaggeration and self-glorification were in character, mendacity was not. Secondly, it is unlikely he would have lied, because he was writing about these events while other witnesses were still alive, so any untruths could have been pointed out. In addition to these general considerations, there are several specific reasons why we should believe Villiers. One part of his story is clearly true – that he was on board the 'Melik' gunboat during the battle and that he managed to do sketches – because some of these sketches subsequently appeared in the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>65</sup> They are from the point of view of a gunboat on the river, suggesting that this is indeed where he was located during the battle. [Fig. 5 and 6] What is more, substantiation for his claim that he had his camera on the gunboat comes from the fact that he mentions this in his *contemporaneous* report published in the *Globe* newspaper (quoted above), not just in his later account of the battle in his autobiography – and the two reports tally, despite being written over twenty years apart.<sup>66</sup>

Most significantly there are contemporary allusions by others to his taking a film camera to the campaign. The first mention of this appeared in a London periodical called *M.A.P* on 30<sup>th</sup> July which reported that Villiers was 'taking a cinematograph [camera] with him' to the Sudan:

'...and hopes to bring back a "living picture" of a real battle, though the apparatus may be difficult to manage when the British Army is taking a Dervish zareba by storm, or when a passing simoon [sandstorm] playfully fills the works with sand.'<sup>67</sup>

Then a paragraph in the *Photographic News* of mid August 1898 stated that Villiers '...has taken away with him a kinematographic camera to the Soudan, for the advance to Khartoum, so that it is quite possible we may before long see some of such results exhibited publicly'.<sup>68</sup>

These reports could be mistaken, or simply one journalist repeating a rumour that another has started, but I believe that the likelihood is, taking into account Villiers' own statements and these sketchy independent reports, that Villiers did indeed have a film camera at Omdurman. Why he failed to take any films before or after the gunboat accident – or at least didn't apparently show any on his return to the UK – is a question for which we simply have no answer. In any case, his unfortunate experiences with trying to film at Omdurman, and before that of being 'beaten' by fakes in the Greco-Turkish war, seem to have disillusioned Villiers about the possibilities of filming war. In a 1900 interview he concluded that: 'A cinematograph is a cumbersome thing to take about anywhere; on the field of battle it is simply ridiculous.'<sup>69</sup>

### **John Benett-Stanford**

The third and last of our cameramen at the battle of Omdurman was the only one to have any obvious success in the endeavour, yet ironically had the least familiarity with the media of the three – indeed it seems that he had had no previous experience as a war correspondent before this campaign, let alone as a film cameraman. John Montague Benett-Stanford (1870—1947) [Fig. 7] was a member of the well-established Stanford family which owned Preston Manor, near Brighton, as well as having property in Wiltshire. He was schooled at Eton, after which he enlisted in the Wiltshire Militia cavalry, then swiftly joined the prestigious First Dragoon Guards, and he saw active service abroad on several occasions.<sup>70</sup> A full-time Army career doesn't seem to have suited him, however, and from the 1890s he was a mere reserve lieutenant in the First Dragoons and in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, and he spent much of his time in the leisure activities of a traditional landowner. Though he was apparently an intelligent and articulate man, he was an archetypal squire of the old school, and had deeply reactionary views on many matters, so it is perhaps somewhat surprising that he was also a pioneer of filmmaking.

Both the 'cinematographic' and journalistic sides of his career began in 1898. Benett-Stanford's reserve status meant that he was not on permanent military service, and in the summer of that year he was at something of a loose end. He fancied trying his hand as a war correspondent, and wrote to several British newspapers to find out if any of them would take him on. One replied – the *Western Morning News* – to offer him a position as their representative for the Sudan campaign, and Benett-Stanford departed from the UK on 6 August. He himself recounted his activities as a correspondent in some detail in a lecture he gave after his return to England, and as this role was related to his filmmaking, I will describe his press work first.<sup>71</sup>

Benett-Stanford had no pass from the War Office to report on the campaign, but claimed that he managed to get a telegraphed permission from Kitchener. This was unusual given the lateness of his application and the Sirdar's known hostility to correspondents, and might perhaps have been facilitated by Stanford's good military connections. His luck stayed with him for the journey too, as *en route* he happened to meet an old friend who was quite an influential officer in the Sudan campaign, and so Benett-Stanford shared this officer's privileged travel arrangements all the way to the front. He arrived there on 25 August – having taken a mere three weeks to get from Britain to the depths of the Sudan, which was quick passage indeed in that era.<sup>72</sup>

Some war correspondents at this time were noted for their arrogance and sense of self importance (Churchill was seen by some in this way), and Benett-Stanford was one of the worst offenders in these respects. The night before the battle of Omdurman he scouted towards the dervish positions – as much, it seems, to prove his courage as to gain information in his role as a journalist. The following morning as the battle began he repeated his scouting, and this proved an actual hindrance to the Sirdar's forces when he and another correspondent got in the way as one section of the British forces was about to start shooting.<sup>73</sup>

He caused a further problem for the military later on. After the first dervish attacks had been beaten off, Benett-Stanford ventured forth onto the battlefield to try to snatch some war booty for himself, a Mahdist flag, from one of the slain warriors, but as he grabbed it he had an unpleasant surprise: in his words, 'up jumped a nigger with a spear, and came for me'.<sup>74</sup> Benett-Stanford carried a powerful 4-barrelled 'Lancaster' pistol (a favourite among officers in the Sudan campaign), and shot at the man, but missed.<sup>75</sup> The dervish came at him again and eventually was shot by a soldier, Captain Nevill Maskelyne Smyth.<sup>76</sup> Smyth was wounded by the warrior with a spear in the process, and was awarded a VC for the act of saving the life of a 'camp follower', i.e. Benett-Stanford (who, incidentally, showed no gratitude for this).<sup>77</sup>

These events reveal something of the character of Benett-Stanford. Overall, one gets the impression that he was selfish, and tended to view the Sudan conflict more as a 'jolly jape' than as a deadly serious war. In the latter respect he epitomizes the almost light-hearted attitude to war and conflict in the era before the events of 1914-18 (which I mentioned in my Introduction). One can understand why some of the new breed of professional military commanders like Kitchener had so little time for war correspondents when some of them were like Stanford.

He caused a further problem for the military later on. After the first dervish attacks had been beaten off, Benett-Stanford ventured forth onto the battlefield to try to snatch some war booty for himself, a Mahdist flag, from one of the slain warriors, but as he grabbed it he had an unpleasant surprise: in his words, 'up jumped a nigger with a spear, and came for me'. Benett-Stanford was prepared to shoot, and carried a powerful 4-barrelled 'Lancaster' pistol (a favourite among officers in the Sudan campaign), but he does not seem to have been a very good shot.<sup>78</sup> A fellow correspondent put the best gloss he could on what happened next:

'Mr Bennett Stanford [sic], who was splendidly mounted, with a cocked four-barrelled Lancaster pistol aimed deliberately at the dervish, who turned towards him. Waiting till the jibbah-clad warrior was but a score of paces or so off, Mr Stanford fired, and appeared to miss ... for the dervish without halt rushed at him, whereupon he easily avoided him, riding off.'<sup>79</sup>

But another witness to the incident adds further details which make this incident less flattering to Benett-Stanford: apparently the attacker was a 'feeble...gaunt, grey-bearded dervish', and Benett-Stanford himself (described as 'a heavy man'), 'was riding a small pony of uncertain gait'. This pony had been unable to go fast enough to escape the greybeard.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the dervish had already been wounded when he attacked the correspondent. The episode therefore is not at all the glorious exploit that Benett-Stanford implied it to be, for he was mounted on a second-rate pony, was attacked by an old, wounded man, and then missed his shot! Eventually a soldier, Captain Nevill Maskelyne Smyth, shot the persistent dervish, himself being wounded with a

spear by the warrior in the process.<sup>81</sup> Smythe was awarded a VC for the act of saving the life of a 'camp follower', i.e. Benett-Stanford.<sup>82</sup> In his lecture about the battle Benett-Stanford remarks that he was 'astonished' that Smythe should win a medal for an action which was so straightforward as shooting one dervish. This does seem an ungrateful comment, given that Smythe had gallantly saved his life.

I have described these events at some length because I think they reveal something of the character of Benett-Stanford. Overall, one gets the impression that he was selfish, and tended to view the Sudan conflict more as a 'jolly jape' than as a deadly serious war. In the latter respect he epitomizes the almost lighthearted attitude to war and conflict in the era before the events of 1914-18 (which I mentioned in my Introduction). One can understand why some of the new breed of professional military commanders like Kitchener had so little time for war correspondents when some of them were like Stanford.

Benett-Stanford's experiences at Omdurman would scarcely be worth describing in such detail were he not, against all odds, a noteworthy pioneer of war cinematography, both here and at the Boer War the following year. Yet, as we shall see, it seems that Benett-Stanford's casual attitude to his role as newspaper correspondent at Omdurman also extended to his work in cinematography. Rachael Low wrote that he was 'the son of a wealthy family in Brighton, and took up kinematography as a hobby', and this is as good a brief description as one could ask for.<sup>83</sup>

He might have been introduced to cinematography by the film pioneer, G.A. Smith. Both men lived in or near the coastal town of Brighton (at least Benett-Stanford had one of his houses near there) and perhaps living relatively close to one another led to their meeting, and to Smith supplying Stanford with film equipment. According to a British photographic journal in September, 'G.A. Smith has fitted out one of the foremost war correspondents in the Soudan with apparatus and films for taking cinematograph pictures "at the front"'.<sup>84</sup> (The phrase 'one of the foremost' was more than excessive in relation to Stanford.) Smith's sales ledger shows that in August 1898 Benett-Stanford purchased some 14(?) rolls of negative film from him (made by the Blair company).<sup>85</sup> This must have been at the beginning of August, given Benett-Stanford's known departure date to the Sudan on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the month, and the would-be filmmaker had probably obtained his camera from Smith too. The Sudan assignment was apparently Stanford's first experience of filmmaking.

### **Benett-Stanford's Omdurman film**

We know few details of Benett-Stanford's experience with this camera at the front, because he does not mention it in his account of the campaign, the lecture he gave afterwards. He certainly made one very significant film, though the fact that he produced so little again suggests a less-than-committed attitude to his filmmaking work. All we know about this film is from a letter that he enclosed with it on his return from the Sudan, which was published in several British photographic journals from November:

'The cinematograph film which you have was taken by me on the battlefield of Omdurman the day before the battle. It is the only genuine Soudan film, as nobody else had a cinematograph camera with them. [untrue, as we have seen.] There was a rumour that the dervishes were advancing to attack us, and all the men were told to lie down and be in readiness to fall in for anything. I, therefore, fixed my camera on the Grenadier Guards (Queen's Company), and when the brigade trumpeter, whom you see in the photograph, sounded the call, I took the men standing up, fixing bayonets, and marching off. It was taken in the British zareba, at the village of Kerreri, in the same position as they fought the battle commonly called Omdurman.'<sup>86</sup>

The film was developed by G.A. Smith, Benett-Stanford apparently paying for this processing himself.<sup>87</sup> Smith's ledger shows that on 6 October 1898 an amount of £1.10s.6d. was charged to Stanford for 'Developing 4 lengths Neg'. Stanford was later charged an additional 5 shillings for 'Joining, etc, Omdurman Neg'.<sup>88</sup> The phrase '4 lengths Neg' and the charge for joining might suggest that the film was made up of more than one shot, though the final length is unknown, and no copy of the film is believed to survive. Indeed, until recently no images from it were extant. However, I have now found a series of frames from the film reproduced in *The Photographic Dealer*.<sup>89</sup> The two strips of frames show British troops in the desert advancing across picture, silhouetted against the sky. Being all that we have left of this historic film, these few images are indeed precious. [Fig. 8 and 9]

Incidentally, G.A. Smith's ledger suggests that another film relating to the Sudan was made by Stanford, entitled *The Sirdar*, because an entry in Smith's account book on 2 Jan 1899 notes, 'Develop'g short neg "Sirdar" – 3 Shillings'.<sup>90</sup> (This was almost three months after Benett-Stanford's Grenadier Guards film was developed.) John Barnes lists it as possibly filmed in December, in which case it was presumably not filmed in the Sudan. Another mystery. In any case, clearly it must have shown Kitchener, the Sirdar.

Benett-Stanford's film of the Guards at Omdurman was widely publicised in the photographic and lantern press from the second week in November, distributed by Wolff and entitled, *Alarming Queen's Company of Grenadier Guards at Omdurman*, though it later lost the 'alarming' word in the title<sup>91</sup> It was noticed in the press principally for its claim to be the only film of the campaign taken on location. One journalist wrote:

'Such a film cannot fail to be eminently popular during the present season, and one can easily imagine with what enthusiasm its exhibition would be attended in any British audience. There are many films on exhibition of military subjects, in which the scenes are evidently artificially prepared, and are wholly lacking in reality, but here we have the real article, which will be proportionally more valuable and more infused with thrilling incident.'<sup>92</sup>

The writer was both wrong and right. Wrong that the film was 'infused with thrilling incident' – after all, it just showed troops advancing through frame –

but right that it was valuable because it was ‘the real article’. In fact the *Photogram* journal suggested this film was ‘the most notable of the whole year’, predicting that it would be in huge demand.<sup>93</sup> It was distributed by the agents Philipp Wolff, and the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal* commented that, ‘Mr Wolff is to be congratulated on having the publicity of this valuable film’. Though it was genuine, that didn’t prevent various people from making false claims for the film. While Benett-Stanford makes clear in his letter, with uncharacteristic modesty, that it showed the troops on the day *before* the battle, in an interview with Smith, the film is described as a ‘real battle-picture, the only one he [Smith] believes in existence’. This article inaccurately notes that the film ‘represents a portion of the English army springing from bivouac, forming up, and running forward to join in the annihilating of the Dervishes at Omdurman’.<sup>94</sup> One wonders if showmen made similar claims – that this film was actually shot during the famous battle?

As noted above, disappointingly, Benett-Stanford doesn’t seem to have commented on his filming at Omdurman apart from in his letter enclosed with the film which I have quoted above. Though he gave a lantern lecture about his experiences at the battle in January 1899, and while the transcript of this lecture is rich with anecdote about his actions before and during the battle, he fails to mention anything at all about his filming activities.<sup>95</sup> I have also looked at reports of the Sudan campaign in the newspaper he represented, the *Western Morning News*, for the relevant period, and this too contains nothing about his use of a film camera in the Sudan.<sup>96</sup> Why would he not want to mention his film making? Some likely explanations are, firstly that he didn’t consider it an important enough part of his activities to merit a mention. Secondly – a reason suggested by David Beevors, an expert on Benett-Stanford – perhaps he feared that being seen to have anything to do with the ‘cinema’, a common fairground attraction, might seem ‘infra dig’.<sup>97</sup> And thirdly, maybe he thought that because he came back from the Sudan with so few actual films – only one or two scenes – his experience had been embarrassingly unproductive.

Yet though he may have remained uncharacteristically diffident about his achievement, Stanford’s few feet of film taken on the battlefield of Omdurman were recognized at the time as being remarkable – commentators noted as much – and in retrospect the film was truly historic, being the first film ever shot of a British war, only a day before a remarkable but one-sided victory. The film (albeit shot on the day before the battle, and not therefore in a literal sense a record of ‘war itself’) marks a significant milestone in the history of war and the media. These images offer a tantalizing glimpse of an important historical event in the changing face of colonial warfare, in which a ruthless, mechanical, ‘scientific’ war was making obsolete all and every form of traditional warfare

But this was a lone triumph, and it is clear from our examination of the work of the three potential cameramen at the campaign, Villiers, Bull and Benett-Stanford that in general the filming of the Sudan war had largely been a failure. With only a single film taken in the field ever released, this was not enough to satisfy audiences back home.

### **The cameraman in the picture**

There is one further tantalising possibility regarding the filming at Omdurman which I will mention. In the archives of the vast Hulton picture library in London there is a photograph, apparently taken in the aftermath of the Omdurman events.<sup>98</sup> Marked on the back is the caption, 'Kitchener reviewing troops in Khartoum after the victory over the Mahdi' and in German, 'review of Sudanese troops'. The photograph shows a military ceremony in the desert, with a group of apparently Sudanese soldiers standing before Egyptian and pith-helmeted British officers and more British officers are on a rostrum. The intriguing aspect from our point of view is that there seems to be a movie camera filming the event, in the lower right of the picture. Standing by the camera are one or two men, one wearing a white jacket and pith helmet and the other a soft trilby-like hat. One of them is possibly the cameraman.<sup>99</sup> The picture is so indistinct and the film camera and two men so far to the side that it is difficult to know what is pictured. [Fig. 10 and 11]

What was this event? There was a ceremony held two days after the battle, a tribute to the late General Gordon, which Bull and Villiers both attended, but this location is dissimilar to that one.<sup>100</sup> More likely, it is a rather less pleasant event which took place at about the same date, which is referred to in a War Office file as Kitchener's attempt to punish some misconduct among his Sudanese troops after the battle. The report notes that 'Seven officers, ringleaders, were marched out in front of the troops, their badges of rank were removed, they were then reduced to the ranks and drummed out of the Service...'<sup>101</sup> The photograph indeed shows approximately seven men in Sudanese uniforms (?) lined up.<sup>102</sup> One further piece of speculation: as mentioned, the photograph shows the British officers standing on a rostrum, and I wonder if this could help to explain the testimony of soldier Coyne, who thought he recalled René Bull filming the battle of Omdurman from a rostrum. Perhaps what he saw, instead and later mis-remembered, was merely a cameraman filming an event in the aftermath, of a scene including a rostrum?<sup>103</sup>

In any case, I have now found confirmation that one of the cameramen did film an event – perhaps this one – after the battle. This comes from a diary entry of one of the Grenadier Guards who was present. Sergeant Harris wrote in his diary for 7 September that his unit:

'...paraded at 6.30 and did rifle exercises etc. in front of the [Egyptian Army]. One of the reporters has them on the cinematograph. No doubt it will appear in London some of these days.'<sup>104</sup>

Was this the same event as appears in the photograph? Possibly. Harris states the time was 6.30, and the long shadows in the image certainly point to an early morning time. What's more the image certainly matches Harris' statement that both British and Egyptians/Sudanese were present. Was the cameraman René Bull? This is not possible if the event was on 7 September as Harris states, for Bull departed on 5 September (embarking on a gunboat from Omdurman with three other war correspondents, heading back towards

Cairo).<sup>105</sup> In which case the cameraman or 'reporter' that Harris mentions must have been either Villiers or Bennett-Stanford, and perhaps it is the same cameraman and event which is depicted in the Hulton photograph? Perhaps we shall never know for sure, but at least we know, thanks to Harris, that someone was filming after the battle.

## CELEBRATING VICTORY IN THE BRITISH MEDIA

News of the Omdurman victory, relayed by telegraph, broke in Britain a couple of days after the event. Over the following month the press was thick with special issues and features on the campaign, which coverage escalated further when the war correspondents returned. There were pages of news reports, images, and outright military glorification in the newspapers and illustrated press.

While historians, including film historians, have discussed the frenzied patriotic spirit which prevailed in the USA at the time of the Spanish-American war and in Britain at the time of the victories in the Boer War (the so-called 'Mafficking' crowds), it has rather been forgotten that a similar frenzy was ignited, albeit on a smaller scale, by the reconquest of the Sudan and especially the battle of Omdurman.

This patriotic fervour was not to everyone's taste in Britain. One anti-colonialist writer noted in his diary that: 'The whole country, if one may judge by the Press, has gone mad with the lust of fighting glory, and there is no moral sense left in England to which to appeal.'<sup>106</sup> The frenzy extended to the poor too: a labour paper complained that the working class were more interested in celebrating Omdurman than in supporting a coal strike then taking place in Wales.<sup>107</sup>

The celebration of the Sudan victory extended across all media. Books about the campaign were brought out within weeks, with huge print-runs. Steevens' *With Kitchener to Khartoum*, for example, was an immense success and even before the end of 1898 had been reprinted 'many times'; and Watkins' account went through at least three impressions.<sup>108</sup> There were celebratory poems and songs, many of the latter about the Charge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers.<sup>109</sup> The Lancers' charge was also the chief subject of war tableaux, souvenir illustrations, chromolithographs, and posters.<sup>110</sup> Madame Tussauds had a waxwork display in praise of Kitchener's contributions to the Sudan campaign, and everywhere there were references back to General Gordon, whose death had finally been avenged by the recent victories.<sup>111</sup> Even as far afield as Germany the September victory evoked keen interest, and a panorama painting was advertised of 'the taking of Omdurman by General Kitchener'.<sup>112</sup>

The Sudan events also inspired performance media. In this era before cinema had fully taken root, the magic lantern brought the war to many screens. A photographic journal predicted that this subject was 'so much to the fore' that it would be a popular lantern lecture during the winter, and so it proved.<sup>113</sup> Some of the war correspondents including Bull and Villiers lectured on the



Sudan war with slides, and other lantern lectures were offered through organisations such as the National Sunday League.<sup>114</sup> Slide sets were released about the campaign, including one on Gordon and Khartoum by Newton and Company with 60 lantern slides, many of these based on original drawings by Caton-Woodville, Seppings Wright and others, with an accompanying lecture.

In November Pooles Myriorama advertised shows in Hove on military themes, including the blowing up of the Maine and the war in Sudan.<sup>115</sup> Lord George Sanger's circus mounted a spectacular show with a thousand men and horses to depict 'Kitchener's Glorious Victory over the Savage Forces of the Khalifa'.<sup>116</sup> At Crystal Palace Brock's firework display had 'Fire portraits of Gordon and the Sirdar... with the word "Avenged" underneath', and a newspaper noted that 'so long as the fiery picture was visible the cheers of the spectators continued'. The following year there was a complete 'pyrodrama' entitled 'The Battle of Omdurman'.<sup>117</sup>

The most passionate emotions were manifested in music halls, where the war theme was ubiquitous for some weeks. Throughout September of 1898 no variety programme was complete without a reference to the Sirdar's victory.<sup>118</sup> At the Middlesex Music Hall as late as December the songs still referred to the Sudan victory and, as one observer noted, 'what was noticeable was the intense patriotism of each Artiste'.<sup>119</sup> The music hall was a common venue for film shows in this early era before the establishment of permanent cinemas, and, as we shall see, the same frenzied reaction greeted films about the campaign as met other media representations.

## **WAR-RELATED FILMS**

With the virtual failure of the filmmakers at the Sudan war and Omdurman to film the actual events of the conflict, film exhibitors were left looking for an alternative. In these circumstances, lacking film of the actual event, and needing something to put on screen, exhibitors quickly learnt to look for existing films which showed related images, what I call 'close substitutes'. These could be films of either the same people who took part in the event, or the place where it happened, or a similar kind of event. In practice this meant screening the following kinds of films: British troops (preferably from the same units which had been at Omdurman); or their commanders; or views of the Nile region; or troops charging. Films might also be re-titled to fit into one of these categories in order to seem more appropriate. Finally, as a separate category, a few symbolic, nationalistic scenes were made, and shots of British flags flying were also to be seen.

### **Related images: charging lancers**

As news broke in the UK of the victory at Omdurman and of the actual Lancers' charge, films of British cavalry became the 'in thing'. As G.A. Smith stated: 'As soon .. as there was a demand for the Charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, pictures were forthcoming which had been taken at Aldershot a year or two before'.<sup>120</sup> (Aldershot is a major garrison town in England.) By mid

September a 'Charge of Lancers' film was being advertised, and probably this same one – entitled 'Charge of the 21st Lancers', aka 'Charge of the 21st Hussars' – was available from distributors Philipp Wolff and Fuerst Brothers.<sup>121</sup> Some commentators seemed to think the latter scene might show the actual cavalry charge in the Sudan:

'Messrs Fuerst Bros inform us that they are prepared to supply kinematograph films of the recent fighting in the Soudan, and one in particular would be, we should think, extremely interesting – viz., the charge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers.'<sup>122</sup>

Others who actually had seen this film were more circumspect, and didn't imply that the film showed the charge itself. The *Era* in January wrote of a film being screened at the World's Fair, Islington: 'A striking animated picture shown here is one representing the Charge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers at Omdurman.'<sup>123</sup> Note the use by the *Era* writer of the word 'representing', suggesting that this was probably a parade ground view of lancers which could be said to 'represent' the actual charge. A report of another screening of this or a similar film made it clear that this was indeed merely, 'a *parade* of the now famous 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers'.<sup>124</sup> (My emphasis). Even though these lancers were filmed nowhere near the Sudan, the moving image of them on parade was 'greeted with tremendous applause', which was a common reaction to all Omdurman-related films at this time.

A later example of this 'off the shelf' type of film was Birt Acres' *Charge of the 12th Lancers* and was advertised on 19 August 1899 with the by-line: 'We have just secured the finest and most realistic military film ever taken... After seeing this film you will understand what the Dervishes had to encounter... They charge right at you'.<sup>125</sup>

### **Related images: heroic troops**

In addition to this technique of resurrecting existing films related to the subject, another strategy was emerging at this time in the presentation of war news on film. If you couldn't film the troops winning their victory, maybe you could at least film them just *before* or as soon as possible *afterwards*. The Seaforth Highlanders took part in the battle of Omdurman, and like all the Scottish regiments, with their picturesque uniforms, were perennially popular with large parts of the British public. By October 1898 several distributors offered films of the Seaforths marching through Cairo. These films were often titled either 'Leaving Cairo for the Front' or 'return[ing] to Cairo after the fall of Omdurman and Khartoum'.<sup>126</sup> Quite possibly they were all the same film, either taken before or after the battle – after all, a shot of soldiers parading in a Cairo street would look the same whenever it had been filmed. This film survives (in the NFTVA), identified as *The Seaforth Highlanders Return to Cairo after the Fall of Omdurman and Khartoum*. [Fig. 12 and 13] Alfred Bromhead, head of Gaumont UK, recalled that 'it was a fine picture photographically, and the soldiers made a capital show with their swinging kilts'.<sup>127</sup> We do not know who made this film (or films). If made *after* the battle it is just possible it was shot by Bennett-Stanford on his way home from the

front, though there is no record of G.A. Smith developing it for him, and it is more likely to have been shot by another travelling cameraman.<sup>128</sup>

A similar film which may have been made at about the same time, *MacDonald's Egyptian Brigade*, was released by Fuerst in September. It was screened at the Alhambra music hall, London, apparently under the auspices of 'Edison's Pictures'.<sup>129</sup> MacDonald himself has sometimes been described as the real hero of Omdurman, for under his quick-thinking command his brigade played a crucial role in the battle. One American photographic journal reported second-hand that the MacDonald film showed the brigade charging the Dervish hordes, which was of course not feasible.<sup>130</sup> It is likely that, rather than charging, it merely showed the brigade marching somewhere, possibly in Cairo, for the aforementioned film, *The Seaforths Leaving Cairo* was shown in the same 'Edison's Pictures' programme, which might suggest that they came from the same source. Perhaps indeed the Seaforths and MacDonald's soldiers had been filmed in Cairo on the same occasion?

One other film of this ilk is worth mentioning. From 1 October the Royal Music Hall in London was advertising among 'scenes from the Soudan', a film entitled, *The Cameron Highlanders Leaving Wady Halfa for the Front*.<sup>131</sup> Wadi Halfa is far down the Nile toward Cairo, and the Camerons had actually departed from there on the new railway en route to Omdurman many months before, and it's unlikely a cameraman had been in the region at that time. What is much more likely is that they were filmed *after* the battle, on their way back to Cairo, i.e. some time in September. The fact that the film was only advertised a month after victory at Omdurman suggests that the negative was brought back from the Sudan by the cameraman who was with the troops. Again it is possible it was shot by Benett-Stanford or indeed Villiers.

Films of troops returning to the UK from their victory in the Sudan were also very saleable at this time. The Grenadier Guards (whom Benett-Stanford had filmed the day before the battle) was a highly popular regiment in the British Army. They were some of the tallest and fittest troops, worthy warriors of the nation, and any film of them was bound to sell. They returned to the UK about a month after the battle of Omdurman, and were filmed on 6 October 1898 as they marched through London on their way to their barracks. Impressively, as many as five films of this march (or of their earlier arrival in Southampton), were released – from companies Wolff, Paul, Biograph and A.D. Thomas – attesting to its saleability as a subject.

The Biograph company was amongst those firms which filmed the Guards' London return, and made great play of the speed with which the film was screened after the event – it was showing in their regular venue, the Palace Theatre in London, within seven or eight hours of the march.<sup>132</sup> Interestingly for students of film form, the film was introduced by a lantern slide with a title on it, reading: 'See the conquering heroes come! Welcome Home!' This was years before actual inter-titles became widespread, and again demonstrates the innovative character of early war-related film exhibition, and the stimulating effect on film technique of the pressure to present conflict on screen. Descriptions of the audience reactions to this film emphasise its huge

popular appeal, and suggest that this exhibition strategy of showing a close substitute for the actual war could be very popular, for at such a time the public were keen to see their conquering troops in almost any context. One newspaper noted of the Biograph film:

‘The audience seemed to cheer with even more vigour than had been heard in the streets; and they were rewarded with a really fine spectacle of the men in their helmets marching as if on parade round York-street into Westminster-bridge-road... The orchestra played the Grenadiers through the canvas to their own familiar march, which was enthusiastically echoed throughout the theatre.’<sup>133</sup>

Another newspaper added that ‘many of the audience were so carried away that they... waved their hats and handkerchiefs, and cheered vociferously.’ Following the film, some even more evocative patriotic images were screened, harking back to former British military glories: a ‘picture’ (film or slide?) of Nelson’s flagship *Victory* was shown to the tune of ‘Rule Britannia’ as well as a film of the Union Jack fluttering, which both ‘evoked great cheering’.<sup>134</sup> Meanwhile a short distance away in the Empire Theatre, the war-related film ‘which perhaps aroused the greatest enthusiasm of the evening’, said one journalist, ‘simply showed a Union Jack floating proudly from the top of a mast. The audience cheered this frantically, showing the extraordinary loyalty and patriotism now rife in the land’.<sup>135</sup> (More of flag films later, in my section on symbolic films). There are obvious similarities here with the reception in the United States of films of flags at the time of the Spanish-American War – notably the film of *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag*. These parallels to America’s war were to continue, with other kinds of films related to the Omdurman victory.

### **Related images: celebrity commanders**

Just as Admiral Dewey was turned into a national hero in America by their war of 1898, and was filmed afterwards at his every public appearance, the same happened to the British military hero of 1898, Kitchener (who, a few weeks after the victory was elevated to Baron, ‘Kitchener of Khartoum’). The first available opportunity to film the Sirdar was at his homecoming – and films of his return to the UK were released by the same four companies which had covered the return of the Guards.

The Biograph company’s efforts gained the most attention, and cameraman Dickson was as ever more enterprising than most, in that he filmed both the Sirdar’s embarkation at Calais in France, and also the arrival of the great man at Dover a few hours later (both 27 October). There were many photographers present at the homecoming (to Kitchener’s evident annoyance), including the Biograph company’s W.K.-L. Dickson. It was probably the sight of Dickson at his camera which caused the *Daily Telegraph* reporter to fulminate: ‘A cinematograph operator had his infernal machine installed on the bridge of the steamer’.<sup>136</sup> But with notable hypocrisy the same newspaper was full of praise for the results on screen at the Palace Theatre, presented that same night, for the large format Biograph film meant that the images were extremely clear and detailed: ‘admirable full-face and side portraits of the gallant General have

been obtained. So clear and distinct are the photographs that every expression on the Sirdar's features is plainly visible.<sup>137</sup> The audience's reaction was one of sheer adulation:

'In the first instance the Palace audience saw the conqueror of the Soudan at Calais. They saw six feet odd of hard, wiry humanity, framed in an ordinary lounging jacket suit of grey, alert and smiling. They saw him exchange a hearty shake of the hand with the steamer's skipper — and they rose to a man, aye, and to a woman, cheering loud and long. And when the cheers had died away they were succeeded by volley after volley of vociferous and unmistakably genuine British "hurrahs," which spread from floor to ceiling, from pit to gallery, from the back of the stage even into the fashionable atmosphere of the tiers of boxes. The demonstration was renewed when the second scene was presented — representing the reception of the Sirdar, hat in hand, walking down the Admiralty Pier to meet the Mayor of Dover.'<sup>138</sup>

So popular were these films of Kitchener that they were still shown at the Palace Theatre five months later.<sup>139</sup> Other film companies also covered Kitchener's return. R.W. Paul secured, 'an excellent animated photograph of the reception of the Sirdar at Guildhall', which, at 120 ft., was unusually long, attesting to its predicted appeal.<sup>140</sup> A film of the Sirdar's return was shown at the Alhambra Theatre to huge adulation, reported one newspaper, 'arousing roars of applause, while another depicting some French soldiers at drill is received with a burst of hisses!'<sup>141</sup> Hisses for the French were only to be expected, of course, for they were the traditional enemy of Britain in this era before the 'Entente cordiale', especially as their government had designs on the Sudan (which designs were thwarted at Fachoda, again by Kitchener). For these reasons there is no record of the Sirdar film being shown in France, though interestingly it was screened in Holland at this time — which is ironic, given the sheer hatred for Kitchener exhibited in that country during the Boer war, which broke out just a year later.<sup>142</sup> An earlier hero of the Sudan also received his due during this period of inflated national pride. The *Era* reported on 10 September:

'An enthusiastic scene was witnessed at the Alhambra on Tuesday night. The statue of Gordon was included in the cinematograph pictures, with the words, "At Last." The band played the national Anthem, and the large audience cheered vociferously.'

The following week more views were added, including one of Kitchener, though it was still General Gordon's image — presumably a lantern slide — which garnered the most intense enthusiasm.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, a lantern view of Gordon's statue was screened at the Palace Theatre during the Biograph programme, and was 'received with great enthusiasm'.<sup>144</sup> Gordon, though his mission in the Sudan had been a failure, and he was ignominiously killed by the mob, was by this time firmly established as a great British hero.

### Re-titled scenes

As I have explained in my second chapter, deception about a film's status can take place at the stage of exhibition as well as production. This often comes down to misleading new titles being given to existing films, and this certainly came to pass in the case of the Sudan war. Fuerst Brothers advertised several 'Soudanese pictures' at the end of September, including *Gunboats on the Nile* and *War Correspondents Arriving in Camp*.<sup>145</sup> It is not clear what/whose these films were, but it seems unlikely that they were of the actual campaign, because (as we have seen) none of the potential cameramen are known to have shot anything of this kind. My suspicion would be that the first title was filmed near Cairo (or possibly it was a shot of general shipping on the Nile), and the second could have been a Spanish-American war film bearing this title which Edison released earlier in the year. Warwick's *The Return of the War Correspondents* could be the same film.<sup>146</sup> In any case, the re-titling made these films appropriate and relevant to the Sudan war.

### Staged films

Several staged symbolic films to do with the Sudan War were screened. The 'flag films' mentioned earlier fall into this category, though it is not clear who made them or if they were specially made for this war. Other allegorical scenes came onto the market at this time, more specifically related to the Sudan War, including one entitled, *Khalifa Praying for Victory*. This scene – comparable to such films as Amet's Uncle Sam film (made during the Spanish-American War – would have been very simple to set up with a suitably dressed performer.<sup>147</sup>

Warwick offered two dramatised films relating to the war, which may be classed as 'fakes' or 're-enactments', though coming rather long after the war. *Defence of the Colours*, probably released in late 1898 or early 1899 was described as 'A thrilling Incident of the Recent War'.<sup>148</sup> Appearing later was *A reproduction of an Omdurman battle*, and this is another mystery, of unknown genre and lacking description.<sup>149</sup> A further film from the company, released at the end of 1899, was a fully dramatised subject, entitled *How Tommy Won the Victoria Cross: an Incident of the Soudan War*, presumably made to exploit the patriotic climate at the time of the Boer War through this tale of the earlier war. The plot synopsis describes a tale of British heroism and dervish perfidy:

'Two Dervishes near Omdurman ambush and wound a British soldier, who fights back and manages to wound them in return. A cavalryman finds the exhausted trio and offers them water, whereupon the Dervishes attempt to kill the two Britons. The two British soldiers however manage to kill the attackers and make their escape on horseback, as more Dervishes arrive.' 100 ft.<sup>150</sup>

Incidentally this story was not the pure xenophobia it might appear to be. The action was partially based on genuine experience of British troops in the Sudan in 1898 (and in earlier times), a number of whom reported dervishes playing dead and then attacking British soldiers as they passed, or wounded dervishes doing the same when offered water.<sup>151</sup> There are too many

independent reports of this 'shamming when dead' behaviour for it to be mere invention – but clearly it was good propaganda too.

### **Programmes of several Sudan war films**

Charles Musser in his pioneering work on the Eden Musee in New York has shown the importance of the exhibitor in the early cinema era, and his role in shaping/creating screen programmes out of individual short films (and lantern slides). Exhibitors played a similar role in Britain in the aftermath of the Sudan war. In the British case the programme was shaped as much by film companies as exhibitors, because some of the companies, in listing films in their catalogues, grouped scenes about the Sudan events together, which would make it easier for an exhibitor to choose and compile subjects about the war.

Fuerst Brothers, for example, from the end of September listed a group of 'Soudanese pictures', which included six of the films related to the war which I have previously mentioned.<sup>152</sup> The Warwick Trading Company's catalogue had a section headed 'The Soudan Campaign' with eight film titles, including some views of the Nile at Wady Halfa and other places associated with the campaign. These latter, showing the region in which the battle took place, are an example of my category of related films, in the sub category of showing 'the place where it happened'.

A. D. Thomas screened such Nile views at his shows in the Alhambra Theatre, along with other war-related reels and a view of General Gordon, which was described as 'a coloured picture', and was presumably a slide.<sup>153</sup> This mixing up of slides and film was, as we shall see, a regular strategy in the Eden Musee shows of the Spanish-American War, and was also practiced in the UK, as this and other examples prove. It seems though, that Sudan war programmes in the UK were not as long and complex as in the Eden Musee, tending to be mere sections within an individual programme, rather than a complete war show. Lists of the films/images in such programmes are rare, and the A.D. Thomas show at the Alhambra is one of only a couple of examples of listings of Sudan war films/images that I have found. The other was at a provincial theatre as late as April 1899, where three films about the war were grouped together in the programme.<sup>154</sup> The aforementioned examples of shots of troops or commanders such as Kitchener being screened might have involved several films being shown, rather than just one, although this is not clear from the descriptions of the shows.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **The film industry and Omdurman**

After two years of preparations in the Sudan, in September 1898 Kitchener managed to pull off a total victory. It was a surprise and a joy for most of the British nation, and people clamoured for news and information about the events. While the cameramen at Omdurman, faced with an insurmountable problem of trying to film a new kind of warfare with primitive cameras, largely failed to record the war, the exhibitors managed to overcome the deficiency.

Exhibitors and distributors, by adapting the cut-and-paste style of the print media, put together a number of moving images ('moving' in every sense), which served to represent and celebrate the victory. Though the efforts of the American media during the Cuban war were more extensive, with longer film programmes, the British in their way were equally creative in presenting newsworthy (and propaganda) images related to this colonial war. Films of victorious troops marching through the streets, lantern slides of Kitchener and Gordon, symbolic films of Union Jacks waving or enemies vanquished – all were used to celebrate the British victory at Omdurman. However, these were somewhat piecemeal efforts, based on cobbling together minimal numbers of films and slides. As we shall see, a year later when the Boer War commenced, the British film industry had learned much, and as a result was better prepared to film aspects of the war, and was also more successful in subsequently presenting these films to a patriotic public.

### **Scientific war and the end of visible heroism**

It had been something of a lost opportunity. The year 1898, in terms of warfare, was the dividing line between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Boer War the following year introduced a new kind of warfare in which longer-range weaponry and defensive tactics held sway. Omdurman, while a proving ground for some new military technology (and culminating in a massacre of a primitively-armed foe), was in other respects the swansong of the traditional colonial battle. In this sense, one might say that the cinema had arrived just a few years too late, for if more experienced filmmakers had been on the scene in 1898, perhaps we might have in our film archives today a visual record of aspects of this earlier kind of British warfare, employing such – now quaint – tactics as a defensive square, volley firing, and a glorious (and ineffectual) cavalry charge.

Certainly a film of the latter, or shots of the troops who had just taken part in it, would have been a massive success at the time, for most of Kitchener's campaign had been a foretaste of the uninspiring, unheroic, 'scientific war' (as commentators were already calling it in the 1890s) of the future, in which logistics, efficient supply and impregnable defence were more important than valour.<sup>155</sup> Some aspects of the Sudan campaign exemplified a process in which many previously visible elements were being taken out of war. Bright uniforms were giving way to khaki. Guns had longer range, thereby stretching out the battlefield and reducing the intensity of hand-to-hand combat of earlier warfare. Rifle fire, with the advent of smokeless powder was becoming invisible.

In contrast, the charge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers seemed truly heroic, an inspiring example of the old-fashioned glories of battle. In this respect, as Harrington has noted, there is an interesting parallel between this charge of the Lancers' and the Rough Riders storming up San Juan Hill two months earlier in Cuba. Both were heroic actions, albeit militarily insignificant, and both were exploited by the media for their inspirational content. Harrington writes:



'The Sudan campaign and the Spanish-American War were rather mundane affairs lacking the dash which the public had come to expect from war; these two charges, one on foot, the other on horses, echoed earlier military glories and were ripe for exaggerating by the journalists of 1898.'<sup>156</sup>

We shall now move on to discussing the Spanish-American War, in which the storming of San Juan featured. This war, which took place a short while before Omdurman, marks an even more important stage in the development of media and filmic representation.

### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> V.G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse : 1815-1960* (London: Leicester University Press/Fontana Paperbacks, 1982), p.79. Kiernan adds that the Mahdist regime only ever dominated the south of the country, and as 'Mahdism contained no message of social liberation' all efforts to convert the Egyptian population to its cause failed. Warner stresses that the tyranny in the Mahdiah was due to the Khalifa, not to his predecessor, the Mahdi. See Philip Warner, *Dervish : The Rise and Fall of an African Empire* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1973), p.224. Holt on the other hand suggests the Khalifa was demonised by European writers of the time, though even he admits a marked difference between the two regimes, and a 'failing in action' during the Khalifa's rule. See P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898 : A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Nairobi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.4-5. These days many people of Sudanese origin would see the Khalifa's regime as anachronistic, to say the least. See Jamal Mahjoub, *In the Hour of the Signs* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1996). For a good account of the Sudan campaign and the media, see John O. Springhall, "'Up guards and at them!'" British imperialism and popular art, 1880-1914', in John M. Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.49-72.

<sup>2</sup> G. W. Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartum* (Edinburgh & London: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1898), p.2.

<sup>3</sup> The claim was made by Slatin Pasha, probably in Rudolf Carl Slatin and Francis Reginald Wingate, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan : A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879-1895* (London: Edward Arnold, 1898). Quoted in Bennet Burleigh, *Sirdar and Khalifa, or, the Re-Conquest of the Soudan, 1898* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1898), p.1. Wallis and Bodge's *Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan* (c1906) states that during dervish rule, the population of the territory decreased from eight million to two. Cited in Alan Sillitoe, *Leading the Blind: A Century of Guidebook Travel, 1815-1914* (London: Papermac, 1996), p.184-5: Sillitoe adds that this is equivalent to the effect in Cambodia of Pol Pot's regime.

<sup>4</sup> Kiernan, op. cit., p.79. Interestingly, the Mahdist state included part of Darfur, recently tyrannised once again by the agents of a despotic, islamic regime. See Douglas Porch, *Wars of Empire* (London: Cassell, 2000), map on p.150.

<sup>5</sup> Moore-Morris stresses that the Mahdist period has echoes even today. Ralph Moore-Morris, (ed.) 'Sudan Centenary Special Issue', issue of *Soldiers of the Queen*, no. 94, Sep 1998.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth pointing out that, as with some other instances of imperial intervention in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was not necessarily any overwhelming economic benefit in winning this land. Indeed some suggested that reconquering the Sudan was 'not worth the candle'. Even the bullish imperialist Steevens stated that Egypt would be better off without its southern neighbour under its purview, for the Sudan as a whole 'was never a pecuniary advantage to Egypt'. G. W. Steevens, *Egypt in 1898* (London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1898), p.165. In Lawrence's *The Rainbow* of 1915 two characters debate whether Britain was right to overthrow the Mahdi, one maintaining that it was none of our business, the other that intervention was all about duty to Britain. See D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (1915), Chapter 11, 'First Love'.

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<sup>7</sup> See Dupuy and Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History : From 3500 B.C. To the Present* (London: Jane's, 1986), p.847-8. The campaign got under way when, on 12 March 1896 the Sirdar received instructions from Lord Cromer authorising an expedition into Dongola province. See Winston Churchill in *The River War : The Sudan, 1898* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1899-1900), Vol. 1, p.181.

<sup>8</sup> The Sudan Military Railway was, as Steevens put it, 'the deadliest weapon that Britain has ever used against Mahdism', part of what he called the 'machine-like precision' that characterised this campaign. Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartum*, p.22. Some historians too believe that the SMR was the 'decisive weapon' in the 1897-98 campaign rather than the machine gun, which is popularly thought to be the crucial technology of this war. Moore-Morris, op. cit.; R.T. Stearn, 'Muskets and Maxim Guns: The Weapon Factor in the Scramble for Africa', *Soldiers of the Queen*, no. 105, June 2001, p.6-7. The SMR ran 270 miles across the desert, say some, though one source says 550 miles. See *Sudan Campaign, 1896-1899. By 'an Officer.'* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1899), p.166. It was laid with astonishing speed, at the rate of up to three miles a day in the summer of 1898. See O.S. Watkins, *With Kitchener's Army : Being a Chaplain's Experiences with the Nile Expedition, 1898* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1899), p.72. When completed, this railway enabled troops, guns and gunboats to be brought rapidly and in great quantities to where they were needed.

<sup>9</sup> Kitchener's force strength was roughly as follows. British: 8,200 ; Egyptian/Sudanese etc 17,600. On the balance of forces in Sudan, see Donald Featherstone, *Omdurman 1898 : Kitchener's Victory in the Sudan* (London: Osprey, 1993), p.61.

<sup>10</sup> Kiernan, op. cit., p.80.

<sup>11</sup> The number of dervish fighters at the battle has never been established with any precision and Clark has worked out what is probably the best available estimate. See Peter Clark, 'The Battle of Omdurman', *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* 107, no. 3, 1977, p.320-334; and Peter Clark, *Three Sudanese Battles* (Khartoum: [Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum], 1977).

<sup>12</sup> British forces filed their bullets into what were effectively dum-dums to give them more killing power (see Burleigh, *Sirdar and Khalifa*, p.106.) The Colt .45 was developed in 1911 for similar imperialist reasons – to give American soldiers a weapon with more 'stopping power' against the determined fighters of the southern Philippines.

<sup>13</sup> The word 'dervish' simply means 'poor', says Warner, p.9.

<sup>14</sup> Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartum*, p.289. Some of Britain's opponents in the Third-World at this time were much more successful in their tactics, using sniping and hit and run raids, etc. The correspondent L. Oppenheim who was at both the Tirah campaign against the Afridis in Afghanistan and also at Omdurman notes that while the Afridis forced the British 'to play their game', the Khalifa 'came and played the Sirdar's game', though he acknowledges that most of the Sirdar's success was due to sound organisation. See *Nineteenth Century* 44, Dec 1898, p.1042 etc.

<sup>15</sup> Steevens, op. cit., p.263-4, 285.

<sup>16</sup> But see Terry Brighton, *The Last Charge : The 21st Lancers and the Battle of Omdurman, 2 September 1898* (Ramsbury: Crowood Press, 1998), which takes a more positive view of the wisdom of the charge. The film *Young Winston* (1971) wrongly implies that the charge of the 21st Lancers took place the 'following day' as a follow up operation; it was the same day.

<sup>17</sup> See John Meredith, ed. *Omdurman Diaries, 1898 : Eyewitness Accounts of the Legendary Campaign* (Barnsley; London: Leo Cooper, 1998), p.189. The British troops felt some sympathy for the dervishes. Lieut. Hamilton Hodgson noted in his diary: 'I felt sorry for these men; they were simply wiped out... nothing could live under the fire...' Hamilton Hodgson, 'The Lincolnshires at Omdurman', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Summer 1942.

<sup>18</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers : Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), p.150.

<sup>19</sup> Some sources give British and allies' casualties at a mere 382 or 387, of which only 49 were killed (and only 30 of these British). For more on this see Kiernan, p.80; Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartum*, p. 284, 286. Though Repington put British losses a little higher. Huyshe has Dervish dead 10,800, wounded 16,000; British and Egyptian dead and wounded 47 and 342 respectively. See Wentworth Huyshe, 'The Omdurman Victory', *Living Age* 219, no. 2831, 8 Oct 1898, p.121-3. The estimate in at least one source of 25,000 dervishes killed is exaggeration. (TLS 2 Aug 1996, p.31). Clodfelter is most useful on casualty figures (and

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several other kind of battle facts and figures). Churchill described Omdurman as 'the most signal triumph ever gained by the arms of science over barbarians'. He defended the use of the dum-dum and similar bullets in such 'savage warfare', as such opponents sometimes refused to acknowledge their injuries and they 'give no quarter'. Churchill, op. cit., vol. 2, p.164 and p.338.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), p.544. Only one British commander at the battle, Lyttleton, allowed free firing, as opposed to volley firing, but some old-fashioned commentators condemned this new military tactic as inadvisable. See *Western Morning News* 31 Aug 1898, p.8.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Lord Cromer in R. Wingate papers, Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham: 267/1/224 of 8 Jan and 267/1/233 of 11 Jan 1898.

<sup>22</sup> A would-be war correspondent wrote to the press censor, Wingate, to find out the situation – he had been advised of the five or six limit, and wondered if he'd be allowed, knowing Kitchener's repugnance for correspondents. (Letter from Everard Fielding, 19 July 1898. R. Wingate papers, Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 266/7/26.) In early January 1898 the Sirdar issued an order that war correspondents not be allowed south of Assouan, but the *Daily Telegraph* challenged this prohibition. Burleigh, 1898, p.80. Others say it was *The Times* which made the challenge. Hugh Cecil, 'British Correspondents and the Sudan Campaign of 1896-98', in *Sudan : The Reconquest Reappraised*, edited by Edward M. Spiers (London ; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 1998), p.111. Some complained that this control on numbers of correspondents was the death of the liberty of the press in the field, but one army writer responded to say that war correspondents had caused problems for the army and were a drain on the forces – he noted that each war correspondent in Sudan needed two camels, a horse, and four or five servants. Threestay, 'The Sirdar and the Correspondents', *Naval and Military Magazine*, Feb 1898, p.74-6.

<sup>23</sup> Cecil, p. 102, 112. Wilkinson-Latham says that 15 war correspondents were there. See Wilkinson-Latham, *From Our Special Correspondent : Victorian War Correspondents and Their Campaigns* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p.242. Harrington and Sharf list 17 war correspondents present at Omdurman, though miss out Benett-Stanford, which would make the figure 18. See P. Harrington and F.A. Sharf, *Omdurman, 1898 : The Eyewitnesses Speak : The British Conquest of the Sudan as Described by Participants in Letters, Diaries, Photos, and Drawings* (London: Greenhill Books, 1998), p.219. Churchill lists 12 correspondents at Omdurman; there had originally been 26 for the earlier campaign, of which one was killed, one died of fever and one was wounded. See Churchill, *The River War*, op. cit., vol. 2, p.3 and p.230-1.

<sup>24</sup> Churchill, *The River War*, op. cit., vol. 1, p.415: on 7 Apr, the day before the battle of Atbara, Kitchener muzzled the correspondents and allowed no telegrams to pass.

<sup>25</sup> F. Villiers, *Peaceful Personalities and Warriors Bold* (London & New York: Harper & Bros., 1907), p.193. On 16 August Wingate had dinner with Villiers. See R. Wingate's diary, Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 100/1/106. In his diary Wingate lists some of the correspondents present. See 100/1/107.

<sup>26</sup> Lionel James, a *Times* reporter, claimed to have circumvented the censorship. James, *High Pressure : Being Some Record of Activities in the Service of the Times Newspaper* (London: J. Murray, 1929), p.84.

<sup>27</sup> Watkins, p.260.

<sup>28</sup> BJP 23 Sep 1898, p.612. See also Wilkinson-Latham, p.242.

<sup>29</sup> P. Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', in *Sudan : The Reconquest Reappraised*, edited by Edward M. Spiers (London ; Portland, Or.: Frank Cass, 1998), p.88.

<sup>30</sup> Francis M. Gregson made albums of these for distribution to officers in the regiment he accompanied, the Grenadier Guards. (Cambridge University Library, manuscript Y3042C.) Other officers known to have been taking photographs at Omdurman are Lieut. E.D. Loch of the Grenadier Guards, Lt. Short and Ser-Major Bruce of the RAMC, Captain E.A. Stanton, and gunboat captain Lieut. Cecil Staveley. Loch's photographs survive in the National Army Museum, and the *London Gazette* 30 Sep 1898, p.6, mentions him as Lieut. Hon E.D. Loch, Grenadier Guards. Short and Bruce provided the good quality photos in Watkins' book: see Watkins, op. cit., passim. A couple of Stanton's photographs of troops just before the battle of Omdurman may be seen in the Mary Evans image library (and the Hulton) along with

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illustrations based on his sketches. Staveley photographed at Atbara and at Khartoum (Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 637/2.)

<sup>31</sup> For Wingate, see his diary, 20 Aug (Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 100/1/107). Wingate was depicted as he took a photograph in *Black and White* 17 Sep 1898, p.361.

<sup>32</sup> 'Small talk of the week', *The Sketch* 5 Oct 1898. p.465: in the context of a tongue-in-cheek suggestion for an exhibition about the Sudan. Cited in Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', p.92.

<sup>33</sup> He is writing about January 1898 at this point, though might have added this comment based on what he saw later that year. Churchill, *The River War*, op. cit., vol.1, p.364. The cinema had evidently entered Churchill's consciousness in the Sudan, for, in describing his experience in the charge of the 21st Lancers, he uses a filmic metaphor: 'The whole scene flickered exactly like a cinematograph picture; and, besides, I remember no sound. The event seemed to pass in absolute silence.' Churchill, op. cit., vol.2, p.142. Churchill was known in later life as a fervent cinema fan, and it seems from this metaphor that films were already a preoccupation. Villiers wrote that he had always envied Churchill for taking part in the charge, and receiving 'his baptism of fire that day'.

<sup>34</sup> Letter dated 6 Sep 1898, signed 'Cecil'. This includes details of the battle four days earlier, which he had witnessed from his gunboat, including the Dervish advance: 'a most magnificent sight'. He had a 'Kodak' with him, but told his mother he had been 'very disappointed' with his Atbara photos and hoped that the ones he'd just taken of the aftermath of the battle of Omdurman, near (Gordon's) Khartoum palace 'will be a better success'. Diary and letters of Lieut. Cecil Minet Staveley, Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 637/2. Thanks to Nick Hiley for suggesting I look in this source.

<sup>35</sup> W. Coyne, 'First pictures', letter to *The Radio Times* 2 August 1935, p.9 (This is the same letter which I cited in my chapter on the Greco-Turkish war. It was also printed in *The Listener*). Coyne goes on to say in the letter that after seeing Bull filming at Omdurman, 'A little later I saw Lieut. Winston Churchill charge with the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers', which seems unlikely, as that took place in a different part of the battlefield. Ken Gordon later noted sceptically: 'The first recorded newsreel story was... of the great war artist, Rene Bull, building a rostrum of bamboo poles to film the Dervishes' charge at the battle of Omdurman. I do not know if this picture ever saw the light of the projector, but a hand cranked camera on a bamboo rostrum would be very unsteady...': Kenneth Gordon, 'Forty Years With a Newsreel Camera', *The Cine-Technician*, March-April 1951, p.44-45, etc. (Gordon states, probably misremembering, that his source was a *Daily Telegraph* report, but the Coyne letter seems more likely).

<sup>36</sup> Repington notes that in the days before the battle (and presumably on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September itself) the correspondents were placed in the middle left (as seen from the river) of the zareba encampment, near the first and second British brigades. See Repington, *Vestigia* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1919), p.132. The British First Brigade (commanded by Wauchope) included the Seaforths, Lincolns, Warwicks, Camerons. The Second Brigade (Lytleton in command) included the Grenadier Guards and Northumberland Fusiliers. H.S.L. Alford and W.D. Sword, *The Egyptian Sudan: Its Loss and Its Recovery* (London; New York: Macmillan, 1898), p.239.

<sup>37</sup> Letters to author from R.E. Williamson of 9, Causeway, Derby, 15 June and 1 November 1992, saying that William Coyne was his maternal grandfather, and giving me his career details.

<sup>38</sup> PN 5 Aug 1898, p.510. Bull described his still photography at the battle in René Bull, 'To Khartoum with a Kodak', *The Captain* 1, April 1899, p.66-70.

<sup>39</sup> René Bull, *Black and White War Albums ... Snapshots by René Bull* (London: Black and White, 1899): Issues 1 and 2 of the four albums are on the Sudan, devoted to Omdurman and Atbara respectively. While Bull stated that only some 16 of his photographs of the battle of Omdurman came out, his total number of photographs of the campaign was much more than this. There is some confusion on this point in Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', endnote no. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Bull's known lectures are as follows: Early(?) December in Dublin and 20 December in St James' Hall, London (BJP 16 Dec 1898, p.811). 23 Jan at St. Georges' Hall, London (PD Feb 1899, p.25). Again at St James' Hall 7 Feb (BJP 31 Mar 1899, p.203). c. March in Glasgow (PD Apr 1899, p.75). See also *Photography* Jan 1899, p.57. His photographs appeared in *Black and White* throughout September and early October.

<sup>41</sup> Bull rode around with Burleigh. See Bull, 'To Khartoum with a Kodak', op. cit.

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<sup>42</sup> 'The camera in the battlefield', BJP 31 Mar 1899, p.203. This notes: '...it is not improbable that combats in the near future will be depicted with the cinematograph in conjunction with the phonograph or some similar instrument, thus enabling all the sights and sounds of war to be witnessed and heard at entertainments at home'. Incidentally, this article also points out that none of the photographs of the battle by any photographer depict actual fighting – some rather fuzzy images of dust clouds, said to be troops in action, are the closest one comes to it (such as the dusty snaps by Gregson, which I mentioned above). The only way to have obtained battle action photographs, it adds half seriously, would have been for one of the illustrated weeklies to have 'had a black snap-shotter with the Dervishes...but that was perhaps impossible'.

<sup>43</sup> *Pick-Me-Up* 25 Apr 1896. Reproduced in my book, *I Want to See This Annie Mattygraph : a Cartoon History of the Coming of the Movies* (Gemona/Bloomington: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> The first of these two trips in the Sudan region was from July 1897. Villiers had probably gone there directly after the Greco-Turkish War. He gave a lecture in London in early 1898 on his recent Egypt/Sudan experiences. Frederic Villiers, 'My Recent Journey from the Nile to Suakim', *Journal of the Society of Arts* 46, no. 2359, 4 Feb 1898, p.233-40.

<sup>45</sup> Pat Hodgson, *The War Illustrators* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1977).

<sup>46</sup> On the subject of his tent, see *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure*, p.260.

<sup>47</sup> E.N. Bennett, *The Downfall of the Dervishes : Being a Sketch of the Final Sudan Campaign of 1898* (London: Methuen, 1898), p.118-9. A poor-quality photograph by E.D.Loch survives, of Villiers' bicycle being wheeled through the desert during the 1898 campaign. NAM 7009-11-90, 13189-13215. On the reverse is written 'How Mr. Villiers, War Correspondent, rode his Bicycle to Omdurman'. For more re Villiers' bicycle see Wilkinson-Latham, p.237.

<sup>48</sup> Bull's editor added a comment that the unnamed man was Villiers and that the cycle was not a failure, for he 'rode the machine for miles on the march'. See *Black and White* 3 Sep 1898, p.295; another comment that he cycled for miles is reported from the Central News Agency in *Western Morning News* 30 Aug 1898, p.8. According to Burleigh the bicycle performed well: see Villiers entry in Dennis Griffiths, *The Encyclopedia of the British Press : 1422-1992* (London: Macmillan, 1992). See also F.L Bullard, *Famous War Correspondents* (Boston ; London: Little, Brown & Co.; Pitman, 1914), p.188, who says that the bicycle inspired some awe: 'the natives used to think the machine was alive'. In his autobiography Villiers points out that he took the cycle to the Sudan knowing from his previous experience that on much of the desert there is a hard coating, meaning that a cycle would not sink into the sand. Villiers, an old hand in the desert and other challenging environments, was not as naive as Bull seems to have assumed. Further confirmation of this comes in the *M.A.P.* article cited below, which states that Villiers 'considers the firm, sandy surface of the desert excellent for cycling', and that he had even had the bicycle fitted with specially strong tires for the desert.

<sup>49</sup> Bull also, apparently, 'detested' Bennett Burleigh, the *Telegraph* correspondent, so much so that, in April at Atbara, he drew a sketch of the dervishes attacking, with one of the fiendish warriors made to represent Burleigh ! (See Meredith, 1898, p.85.) Bull and Burleigh did, however, ride around together during the battle of Omdurman, so perhaps the dislike had worn off by then.

<sup>50</sup> James, *High Pressure*, p. 4 and 65. On war correspondents' luxuries brought to this campaign see Wilkinson-Latham, p.225-6; Scudamore, *A Sheaf of Memories* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1925), p. 282-4, 387. This is not as frivolous as it might seem. I know from experience, filming in remoter parts of the world, that a few luxuries can make a difficult experience more tolerable, though one might take this too far, such as in Evelyn Waugh's novel, *Scoop*, where a war correspondent takes all kinds of paraphernalia with him to the front, including comfortable chairs and a bath.

<sup>51</sup> Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure*, p.259.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.259-60. It seems improbable that one could order films and a suitable projector from Cairo at this early date. Perhaps, if this incident really occurred, these were lantern slides.

<sup>53</sup> From Villiers' report written 3 September 1898 and published in the *Globe and Traveller* on 26 September, p.4. Bennet, *op. cit.*, p.141, confirms the scorpion story: another reason to believe Villiers' account of other matters too – including his claims of attempted filming. In another *Globe* report Villiers confirms that he did have his camera ('Beyond Omdurman', *Globe and Traveller*, 4 Oct, p.4): 'I had originally come on board in the early morning with a

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camera...’ A drawing of Englishmen in a Sudan rail carriage shows a parcel marked ‘Villiers’ – possibly this was his camera? See ILN 10 Sep 1898, p.381.

<sup>54</sup> Gordon was in the Royal Engineers (*London Gazette* 30 Sep 1898). Staveley calls him ‘Bill Gordon’.

<sup>55</sup> Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure*, p.264.

<sup>56</sup> The ‘Melik’ was one of three gunboats covering the right, or northern flank. See W.S. Chalmers, *The Life and Letters of David, Earl Beatty, Admiral of the Fleet...* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), p.36. (Beatty at this early point in his career at Omdurman commanded a Nile gunboat.)

<sup>57</sup> Frederic Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure*, p.264.

<sup>58</sup> Barnes, 1898 volume, p.61.

<sup>59</sup> Prince Francis of Teck lent Villiers some supplies due to the latter’s loss. Teck, like Villiers, was on the ‘Melik’ during the battle (see Villiers, *Peaceful Personalities and Warriors Bold*, p.178-80) where he ‘worked a Maxim gun to good effect’ (see Bennett, *op. cit.*, p.247-8).

<sup>60</sup> Barnes reproduces this list of themes for the lecture presented in London in early December 1898. (See Barnes, 1898 volume, p.61.) The lecture was to be given on 7 Dec, 1898, in the St. Georges Hall, Langham Place, London. Reported in the *Daily Graphic* 7 Dec 1898, p.982c. It was also given earlier in the same venue, on 15 and 16 November, according to *The Times*: ad on 12 Nov, p.1 and ‘The Sudan campaign’, 16 Nov, p.3, which gives a little more detail.

<sup>61</sup> Villiers sketch, ‘The Sirdar’s Entry into Omdurman on the night of the battle’, had appeared in ILN 1 Oct 1898, p.480. Villiers states in the *Globe and Traveller* 26 Sep 1898, p.4 that he was on the ‘Melik’ during the army’s entry into Omdurman, so perhaps his sketch of it was based on other people’s descriptions, or on an ‘official’ entry after the main army’s entry.

<sup>62</sup> It was scheduled for 13 Dec 1898 at The Dome, Brighton, to be illustrated with slides taken from photos ‘and sketches’ by Villiers. See *Brighton Society* 29 Oct 1898, p.9 and 10 Dec 1898, p.8.

<sup>63</sup> Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1964), p.390.

<sup>64</sup> Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West and the Wilderness* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> See for example his sketches in ILN 24 Sep, p.448-9 of the action at 6.30 am as seen from the ‘Melik’, and ILN 1 Oct, p.481: three pictures of battlefield action all seen from the river; and in the same issue p.484 the ‘Melik’ saving the Camel Corps. There is a picture in the ILN of Major Gordon and Prince Francis of Teck on the ‘Melik’ after the battle, with former prisoners of the Khalifa (held in the Hulton). A picture in *The Graphic* 8 Oct shows Staveley Gordon. A picture of a Nile gunboat of this type is reproduced with other photos of the Omdurman campaign in Clammer, *op. cit.*, p.90-91.

<sup>66</sup> Villiers remained on the ‘Melik’ on the night after the battle too. He reported in his newspaper – an additional mention of his film camera – ‘my bed was the platform of the fore battery, and my camera my pillow’. ‘Beyond Omdurman’, *Globe and Traveller*, 4 Oct, p.4. His being on the boat perhaps accounts for Bennett’s assertion that after the battle Villiers couldn’t be found (even by his servant). Bennett, *The Downfall of the Dervishes*, p.75.

<sup>67</sup> ‘M.A.P. in society’, *M.A.P.* 30 July 1898, p.151-2. Reproduced in ‘Personal’, *The Regiment* 3 Sep 1898, p.358. Cited in Harrington, ‘Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign’, p.92.

<sup>68</sup> PN 12 August 1898, p.508.

<sup>69</sup> See Raymond Blathwayt, ‘Fresh from the Front... a Talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers’, *Daily News*, 19 April 1900, p.7. Villiers was interviewed when he’d just returned from the Boer War. In the same interview he says that for war reporting, sketching is a more convincing and reliable medium than photography.

<sup>70</sup> Entry for Benett-Stanford in E.E. Dorling, *Wilts and Dorset at the Opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Pike and Co., 1906), p.82. See also his obituary in the *Salisbury Journal* 21 Nov 1947, p.7 and 28 Nov, p.6; *Army List*, Oct 1899, p.1121. Much of my information on Benett-Stanford has come from David Bevors, curator of Preston Manor, near Brighton.

<sup>71</sup> Benett-Stanford delivered the lecture at the Assembly Rooms in Salisbury, Wiltshire, which was published as: John M. Benett-Stanford, ‘The Battle of Omdurman’, *The Wiltshire County Mirror and Express*, 27 Jan 1899, p.8.

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<sup>72</sup> Entry in F.R. Wingate's diary of the 1898 Sudan campaign for 25 August: 'Bennett Stanford [sic] W.M. News arrived'. Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 102/1.

<sup>73</sup> The other journalist was Hubert Howard, who later that day was killed. Churchill did something similar. See Ziegler, *Omdurman* (London: Collins, 1973), p.115.

<sup>74</sup> John M. Benett-Stanford, 'The Battle of Omdurman', *The Wiltshire County Mirror and Express*, op. cit., column d.

<sup>75</sup> Many officers equipped themselves with powerful pistols specially for the Sudan campaign. Scudamore spells this weapon as 'Lankaster'. See Scudamore, 1925, op. cit., p.123. Churchill had a Mauser pistol with 10 shots. See chapters 14 and 15 of Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Mandarin, 1991). A fellow correspondent put the best gloss he could on this incident: 'Mr Bennett Stanford [sic], who was splendidly mounted, with a cocked four-barrelled Lancaster pistol aimed deliberately at the dervish, who turned towards him. Waiting till the jibbah-clad warrior was but a score of paces or so off, Mr Stanford fired, and appeared to miss ... for the dervish without halt rushed at him, whereupon he easily avoided him, riding off.' Burleigh himself fired at the man at that point but failed to stop him. B. Burleigh, *The Khartoum Campaign, 1898 : Or the Re-Conquest of the Soudan* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1898), p.203-5.

<sup>76</sup> Another witness to the incident adds further details which make this incident less flattering to Benett-Stanford (James, op. cit., p.74): apparently the attacker was a 'feeble...gaunt, grey-bearded dervish', and already wounded. Benett-Stanford himself (described as 'a heavy man'), 'was riding a small pony of uncertain gait'. This pony had been unable to go fast enough to escape the old warrior. James adds that two correspondents were menaced at first, but that one of them galloped away leaving Benett-Stanford. This escaping journalist may have been René Bull. A further account of this incident is to be found in *Sudan Campaign, 1896-1899*, op. cit., p.198, which tells us that the Baggara attacker in addition to being old, was already wounded. See also *Western Morning News* 24 Sep, p.8, col. 7 for another account, possibly by Benett-Stanford himself. The incident had long reverberations and was still being discussed as late as 1909. See PRO file WO 30/57, piece 10, letter 17. Interestingly in Kipling's *The Light that Failed* (1891, revised ed. 1898, chapter 2) is a similar scene in which the hero, Dick Helder, saves the life of another war correspondent by shooting an attacking Sudanese warrior. A case of life imitating art, perhaps.

<sup>77</sup> In his lecture about the battle Benett-Stanford remarks that he was 'astonished' that Smythe should win a medal for an action which was so straightforward as shooting one dervish. Smythe is named in *Brighton Society* 19 Nov 1898, p.6. A VC was given to an Intelligence officer Smyth, for saving the life of one 'camp follower'. Churchill, *The River War*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 424 and 465.

<sup>78</sup> John M. Benett-Stanford, 'The Battle of Omdurman', *The Wiltshire County Mirror and Express*, op. cit., column d. Many officers equipped themselves with powerful pistols specially for the Sudan campaign. Scudamore spells this weapon as 'Lankaster'. See Scudamore, 1925, op. cit., p.123. Churchill had a Mauser pistol with 10 shots. See chapters 14 and 15 of Winston S. Churchill, *My Early Life* (London: Mandarin, 1991).

<sup>79</sup> B. Burleigh, *The Khartoum Campaign, 1898 : Or the Re-Conquest of the Soudan* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1898), p.203-5. Burleigh himself fired at the man at that point but failed to stop him.

<sup>80</sup> James, op. cit., p.74 notes that two correspondents were menaced at first, but that one of them galloped away leaving Benett-Stanford. This escaping journalist may have been René Bull.

<sup>81</sup> Another account of this incident is to be found in *Sudan Campaign, 1896-1899*, op. cit., p.198, which tells us that the Baggara attacker in addition to being old, was already wounded. See also *Western Morning News* 24 Sep, p.8, col. 7 for another account, possibly by Benett-Stanford himself. The incident had long reverberations and was still being discussed as late as 1909. See PRO file WO 30/57, piece 10, letter 17. Interestingly in Kipling's *The Light that Failed* (1891, revised ed. 1898, chapter 2) is a similar scene in which the hero, Dick Helder, saves the life of another war correspondent by shooting an attacking Sudanese warrior. A case of life imitating art, perhaps.

<sup>82</sup> Smythe is named in *Brighton Society* 19 Nov 1898, p.6. There is some confusion over his first names: a letter about Omdurman by Robert Smyth (commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers during the conflict) notes that early in the battle, about 7am, a war correspondent rode up near them and remained mounted, attracting the fire of Dervish riflemen. Smyth took the

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blame for this, but he privately blamed the correspondent. (Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 533/6/4.) This may or may not refer to the Benett-Stanford incident. A VC was given to Intelligence officer Smyth, for saving the life of one 'camp follower'. Churchill, *The River War*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 424 and 465.

<sup>83</sup> Low and Manvell, vol 1, p.65.

<sup>84</sup> PD Sep 1898, p.54: the journal added that there would probably be a lot of excitement in Smith's lab when any such exposed films were returned to England.

<sup>85</sup> Thanks to Tony Fletcher who, circa 1998 created a name index to G.A. Smith's ledger/account books in which there are several entries for J. Benett-Stanford, 9 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, W. – mainly for developing negatives, from Aug 1898 to Apr 1900.

<sup>86</sup> 'A New Military Cinematographic Picture', *Optical Magic Lantern Journal*, December 1898, p.174. The report begins: 'When at the offices of Mr Philipp Wolff, of 9, Southampton Street, W.C., a few days ago, Mr Hessberg, the manager, informed us that they were about to publish a remarkable cinematographic picture taken in the Sudan by a well-known war correspondent. We give, with permission, an extract from an explanatory letter written to Mr Wolff'. (Mr Hessburg took over from Wolff himself who died in May, says John Barnes). The letter is also reproduced in the following journals: AP 11 Nov 1898, p.890; 'A genuine Soudan film', *The Optician* 17 Nov 1898, p.344; *Photogram*, nd, 1898, p.393; *Photographic Siftings* Nov 1898, p.157; PD Nov 1898, p.110. The first phrase is sometimes slightly changed to 'The cinematograph film that you have'. See also Barnes, 1988 volume, p.60.

<sup>87</sup> Probably, being a man of some wealth, he had paid for his trip out to the Sudan himself as well as for the film processing. Perhaps this was one reason a newspaper like the *Western Morning News* had agreed to take on such an inexperienced man as their war correspondent – that they were essentially getting him for free.

<sup>88</sup> Barnes, 1988 volume, p.60. From Smith's ledger p.27. Also in Tony Fletcher's manuscript 'index' to Smith's ledger/account books.

<sup>89</sup> 'A film from the front', PD Nov 1898, p.110. This rare journal is not preserved for this date in any British collection, and the only known copy of this issue is held in New York Public Library. This is the only trade journal I have seen which reproduced these frames.

<sup>90</sup> From Smith's ledger, p.27.

<sup>91</sup> *The Era* 12 Nov 1898, p.30e: cited in John Barnes, 1988, op. cit.,. In December the film was being advertised in PD by Wolff as *Queen's Company of Grenadier Guards at Omdurman*. (i.e. without the word 'Alarming...')

<sup>92</sup> AP 11 Nov 1898, p.890. *The Optician*, op. cit., p.344 stated: 'The film is sure to be popular. It is the genuine article.'

<sup>93</sup> *Photogram*, 1898 [no month given], p.393; Barnes agrees with this assessment of the film's importance, calling it, 'the most celebrated of the year'. (Barnes, 1898 volume, p.60.)

<sup>94</sup> 'A Brighton Kinematograph Factory', *Brighton Herald* 14 Oct 1899, p.2d. Though this is not given as a direct quotation from Smith, the phrasing does suggest that Smith was trying to claim that the film was shot during the battle itself. The article is partly reprinted in V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of 'Living Picture' Making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488 etc. This adds the comment that: 'The original film is the property of Mr Bennet-Stanford [sic], the war correspondent, by whom it was taken', and notes that Smith himself developed the film.

<sup>95</sup> John M. Benett-Stanford, 'The Battle of Omdurman', *The Wiltshire County Mirror and Express*, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup> I searched from 18 August to 26 September. This newspaper is held in Plymouth Public Library.

<sup>97</sup> Beevors, curator of the former Benett-Stanford residence of Preson Manor, near Brighton, suggested this in a radio programme, 'When Pictures Began to Move' (BBC, nd).

<sup>98</sup> The Hulton (now owned by Getty Images) inherited several picture archives, and this photo is from the former Heinz Guttman library of Wembley. A German caption, handwritten, is partially hidden behind a later label but includes the words, 'Revue der sudanischen Truppen'. The Hulton subject reference is 'War 1882-1900/Sudanese Wars/Camp (Sud)/Khartoum'; H18300; Box 98-5/4. I should point out that there is no proof that this photograph was taken after Omdurman, apart from the caption which implies this, and it might even have been later in the Sudan's history.

<sup>99</sup> The white jacket is similar to that worn by René Bull in another photograph (reproduced in my *Sight and Sound* article on Villiers) of a group of war correspondents at Omdurman. I doubt, however, that it was Bull, as I argue below.



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<sup>100</sup> 'The camera in the battlefield', BJP 31 Mar 1899, p.203 states that Bull's photos included one of 'the memorial service at Khartoum'. We know that Villiers was present at this ceremony, because he says as much. F. Villiers, *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure* (New York & London: Harper & Bros., 1920), p.266 and in his *Who's Who* entry in 1899.

<sup>101</sup> PRO file W.O.30/57 document no.27. This is a fragment of the entire report. I suggest that the photograph of the ceremony (possibly) being filmed is the 'disgracing' ceremony and not the Gordon memorial ceremony for the following reason. The 4 Sep memorial ceremony to Gordon took place in front of the ruins of Gordon's palace in Khartoum just across the river from Omdurman. It was in 'the open space facing the palace', which had Egyptian and British flags flying from its roof, says Steevens. Surviving photographs of the ceremony (indeed with two flags on the roof) seem to show that this open space was amongst ruins of a building, whereas the Hulton photograph is in an outright desert setting with no buildings visible, and the flags on a podium. For photographs of the Gordon event see David Clammer, *The Victorian Army in [Old] Photographs* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975), p.92 and I.F.W. Beckett, *Victoria's Wars* (Princes Risborough: Shire, 1998), p.59. See also Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, p.546. and Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartoum*, p.312-4.

<sup>102</sup> I have not yet found an exact date for this 'disgracing' event, though it was about the same date as the Gordon memorial event. It is not mentioned by Ziegler or Burleigh in their accounts. If we could find out what date it took place, this would help determine which event is in the photograph, and if the cameraman could be René Bull, for Bull (see below) departed on 5 September.

<sup>103</sup> The War Office report noted that Kitchener had ordered 'all the troops in Omdurman' to attend the disgracing parade, so presumably Coyne must have been there.

<sup>104</sup> S. W. Harris and John Harris, 'The Nile Expedition of 1898 and Omdurman: The Diary of Sergeant S. W. Harris, Grenadier Guards', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 78, no. 313, 2000, p.24.

<sup>105</sup> This according to H.P. Creagh-Osborne's diary of the 1898 Sudan campaign, entry for 5 Sep. Sudan Archive, Univ. of Durham, 643/1. Incidentally, the diarist adds that Bull had with him at least three pictures (drawings?) for *Black and White* and several developed negatives of the battle of Omdurman. He developed more negatives while on the gunboat. See also Bull, 'To Khartoum with a Kodak'.

<sup>106</sup> Wilfred S. Blunt in *My Diaries* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1919) p.364-5. Entry for 5 or 6 September.

<sup>107</sup> John M. Mackenzie, ed., *Propaganda and Empire*: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.7.

<sup>108</sup> See Wilkinson-Latham, p.238; John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.129. Steevens' book was published very swiftly after the battle by using his own telegraphic reports: see Cecil, op. cit., p.104; Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartoum*, Foreword to 12th edition.

<sup>109</sup> Poem: Henry Surtees, *The March to Khartoum and Fall of Omdurman* (London: Parkins and Son, 1899). Songs: Francis, Day & Hunter in 1898 published two songs about the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers, viz: John P. Harrington, et al. *The Charge of the 21<sup>st</sup>*, and Orlando Powell et al, *What Will They Say in England? A Story of the Gallant 21st*. Also published: Léonard Gautier, *The Heroic Charge of the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman ... For the Pianoforte* (London: E. Donajowski, 1898).

<sup>110</sup> MHTR 23 June 1899, p.398: war tableaux at the Royal Aquarium; *The Cigarette* 23/1, 24 Sep 1898: free poster of the charge; A. Sutherland: Chromolithographs of the battle of Omdurman – Maggs Books catalogue, c2003, item no.330.

<sup>111</sup> Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', p.94-8.

<sup>112</sup> *Der Komet* no. 703, 10 September 1898, p.24: by Otto Gocksch of Thuringia. Thanks to Deac Rossell for this information.

<sup>113</sup> PD Oct 1898, p.78, which noted that the Newton set had just been published. Odd slides about the war are still around, some, for example, turning up in the Magic Lantern Society sales and wants list no.19 for April 2000.

<sup>114</sup> Information re the National Sunday League comes from Tony Fletcher who has searched through a run of the organisation's journal.

<sup>115</sup> See *Brighton Society* 5 Nov 1898, p.8.

<sup>116</sup> A poster for this show was in Fitzsimmons book catalogue, no.29, 1993.

- <sup>117</sup> *Morning Post* 9 Sep 1898, p.3. John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.191.
- <sup>118</sup> *The Era* 10 Sep 1898, p.18; see also 17 Sep, p.10 and p.18; and 24 Sep, p.18.
- <sup>119</sup> *Pick-Me-Up* 24 Dec 1898, p.195.
- <sup>120</sup> V.W. Cook, 1900, op. cit.
- <sup>121</sup> *The Era*, 17 September 1898. Wolff: cited in Gifford, British non-fiction catalogue; his source: *The Era*, 29 Oct 1898. Fuerst: *Photography* 15 Sep 1898, p.609; PD Oct 1898, p.94; OMLJ Oct 98, p.143; PN 7 Oct 1898, p.662.
- <sup>122</sup> PN 16 Sep 1898, p.588.
- <sup>123</sup> *The Era* 21 Jan 1899: cited in Vanessa Toulmin, *Randall Williams : King of Showmen : From Ghost Show to Bioscope* (London: The Projection Box, 1998), p.39. *The Era* date is given as 29 January in Colin Harding and Simon Popple, eds., *In the Kingdom of Shadows: a Companion to Early Cinema* (London/Madison: Cygnus Arts/Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1996), p.195.
- <sup>124</sup> *Brighton Society* 24 Sep 1898, p.13 re the Biograph at the Brighton Empire. It states in full that a 'photograph of a *parade* of the now famous 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers' was shown, but it is not clear if this 'photograph' was a still picture – a lantern slide – or an actual film; ditto the image of Nelson's flagship 'Victory' which was also shown.
- <sup>125</sup> *The Era* 19 Aug 1899, p.24. It was released by The Northern Photographic Works, Ltd. of High Barnet.
- <sup>126</sup> For example *Seaforth Highlanders Leaving Cairo for the Front* along with *Arrival of Guards in London* was advertised by Wolff in *Photographic Siftings* in Oct 1898, p.140, which suggested such films would 'score well at any entertainment'. What is possibly a frame from the Highlander film is reproduced in this same journal, December, p.344, given as a Gaumont release.
- <sup>127</sup> Alfred Claude Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society* 21, 11 Dec 1933, p.7. He added that many copies of the film were sold to A.D. Thomas, most of which were sent to New York (though the American market would seem an unlikely place for so many prints about a British war). Thomas released two films in the UK with similar titles (*Seaforth Highlanders Marching to the Front* and *The March on Omdurman and Khartoum*). Cited in Gifford, British non-fiction catalogue: his source being an ad in *The Era* 21 Oct 1898; see also ad, MHTR 21 Oct 1898, p.271. Egerton states that the Seaforths were in Cairo from around 10 Jan to 2 March. Then they headed south for action at Atbara and Omdurman. After Omdurman they arrived back in Cairo at 6am on 17 Sep, 'ragged and dirty looking' (though their poor condition might not be apparent in a film). See G.G.A. Egerton, *With the 72nd Highlanders in the Sudan Campaign of 1898* (London: Eden Fisher & Co., 1909). Potentially more useful as a means of identification is that the Seaforths sported a white plume, called the 'duck's tuft' on their helmets. See Ziegler, op. cit., p.40.
- <sup>128</sup> Benett-Stanford could not have filmed it before the battle, as the Seaforths were already up river near Omdurman when he arrived in Egypt.
- <sup>129</sup> A report of Edison's show mentions a different title, *The 10th Sudanese leaving Cairo*, but as the 10<sup>th</sup> Sudanese or Egyptian Brigade were under MacDonald's command at Omdurman, I believe this to be the same film. *Brighton Society* 17 Dec 1898, p.20; Featherstone, op. cit., p.61.
- <sup>130</sup> *The American Amateur Photographer* Nov 1898, p.500-01 assumed it to be a Lumière film. See also *Photography* 15 Sep 1898, p.609; PD Sep 1898, p.54; OMLJ Oct 1898, p.143; PN 7 Oct 1898, p.662; the film was given catalogue no.9052 by Fuerst.
- <sup>131</sup> London Entr'acte 1 Oct 1898, p.2: also in this journal the following four weeks. Before this, in September they were advertising *Panorama of the Nile* – 'in colours'.
- <sup>132</sup> PD Oct 1898, p.78. The *Daily Telegraph* hailed this as a 'remarkable' photographic feat but the *British Journal of Photography* expressed itself impatient with such claims of the rapidity of screening events, saying that eight hours to develop, print, dry and exhibit a film is 'ample time for the work' and 'certainly cannot be termed remarkable'. BJP 14 Oct, p.659.
- <sup>133</sup> *The Daily Chronicle*, quoted in Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise : the History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897-1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999), p.197-8. Illustrated periodicals carried many images of the Guards' return to London: see, for example, *The Graphic* 15 Oct 1898.
- <sup>134</sup> *Morning Post* 7 Oct 1898, p.5.

- <sup>135</sup> *Brighton Society* 31 Dec 1898, p.13.
- <sup>136</sup> The cameraman is unnamed, but presumably was Dickson, Paul Spehr believes. Reported in *Daily Telegraph* 28 Oct, p.7. Noted in PN 4 Nov 1898, p.717, which responded that after all cameras don't cause any harm. Also reported in *The Photographer* Dec 1898, p.182.
- <sup>137</sup> 'A photographic feat', *Daily Telegraph* 29 Oct 1898, p.5. In the Biograph photo frame collection, MoMA, #583 is a frame from *Reception of the Sirdar at Dover*. On Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*, reel 2.
- <sup>138</sup> *London Morning Leader*, 28 Oct 1898 quoted in Brown/Anthony, op. cit., p.51.
- <sup>139</sup> Palace Theatre programme, 1 Apr 1899, held in British Library at 11796.d.6.
- <sup>140</sup> The Sirdar was feted at the Guildhall, London, on 4 November. Paul's film of the event was 120 feet long and cost £3. (PD Nov 1898, p.104). Part of this film, 77 ft., survives in the NFTVA as *Sirdar's Reception at Guildhall*.
- <sup>141</sup> *Brighton Society* 31 Dec 1898, p.13.
- <sup>142</sup> Kitchener's return ['terugkeer'] to England was featured at O. Carré's venue in Amsterdam, according to *Asmodée* 17 Nov 1898: ad. Information from NFM Research Dept.
- <sup>143</sup> *The Era* 10 Sep 1898, p.18; see also *The Era* 17 Sep, p.10 and p.18; and 24 Sep, p.18.
- <sup>144</sup> PD Sep 1898, p.56.
- <sup>145</sup> BJP 30 Sep 1898, p.637: each film was about 55ft long.
- <sup>146</sup> Film no.1397 in Warwick's Supplement to *Descriptive List Of New Film Subjects...* (1898), p.16.
- <sup>147</sup> Distributed by Fuerst Bros, says PD Oct 1898, p.94 and BJP 30 Sep 1898, p.637. It adds that this and the Lancers' Charge are Lumière films.
- <sup>148</sup> Supplement to *Descriptive List Of New Film Subjects...* p.50
- <sup>149</sup> *Blue book of "Warwick" and "Star" selected film subjects... 1902*, p.97-103: the film was also included in the section, 'The Bioscope in Egypt', p.103; and see p.120-21.
- <sup>150</sup> *The Era* 23 Dec 1899, p.28a, reproduced in Barnes, vol 4, p.291; WTC Catalogue, 5 Sep 1900, p.124.
- <sup>151</sup> There are several statements which report this dervish tactic. Corbett notes that as he and his men crossed the battlefield after the conflict, they were attacked by 'dead' dervishes who knifed some soldiers in the back, even as they were offering water to the wounded. A.F. Corbett, *Service through Six Reigns : 1891 to 1953* (Privately printed, 1953), p. 34 and 36. Neufeld also gives an example of this. Charles Neufeld, *A Prisoner of the Khaleefa : Twelve Years' Captivity at Omdurman* (London: G. Bell, 1899), p.288. Others confirm that dervishes played dead, then rose and attacked the Sirdar's forces as they passed. See Meredith, 1998, p.188; Roger Stearn, 'Ernest Bennett and War', *Soldiers of the Queen*, no. 105, June 2001, p.16-24; Wilkinson-Latham, p.244-5; Watkins, 1899, p.178; Repington, 1919, p.151; James, 1929, p.75. It had even happened to Villiers himself when he was reporting a battle in Egypt in 1884 – an apparently dead Arab came at him with a knife, and Villiers only escaped because a British soldier shot the Arab dead. Kipling commented on this phenomenon in his poem 'Fuzzy Wuzzy' with the line, 'he's generally shamming when he's dead'. Both cited in article on Villiers in *Ludgate Magazine* 6, April 1894, p.579 etc. One war correspondent, Ernest Bennett, alleged that allied troops, especially Soudanese, killed defenceless, wounded dervishes after the battle of Omdurman. One of the field commanders who had been there responded to say that some killing of wounded was a necessary response to the problem I've just described, as a precaution, as he put it, 'against treachery when moving amongst wounded Dervishes'. See Bennett, 'After Omdurman: Treatment of Enemy Wounded in the Soudan Campaign', *Contemporary Review* 75, Jan 1899, p.18-33; and W. Gatacre, 'After the Atbara and Omdurman', *Contemporary Review* 75, Feb 1899, p.299-304.
- <sup>152</sup> BJP 30 Sep 1898, p.637.
- <sup>153</sup> *Brighton Society* 17 Dec 1898, p.20.
- <sup>154</sup> Paul J. Marriott, *Early Oxford Picture Palaces* (Oxford: The author, 1978), p.3: ad for Albany Ward's Improved Velograph. Films to be shown included: 'Scenes from the Soudan War: Charge of the 21st Lancers; MacDonald's Brigade; Seaforth Highlanders Marching to the Front'. No date is given, but one film in the same programme is *Cup Tie Between Sheffield U. and Derby County*, played Sat, 15th April. This date was a Saturday in 1899 (and not a Saturday in 1898, 1900 and 1901). I conclude the programme was screened sometime after 15 April 1899.
- <sup>155</sup> Military theorist Jean de Bloch had predicted this triumph of the defence over attack.

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<sup>156</sup> Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', p.99. Another similarity, Harrington notes, is that both wars ended with flag raisings over the towns of their defeated enemies.

## Chapter 5

### THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR (1898)

#### I. Filming for a visual newspaper

### INTRODUCTION

In 1898 the United States fought what was soon to be dubbed ‘the splendid little war’.<sup>1</sup> The war was conducted in two far separate parts of the world: the Caribbean and the western Pacific. When it was all over – and it only lasted a few months – Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines were no longer under Spanish control, and America, almost by accident it seemed, had taken on a new role as an imperial power.

The Spanish-American War was the first major conflict to appear in moving pictures, and merits detailed consideration. In this chapter I will look at how the cameramen tried to film the events on the ground; then in the two chapters which follow I will look at how the war was dramatised, and then exhibited to the public. As we shall see in all these chapters, the war was a very important event for cinema in general, for it had the unexpected effect of giving the new industry a boost: cameramen learned to shoot location stories more effectively; various kinds of dramatizations, even the first ever model-based films, were produced; and exhibitors learned to programme films together in more sophisticated ways. Altogether the cinema medium evolved and developed in quite different ways than if had there been no war.

The role of the ‘yellow press’ in helping to foment the Spanish-American War has long been accepted, and it seems that these powerful press organisations also influenced the filmic coverage of the war. At all stages of filming and exhibiting, the traditions and practices of the newspaper press had a profound effect. Nowhere is this more true than with respect to the various film cameramen who shot events on location, especially in Cuba (little was shot of the war in the Philippines), for throughout their work they had close links with newspapers: cameramen were both conveyed to the war fronts in press boats, and then, once there, worked closely with press reporters, and tended to replicate the newspapers’ patriotic agenda in what they shot.

As we shall see, the film companies themselves were highly pro-active in covering this conflict, acting with great confidence and promptness in arranging to film the various military activities which took place within America, and also in sending cameramen to Cuba. These men – William Paley, Billy Bitzer and Arthur Marvin – tried, against the odds (all of them were struck down by fever), to film the war, and in this chapter I reproduce for the first time excerpts from some eye-witness accounts of their work: that of Paley in particular.<sup>2</sup> These cameramen, in reporting on this war, were true media pioneers, for they helped to establish a genre of news within the moving picture business for the decades which followed.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Cuba

Cubans had long sought and fought for independence from Spain, and in 1895 the Spanish sent General Weyler ('the Butcher') to put down the rebellion.<sup>3</sup> His tactics were brutal – Weyler's troops killed livestock and burned fields in an attempt to starve the insurgents into submission. He criss-crossed the country with vast trenches to restrict rebel movement, and turned Cuban towns into protected areas (the forerunners of the 'protected hamlets' in the Vietnam war). This policy of 'reconcentrado' might have worked, had the points of concentration been efficiently supplied, but as it was there were shortages, notably of food – and thousands of Cubans died, possibly two hundred thousand or more.<sup>4</sup> This fuelled more resentment in Cuba, and outrage in neighbouring America. Indeed one important factor leading to the Spanish-American War was the perception by the American public that Cuba was being cruelly mis-governed, and this was an important motivation for many Americans in volunteering to fight.<sup>5</sup>

The injustice in Cuba was played up by newspapers in the United States (notably those published by Pulitzer and Hearst, and other so-called 'yellow press' titles) which printed sensational stories of Cuban suffering and Spanish atrocities – sometimes embellished or even invented – simultaneously reflecting and stimulating public outrage. Many Americans were soon looking upon Cuban deliverance from Spain as 'a holy crusade'.<sup>6</sup> In November 1896 McKinley was elected president with a campaign promise to free the Cuban people.

Negotiations took place between Spain and America to improve conditions on the island, but broke down after a letter from the Spanish ambassador, which spoke slightly of President McKinley, was published in Hearst's *New York Journal* in February 1898. Later the same month there occurred what was to be a key event leading to war. The Americans had sent a battleship, the U.S.S. *Maine*, to protect US interests in Cuba and on 15 February it blew up in Havana harbour, killing 260 American sailors. The cause was never established for sure, but the yellow press blamed Spain and called for war, a call which became increasingly accepted by the American public and politicians, and by March even parts of the business community had adopted a pro-war stance (they had hitherto considered that their interests in Cuba would be best served by the Spanish remaining in power). It is sometimes assumed that the Spanish-American War was fought by the United States mainly or merely to gain territory and commercial advantage. While such motives clearly played some role, the reasons for going to war were complicated, and indeed it is questionable whether the country ever gained a pecuniary advantage from its new acquisitions commensurate with the costs of the conflict – which eventually came to a quarter of a billion dollars.<sup>7</sup>

## **America**

One important factor leading to war was the resolve and bellicosity of Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, who had long conspired for US intervention in Cuba.<sup>8</sup> He quietly began building up America's armaments and military supplies while managing to place the action-oriented Admiral Dewey in charge of the Pacific fleet, with orders to blockade or attack the Spanish fleet in the Philippines if war broke out with Spain. As tension rose, conflict became inevitable, and on 25 April 1898 a formal declaration of war was recognized between Spain and the United States.<sup>9</sup> Within days, Dewey located Spain's Asian fleet in Manila Bay, and on 1 May 1898 managed to sink all vessels (with the loss to his own crews of just one man killed).

After this overwhelming victory, the focus then shifted to Cuba. General Shafter had been put in command of a force of up to 17,000 troops, consisting of much of the small US regular army at the time, plus volunteers, this being the largest foreign expedition to depart from America to date.<sup>10</sup> In June the troops invaded Cuba, landing near Santiago. Fighting soon broke out, though the defending Spaniards rarely offered the Americans a major military challenge. The decisive battles took place on 1 July, and one of the most memorable actions was when American troops, including the volunteer 'Rough Riders' led by Theodore Roosevelt, charged up Kettle Hill and San Juan Hill, taking these high points. The American Army soon surrounded Santiago.<sup>11</sup>

Another important American victory took place a couple of days later when the US navy destroyed the Spanish Caribbean fleet off Santiago; as in Manila, every Spanish warship was sunk, with trivial loss of American life. On 17 July, unaware that the US forces were at their lowest ebb due to fever, the Spanish in Santiago surrendered. This was effectively the end of Spain's hopes of staying in power in Cuba, and indeed in the Americas, for the following month America defeated the Spanish forces in Puerto Rico and took the island. An armistice was signed, and at the end of the year the Treaty of Paris formalised Spain's loss of the last vestiges of her once vast American empire. The USA gained Puerto Rico and Guam and acquired the Philippines for \$20 million; Cuba became a nominally independent satellite of the US.<sup>12</sup>

The war had some far-reaching consequences. American observers swiftly started predicting that the coming hundred years would be 'the American century', while the Spanish still call this year in their history when they lost their overseas empire 'the disaster'. British popular support for America during the war led some to talk of a new Anglo-Saxon alliance in the world.<sup>13</sup> And, as many southerners and black Americans fought with distinction, the war (and the following one in the Philippines) helped to unite the American nation in the long, bitter aftermath of the Civil War.<sup>14</sup>

The naval victories had important military consequences. Virtually all the Spanish fleet was sunk at the battles of Santiago and Manila, largely due to the American vessels being more heavily protected, and the lesson was not

lost on the designers of the Dreadnoughts, which were built in Europe before the First World War.

Other aspects of the American war effort had not been so successful, though here too lessons were learned. American ground troops in Cuba were inadequately armed, clothed and supplied. Many had made do with firearms of the Civil War era, and so were easily picked off by Spanish snipers who had the new pattern of Mauser rifles. Yellow fever broke out in the American camps (thousands eventually died), and medical facilities on the troop ships were virtually non-existent: these were dubbed 'the horror ships', as scores of Americans suffered on the voyage home, including one of the cameramen, as we shall see.

## THE WAR AND THE MEDIA

### The press

No study of the media in the Spanish-American War could be complete or even intelligible without mention of the role and effects of the press. It is especially relevant for us because both the Edison and Biograph companies relied on newspaper boats in getting their cameramen to the vicinity of Cuba.

In the 1890s America was a nation of newspaper readers: there were thousands of weeklies and 1,900 dailies.<sup>15</sup> Many of these daily papers were of the 'yellow press' variety, meaning that they emphasised sensational news – crime and similar stories. At the time of the Spanish-American War, up to half of the press was of this type.<sup>16</sup> From the middle 1890s the yellow press started playing up the Cuba issue, so that the island and its population was constantly being reported, with graphic stories of the oppression of the Cuban population by their Spanish colonial masters, and with repeated exhortations for US intervention against Spain.<sup>17</sup> A bitter circulation battle between two New York City papers, William Randolph Hearst's *World* and Joseph Pulitzer's *Journal* kept the issue on the boil. These titles had a huge readership: by January 1898 the New York *World* alone claimed a circulation of five million per week, the largest, it said, in any country.<sup>18</sup> The newspapers increased their visibility by special campaigns, by advertising, and by placing prominent war-news bulletin boards outside their offices.<sup>19</sup> [Fig. 1] The Cuban issue and subsequent war between America and Spain was major news in foreign journals too, and was reported in particularly dramatic fashion by the illustrated papers, such as *Le Petit Journal*, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>20</sup>

By early 1898 there was no doubt that much of the US public was in a war mood, though there was also much opposition on the grounds of cost (Spain's forces were thought stronger than they turned out to be) and the lack of obvious benefits of winning Cuba.<sup>21</sup> But the outrage over the Maine proved decisive, and the pressure for intervention became so insistent that McKinley could not resist the political consequences of not intervening.<sup>22</sup> Some historians argue that the press played a leading part in creating this mood, a recent review concluding that 'sensational and conservative newspapers



together created an enabling environment for going to war'.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Wisan who studied the Cuban issue as reflected in the New York press concluded: 'The principal cause of our war with Spain was the public demand for it, a demand too powerful for effective resistance by the business and financial leaders of the nation or by President McKinley. For the creation of the public state of mind, the press was largely responsible.'<sup>24</sup> He added: 'In the opinion of the writer, the Spanish-American War would not have occurred had not the appearance of Hearst in New York journalism precipitated a bitter battle for newspaper circulation.'<sup>25</sup> One correspondent for the New York *Journal* unashamedly admitted their responsibility, stating that 'the *Journal* had provoked the war'.<sup>26</sup>

Hearst's appetite for war is legendary, and has become part of film history through a famous scene in the 1940 film, *Citizen Kane*. In the film Kane is a larger-than-life newspaper editor, a character partly based on Hearst, who has assigned a correspondent to a Cuba which is supposedly in the throes of war between Spain and the rebels. Kane receives a plaintive cable from the correspondent saying, 'Could send you prose poems about scenery but don't feel right spending your money. Stop. There is no war in Cuba. Signed Wheeler.' Kane dictates his reply: 'Dear Wheeler, You provide the prose poems, I'll provide the war.'<sup>27</sup> The scene is based on an anecdote of a genuine correspondent, artist Frederic S. Remington, who was sent to Cuba by Hearst during the rebellion.<sup>28</sup>

As far as the Spanish-American War itself is concerned, the first big story was something of a news disaster. The sinking of the Spanish fleet on 1 May took place a long way off in Manila Bay in the little-known Philippines – it was all over within a morning, with virtually no photographic coverage, minimal reporting from the scene, and only the artists could illustrate the stirring event. [Fig. 2] While this was certainly a major and significant victory, and Dewey was glorified in images and articles, Cuba remained the real story for American newspapers. For some weeks after war was declared there was little action on the island, so the journalists waited with the burgeoning US forces in the various military centres in the US, filing stories about war preparations.<sup>29</sup> Then the troops started arriving in the principal jumping-off point in Tampa, Florida, and there was more waiting.<sup>30</sup> As May turned into June and the day of departure loomed, more and more correspondents arrived in Tampa, hoping to go to Cuba with the invasion force.

It is probably fair to say that never before or since have so many correspondents covered such a small war. There is no precise figure of the numbers who came to Florida, but it was certainly into the hundreds, possibly as many as 500. Even if one takes into account only those whose names are known – reporters, photographers and artists – there were about 300.<sup>31</sup> Hearst's New York *Journal* alone had fifty correspondents in the field.<sup>32</sup> As to numbers who actually accompanied the expedition to Cuba, the figures are equally difficult to ascertain precisely, because of the disorganisation and later illness which characterised the expedition, and the fact that some correspondents were also soldiers, etc. One source at the time put the figure at 165, another at a little more than half that figure.<sup>33</sup> They came from several

different countries and various parts of the United States, some being attached to particular military units as proto 'embedded correspondents'.<sup>34</sup> And, this being an age of increasing opportunity for women, three female correspondents also went to Cuba.<sup>35</sup> During the land campaign the journalists staked out a prominent place for themselves, with part of the US landing point of Siboney dubbed 'newspaper row' because three buildings had been occupied by war correspondents.<sup>36</sup>

The costs of reporting wars have always been enormous (though some of the expenditure is returned in increased war circulation) and in this era it was said that a third of the total running expenditure of a paper could go on war correspondents.<sup>37</sup> In the case of the Cuban campaign the total cost must have been astronomical, due to the sheer number of correspondents and the hire of numerous press dispatch boats to convey this army of reporters to the front. One observer calculated that these press boats were about equal numerically to the US fleets of Admirals Sampson and Schley taken together.<sup>38</sup> The *Journal* alone eventually had ten boats. Such were their numbers and such was the desire of their newspaper passengers to get close to the action that these boats actually created some nuisance for the US forces: the *Journal's* boat *Anita* was at one point almost cut in two by the battle cruiser *New York*, and only escaped due to a prompt change of course. (The *Anita* is of more than passing interest, for a film crew was based on board, as I shall describe later.) The press boats prompted other moments of anxiety for the forces, for example, by passing with their lights blazing near to US warships, potentially attracting the attention of Spanish ships.<sup>39</sup>

### **Photography**

Even before the war, photography had a role in the nascent conflict with Spain, for images of starving people in Cuba – victims of the reconcentrado policy – were powerful propaganda for the pro-war lobby in the US.<sup>40</sup> From early in 1898 the American press sent photographers to Cuba in growing numbers.<sup>41</sup> The most significant event in the run-up to war was the sinking of the *Maine*, and three of the top US press photographers went to Havana to photograph the wreck, including J. Hemment and Jimmy Hare.<sup>42</sup> The image of the sunken American vessel became a powerful visual argument for the interventionists. Hare, already an experienced press photographer, had been quite determined to go to Cuba, and visited the offices of *Collier's* magazine to convince them to give him the assignment. As the editor later put it, 'The Maine blew up, and Jimmy blew in'. Hare stayed with *Collier's* in the weeks following, photographing the suffering people of Cuba and then the war itself, and his pictures helped to make the reputation of the magazine.<sup>43</sup> Other famous photographers also took pictures during the events of '98: for example, Burton Holmes apparently photographed the funeral for the *Maine* victims, and his poignant image shows a line of coffins being brought along a busy street in Havana.<sup>44</sup>

During the brief land campaign of the shooting war, there were a lot of men with cameras, indeed one correspondent wrote of 'an army of photographers'.<sup>45</sup> They included professionals such as Floyd Campbell and James Burton, though a number of photographs were taken by ordinary

soldiers and officers, and these images were sometimes acquired and published by the illustrated magazines. Among these amateurs were Lieutenant Wise of the Ninth regiment and Corporal Babcock of the Seventy-First infantry, and there were others whose images never made it to the printed page.<sup>46</sup> Not all the photographers were as considerate as they might have been, and as the Americans took casualties at the battle of El Pozo, one insensitive press reporter with a large camera continued to photograph the agonies of the wounded despite their protestations.<sup>47</sup>

The experiences of the photographers mirrored that of the film cameraman in some ways, most notably in their inability to photograph battlefield action. One of the stills men disclosed: 'I found it impossible to make any actual "battle scenes", for many reasons – the distance at which the fighting is conducted, the area which is covered, but chiefly the long grass and thickly wooded country.'<sup>48</sup> Certainly the Spanish enemy were almost impossible to see, let alone photograph, for many of them remained hidden as they sniped with their long-range Mauser rifles at the US troops. Photographing the American troops in action was almost as difficult and dangerous, as the bullets from the Spaniards sometimes flew thick and fast. The published photographs – in *Harpers* and *Leslie's* for example – tend to show merely the background to the war, with troops before and after battles, rather than in action. The action images are all in the form of drawings by skilled artists, and they are often superb: e.g. in *Leslie's* there is a stunning impression of the exploding *Maine*, and an evocative view of soldiers advancing across a battlefield in Cuba by H.C. Christy.<sup>49</sup> [see illustrations for Chapter 1: Fig. 5 and 6]

Stereographic photographs were a major outlet for photography at this time, and there are more stereographs of the Spanish American war than of any other war. But these too are lacking action, and an expert in this field concludes that among thousands of views from over a score of publishers, 'the combined coverage is marvellously complete, excepting scenes of battle actions'.<sup>50</sup>

There is one intriguing example of how photography could match the artists of brush and canvas. One of the war correspondents on the US warship the *Brooklyn* was George E. Graham, who, as well as taking photographs during the battle with Cervera's fleet off Santiago, also, according to one book, 'photographed a man in the act of replacing the flag at the masthead of the *Brooklyn* after it had been shot away'.<sup>51</sup> The image is not reproduced in the book, but one suspects that this was a posed shot, taken after the battle: a stills equivalent of a trend which emerged in the Philippine War of early film cameramen 'arranging' actions in the war zone for the camera. The description is reminiscent of the famous photograph of the US flag being raised over Iwo Jima in World War II, and the same message of national heroism is unmistakable. Films of flags would be a major film genre during the war of '98.

The visual record of the war, and especially the photographic record, was of some interest to the authorities, and one commander even seems to have had his own photographer in tow: one J. C. Wheat Jr. is listed as 'Photographer for

General Ludlow'.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, in 1899 the US War Department planned to compile a photographic history of the war, and tried to trace all who had carried cameras into the region of operations.<sup>53</sup> This was just after the Philippine American war had broken out, which, as we shall see, was to be very well documented by photographers who were actually based within US units, as was a film cameraman, Carl Ackerman, who was effectively working for the US War Department. The US military were swiftly learning to appreciate the value of photographic images as both a record and as propaganda.

## **FILMING THE WAR**

### **War-related filming in the USA**

Several companies filmed preparations and other aspects of the war in the United States: such activities as troops on the move, life in army camps, parades and the like. In this way, the war stimulated production. For example, the high demand for war films led the Selig company to start filmmaking for the first time. In May 1898 Selig's cameramen shot a series of films about life at Camp Tanner, Springfield, Illinois, including *Soldiers at Play*, *Wash Day in Camp* and *First Regiment Marching*. In April and May the Lubin company too filmed war preparations, including ships, troops and camp life in Philadelphia, Virginia and Georgia.<sup>54</sup> Much of this kind of US-located filming was undertaken, including by Biograph and Edison (some of it shot by the cameramen whom I feature below). Such scenes were shown in the programmes of war films, and therefore will be covered briefly in that context in my chapter on exhibition.

### **Plans to film the war**

Before the start of the war Cuba had only once been filmed, when, early in 1897, a Lumière cameraman, Gabriel Veyre, came to Havana to exhibit views with his cinematograph and also, allegedly shot Cuba's first film, a view of the local fire brigade. It may be that the military crisis on the island affected filmmaking even then, for Veyre is reported to have been required to make some films for the Spanish authorities.<sup>55</sup> However, no Cuban views appeared in the Lumière film catalogue, and there is no mention in Veyre's letters – though apparently some of these missives were lost.<sup>56</sup>

In the Spring of the following year, even before the outbreak of hostilities, pundits were predicting that film would play its part in reporting the coming war. A couple of days before the Battle of Manila Bay, a British photographic journal opined: 'The cinematograph will, there is very little doubt, be brought into use by some of our enterprising transatlantic cousins'.<sup>57</sup> Only a few days later another journal surmised that films would probably be made of the war, but warned, correctly, that one of the problems in filming would be the great distances over which modern war could be fought – especially naval battles. 'What can the camera-worker expect to get?' it asked, pessimistically, and answered its own question:

‘The attacking ships will, for fear of mines, keep quite two and a half miles from the shore, nor is it needful that they should go any nearer, for splendid gun practice is possible at that distance. The vessel bearing the animatograph apparatus will probably not be allowed to get within a mile of the fighting ships, and will be three times that distance from the shore. What kind of a picture will be possible under such circumstances? A few dots to represent ships – a dark line to indicate the shore, and some white blots which will mean puffs of smoke. Such will be the representation by the animatographic camera of a naval battle.’<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps the solution was to use some kind of special lens? A month later a proposal for exactly this emerged from the US War Department, as part of an apparently official plan to film the war. The distance problem was to be surmounted by using ‘a new-fangled contrivance... called a “telephotographoscope”’. In fact, at this date, no film camera had yet been fitted with a telephoto lens, so this was wishful thinking, as was probably the rest of the scheme. The detailed plan, as reported in the press, was to base ‘a biograph or vitascope apparatus’ on – of all places – an ambulance ship (along with other photographic apparatus for medical use).<sup>59</sup> By periodically going ashore, it was said, the government photographer, ‘confidently expects to get some biograph views of land engagements – possibly of those incidental to the siege of Havana – and his hope is that he may obtain a vitascopic series of glimpses of a naval fight off shore’. This is where the ‘telephotographoscope’ or telephoto lens would come into play, and using this equipment some stirring scenes might be obtained:

‘What a marvel, indeed, would be a moving photograph of a duel between two warships, American and Spanish, terminating, of course, in the destruction of the enemy's vessel, exhibited on a stereopticon screen before wildly enthusiastic audiences from Boston to San Francisco. How the enthusiastic American audiences aforesaid would yell if they could see with their own eyes that monument to medievalism, Morro Castle, actually falling into a heap of its own debris before the fire-vomitting guns of Admiral Sampson's fleet. Then, like the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight in its vitascope reproduction, they would behold the glorious performance again and again until satisfied that the Maine had been remembered sufficiently.’<sup>60</sup>

I haven't managed to discover any more about this filming plan, and it might well have been an invention of press agents rather than a genuine possibility. Certainly no-one ever managed to film anything like the ‘fire-vomitting guns’ of the American fleet attacking the Spanish, though some activity was filmed in the war zone (and some of the re-enactments were quite action-packed as we shall see). The plan might all have been a lot of whimsy, like the suggestion from one wag in early May that the reason for the delay in the commencement of hostilities between America and Spain: ‘has been the settlement of certain animatograph concessions!’<sup>61</sup> The same idea was seen in a cartoon of the time, and the cameramen, interestingly, are portrayed with long, telephoto-type lenses as they film the naval battle off Cuba.<sup>62</sup> [Fig. 4]

## **False claims**

Whimsical and false claims seem to have characterised the cinematic coverage of this war. While a number of cameramen genuinely filmed aspects of the war in Cuba, there are two claims which I consider specious and unfounded, and which I will therefore deal with first before moving on fairly swiftly.<sup>63</sup> James H. White, an early Edison cameraman and director, claimed to have filmed the battle of Manila Bay on 1 May 1898 in some accounts, adding that he was assisted by Frederick Blechynden. Similarly Albert E. Smith and James Stuart Blackton, founders of the Vitagraph Company, later claimed that they went to Cuba and succeeded in filming aspects of the war.

White relates his filming experiences in various sources. The claim to have filmed Dewey's victory first appears in a 1927 interview, where he states that he was aboard the *SS Baltimore*, one of the ships in Dewey's fleet. On the morning of the battle, the 1st May, White claims that, 'From the Baltimore, I was enabled to get some splendid "shots" during the action.' He adds: 'I hurriedly developed my negatives to show the officers of the fleet, before rushing them back to New York'.<sup>64</sup> He says that the films were then screened at Huber's Museum in the city. But the story lacks a shred of substantiation: no film was advertised or survives, and there is no corroborating evidence that White was at the battle. The inconsistency between his accounts, and the wild claims in some of them, are further reasons to doubt him: for example, in an 1899 article he doesn't mention being at the Manila Bay battle at all, but states rather that he had had his film camera at the assault on San Juan Hill in Cuba!

As for Smith and Blackton, they claimed to have gained passage on William Randolph Hearst's boat, the *Buccaneer*, with their film camera, succeeded in taking some shots of the war in Cuba, and then returned to New York, 'with the first moving picture newsfilm of war ever made'.<sup>65</sup> By 1952 with the publication of Smith's colourful autobiography, the story had grown significantly, with some ten pages devoted to the alleged filming of the Cuban war, including that the filmmakers met with Theodore Roosevelt and travelled to Cuba with the Rough Riders, and were present at the charge up San Juan Hill (1 July).<sup>66</sup> This claim by Smith – to have gone to the war and filmed there – has been taken seriously by several historians.<sup>67</sup> But J. Stuart Blackton's daughter stated that neither her father nor Smith ever set foot in Cuba.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, there are no original sources to confirm these stories, and dates established by Charles Musser prove that Smith and Blackton were in the USA when Smith claims they were filming in Cuba.<sup>69</sup> Musser suggests that: 'The assertion that Smith and Blackton went to Cuba to film the Spanish-American War... probably began as a face-saving gesture designed to conceal their duping activities.'<sup>70</sup>

## **BIOGRAPH'S CAMERAMEN: ARTHUR MARVIN AND BILLY BITZER**

### **Bitzer films the stricken *Maine* before the war**

In contrast to these 'tall tales' of Smith and White et al, some companies and cameramen really did succeed in filming aspects of the war. By 1898,

American film production was dominated by two companies: the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company ('AM&B' or 'Biograph') and the Edison Manufacturing Company. Biograph had a strong news agenda and was not slow to take up the challenge of filming this war. The sinking of the *Maine* was their cue to send a cameraman to film the wreckage and cover other aspects of the growing tension in Cuba. The cameraman in question was Billy Bitzer, who already had much experience of filming actualities ('news happenings'), and was later to achieve fame as D.W. Griffith's cameraman.<sup>71</sup>

The Biograph camera at this time was a very large affair, using wide film, and run by a motor with heavy batteries: not the best instrument for capturing news events, and Bitzer later recalled his travails in using this 'cumbersome camera' on the Cuba assignment. He says he travelled there from the USA on a transport ship called the *Seguranca*. Bitzer doesn't mention it, but a stills photographer, John Hemment (mentioned earlier), embarked on the same ship. He was working for some of the pictorial papers on this job, through the Arkell Publishing Co., and possibly for the US Government too, and his aims were similar to Bitzer's: to record the sunken *Maine* (which was still partly visible above water), and other aspects of the growing tension in Cuba.<sup>72</sup> An ex-athlete and future film cameraman, Hemment was in 1898 a leading news photographer – 'the foremost snap shottist in all America' – who would later photograph other subjects and personalities related to the war, including Admiral Dewey.<sup>73</sup>

Bitzer and Hemment arrived in Havana in late February while the bodies were still being recovered by divers from the sunken *Maine*. They may have worked together on their similar assignments, for they seem to have filmed/photographed several sites in common: both men recorded the wreck of the *Maine*, their main objective, and also another visiting US ship, the *Montgomery*, as well as a local landmark, Morro Castle, and groups of Cuban reconcentrados – victims of the Spanish policy of concentration.<sup>74</sup> Both Bitzer and Hemment experienced hostility from Spanish officials in Havana as they tried to film or photograph sites, and Hemment claims he was arrested briefly when about to photograph the Morro Castle.<sup>75</sup> He was not the only photographer to be harshly treated, and several journalists who reported from Cuba were hindered by the Spanish authorities.<sup>76</sup> Bitzer notes that 'Visiting Cuba under Spanish rule was highly dangerous.... The grins and leers on the faces of the bystanders gave me to understand this was unfriendly territory'. He adds that he tried 'to get pictures from a tow-boat' but in fact 'all I got was moving pictures of the *Maine* as seen from the shore'. The list of films (below) seems to show that he shot rather more than this, including a moving shot of the stricken *Maine* and a separate scene of divers working on her. As we shall see, William Paley, Edison's cameraman also secured a moving view of the sunken battleship from a launch.

Biograph's production register lists nine films seemingly shot in Cuba at this time, just before the war, and all were presumably the work of Bitzer. The register gives no further description, but many of these films were shown in the UK from late April or early May, and the descriptions by British journalists give us more details.<sup>77</sup> (See list of Bitzer's films below). There is quite a

variety of subjects, many of which would have been of great interest to US audiences, and some would have had quite an emotional impact: those of the wrecked *Maine*, obviously, but the *Cuban Reconcentrados* too would have struck a chord with the US public. These after all, were the people that many Americans were thirsting to avenge: Cubans forced from their homes and brought into population centres like Havana so they could not offer support to the rebels in the countryside. Interestingly Bitzer also shot a film of the Spanish forces in Havana, *Crack Regiment Spanish Volunteers Marching to Gen. Blanco's Palace*, perhaps at the instigation of the authorities.

**Box:**

**Films shot by Billy Bitzer in Cuba, approx February-April 1898**

(with Biograph register numbers, descriptions with sources, and my annotations)

- 475 *Christian Herald's Relief Station, Havana*
- 476 *Divers at Work on Wreck of 'Maine'* – ‘shows the dismemberment of the battleship Maine’ (BJP)
- 477 *Wreck of the Cruiser 'Maine'* – ‘...taken from the Biograph Company's steam yacht in Havana Harbour. The result of the explosion which sunk this fine warship is vividly reproduced. The wreck lies in about 28ft of water, and a considerable part of the upper works is still standing above the surface, which, together with a part of the deck bent over upon itself, tells of the terrible force which hurled hundreds of lives into eternity and destroyed the vessel.’ (*The Era*)
- 478 *General Lee Leaving Hotel Inglaterra, Havana* – ‘Consul-General Lee's departure from the Hotel Inglaterra, [sic] Havana.’ (*The Era* and *BJP*) Consul General Lee was investigating the *Maine* sinking. If this was Lee's final departure from Havana, it would have been shot 10 April. (Incidentally, Bitzer was also staying at the Hotel Inglaterra.)
- 479 *A Run of the Havana Fire Department; aka Primitive Fire Engine of Havana on its Way to a Conflagration*
- 480 *U.S. 'Montgomery' in Havana Harbour*
- 482 *Crack Regiment Spanish Volunteers Marching to Gen. Blanco's Palace* [Havana] – ‘These volunteers are the militia in the service of Spain in Cuba.’ (*The Era* and *BJP*)
- 484 *Cuban Reconcentrados; aka Reconcentrados at Los Fosos Relief Station, Havana, Cuba* ‘a gathering of "Reconcentrados" at the Los Fosos relief station, Havana. The children as well as adults are sent to these stations to secure food for the members of their family. A scramble is depicted for food and money, which is being distributed amongst them.’ (*The Era*)
- 485 *Steamer 'Olivette' Passing Morro Castle in Havana Harbour* – ‘An excellent view... of Morro Castle, Havana Harbour, with the Olivette sailing out.’ (*The Era*) ‘Morro Castle, Havana, with the steamship Olivette sailing out of the harbour’. (*BJP*)

It is not certain how long Bitzer remained in Cuba in this pre-war period, as, in his memoirs he is confused about his dates of both arriving and departing. I



conclude, based on a number of clues, that he arrived in Havana 23 February, and may have departed as late as 10 April.<sup>78</sup> Back at home in the USA, as war became more likely, by mid-April Bitzer and other Biograph cameramen were assigned to filming war-related news actualities, notably scenes of the military's preparations in several localities in America. Biograph crews filmed such things as warships, cavalry, troops training and departing for the war; and in Washington, D.C. they filmed Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>79</sup> The company advertised the resulting films as 'American Biograph authentic war views'. It is worth underlining that in covering the *Maine* issue so fully, and shooting other military scenes, Biograph and Bitzer were following a similar agenda to that pursued by the newspaper press.

### **Arthur Marvin's adventures on the waves**

Meanwhile another Biograph cameraman, Arthur Marvin, was about to get a taste of war. Sent to Tampa, Florida as troops assembled there, his task began in a rather mundane fashion, filming the sort of background activity 'war views' that I have just mentioned. As he put it, he spent 'weeks of tedious waiting in Tampa', filming troops and anything else that seemed of interest (even including an execution by hanging!)<sup>80</sup>

But as tension rose in this pre-war period, Biograph wanted their cameras to be closer to Cuba itself, and from about April they managed to place Marvin on board the *Anita*. This boat had been chartered by William Randolph Hearst's New York *Journal*, and was cruising around Cuba weeks before the American invasion, searching for any news to report.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, Biograph's other cameraman, Billy Bitzer, and the Edison company's William Paley, had similar arrangements to travel on the *Journal's* press boats. Perhaps Hearst had some interest in promoting moving pictures, though it might simply be that he had so many press boats available that using his transport was the most obvious choice for other media representatives.

The Spanish navy tended to look upon all foreign boats with suspicion at this time, and treated American journalists as common spies. It is likely that a boat representing the *Journal* – a newspaper which had led the call for war with Spain – would have been regarded with especial animosity if its identity had been known. In the circumstances, Biograph executive Mr. Koopman was professing blind optimism about the boat's status when he said: 'No, we are not likely to be interfered with, as we are to be regarded by both sides as taking up a position of "benevolent neutrality."' Of course they may object to some of the pictures being shown.'<sup>82</sup>

In fact the *Anita* was indeed menaced by the Spanish navy, and Koopman's claim of neutrality was in any case disingenuous. For a start, part of the boat's mission was military, as at one point it dropped off a US Lieutenant in Puerto Rico to contact the insurgents.<sup>83</sup> And according to another source, the *Anita* was 'under the British flag', rather than neutral.<sup>84</sup> This might have been safer than flying under US colours, but, if previous experience was anything to go by, being British would not necessarily have helped them, especially in allowing access to film in Spanish waters, as another British-registered boat

had been blocked by a Spanish patrol boat while trying to steam into Havana.<sup>85</sup>

So the *Anita's* status was uncertain as, in early May, the boat followed Admiral Sampson's North Atlantic squadron from Key West to Puerto Rico (the other Spanish owned island in the region which the US had its sights set on). On 12 May, Marvin, together with other journalists aboard, witnessed the US navy bombarding Puerto Rico's main city, San Juan.<sup>86</sup> He was keen to record some of this action on film, and later described his experiences:

'As that bombardment was our first opportunity to do any work, we were anxious, naturally, to get some good views. When the firing began we steamed up toward the battleships and got where we could take in the whole range of operations pretty well. We kept urging the captain of the yacht to get in nearer the shore, and he gradually did so. Pretty soon the Spanish batteries began a reply to the American fire. Some of their shells came within three or four hundred yards of us, I presume, and we began to congratulate ourselves on the fact that there might be a good exhibition before long. Presently the Spanish shots began to come faster and to splash up the water a little nearer to us.'<sup>87</sup>

Fascinated by this spectacle, the journalists didn't at first notice that the yacht's captain had prudently decided to move rapidly away from the zone of fire. They tried to stop the retreat but neither the Captain nor crew would listen until they were 25 miles out at sea. When finally, a couple of days later, they returned to the site of battle to try and get some shots of the damage and the warring parties, Marvin sadly reported that, 'the performance was over, and the American fleet had sailed away'.<sup>88</sup> At that point two small Spanish gunboats spotted the *Anita*, and headed for them at speed. This time the journalists made every effort to help their crew effect an escape, allegedly offering the stokers beer and champagne, and throwing oil, coal, even sides of bacon and anything else they could lay their hands on into the boilers, 'until we had flames coming out of the top of the smokestacks and were leaving Porto Rico in our wake at the rate of fifteen knots per hour'.<sup>89</sup>

Even though they had doused the yacht's lights, one of the gunboats managed to locate them and fired repeatedly, fortunately without effect. Finally, 'after the most nerve-trying ordeal I have ever undergone', as Marvin put it, they reached the neutral harbour of St. Thomas in the Virgin Isles.<sup>90</sup> Some time later Marvin tried to persuade the yacht's captain to sally forth again, but he refused to risk it. Marvin was eventually forced to return to New York – in a tramp steamer – and though he apparently brought back with him a number of films to show for his experiences, it's not clear what these were. By this stage he was much the worse for wear, and as one article put it, he returned to America, 'with his health broken by hardships and his spirit crushed with worry'.<sup>91</sup> Another article about Marvin concluded that: 'Altogether, following the fortunes of war with a camera that weighs a quarter of a ton is likely to be about as exciting as following them with a gun'.<sup>92</sup> The tone of exploit and adventure which suffuses these anecdotes of Marvin fits into a pattern seen in other newspaper reports which were appearing at this

time. Again, the new film medium was following the newspaper agenda in relation to the war.

### **Bitzer films the war in Cuba**

Though war had been declared in April, the bulk of US forces did not leave Tampa until mid June and only set foot in Cuba from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of that month. Bitzer was with the expedition, aboard a 'towboat' along with several newsmen and two still photographers (possibly including Hemment), again in an arrangement with the *New York Journal*. He had every incentive to succeed in this assignment, for he had been promised a bonus for war scenes. They landed in Cuba and Bitzer got to work quickly, later recalling that at the small port of Siboney, 'I took some shots of the troops landing from the "Yale" and "Harvard" transports, and other shots along the beach'.<sup>93</sup> It was probably one of these scenes – '...depicting General Shafter's troops landing in Cuba...' – which was exhibited a few months later in Biograph's venue in London.<sup>94</sup> It might also have been this film which was screened by a US showman the following year, showing, as one article put it: '...our marines rowing in open boats, jumping into the water waist high, forming [a] line with military precision and advancing up the beach with their rifle[s] popping like corn'.<sup>95</sup> Another Biograph film, which survives in the Library of Congress, is likely to be Bitzer's work too: *Wounded Soldiers Embarking in Rowboats* was filmed in Siboney after the battle of La Guásimas and shows wounded soldiers embarking for the hospital ship *Olivette*.

At this point, given that he was lumbered with such ponderous camera equipment, the problem for Bitzer was what to do and how to do it.<sup>96</sup> He later recalled that he couldn't go inland to film near any military action because of the lack of horses (to pull a wagon) – which would indeed have been required to transport his large Biograph camera.<sup>97</sup> So instead, from the towboat he observed and filmed – so he claims – the bombardment of Santiago (he writes 'Havana' in error) from offshore.

Then after some time, Bitzer saw one of William Randolph Hearst's yachts, the *Sylvia* across the water, and he was taken over to her. He recalled: 'Aboard was Hearst of the *New York Journal*, accompanied by Jack Follansbee, James Creelman [a well known war correspondent], and two pretty young ladies who were sisters'.<sup>98</sup> Also on board, though not mentioned by Bitzer in his memoirs, was his photographer colleague, John Hemment, who, with his usual professional thoroughness had fitted out a darkroom on the *Sylvia*, complete with quantities of ice to keep his developing solutions sufficiently cool.<sup>99</sup> As Bitzer and Hemment had been together in Cuba before the war (see above), it's not unlikely that they worked together for some of this time too, though neither men mention one another. Bitzer recalled his next part in covering the land war:

'I decided at this juncture to land with my Frankenstein-like camera and exert new efforts to obtain battle scenes. Frederic Remington, who was returning to the States, gave me his horse to view the prospects and pull the camera ashore. Then I was ready to follow the troops inland. The outposts were within a few miles of Havana, [again, he means

Santiago] so I started with my camera toward General William R. Shafter's headquarters, halfway between my starting point and the front line. I took movies of the general with his staff, crossing a stream on horseback. He was a portly gentleman and filled the area of the postcard movie field so well that it was unnecessary to worry about filling in the background.<sup>100</sup>

As with the accounts of this war by Albert Smith and James White, though to a lesser extent, Bitzer's also has its points of exaggeration, error and possible fabrication. Remington, the famous war artist was certainly not 'returning to the States' at that time – he stayed in Cuba for the main battles on 1 July. Bitzer's claim to have filmed Shafter is also dubious, as no film of Shafter is listed in the Biograph catalogue or register.<sup>101</sup> (Paley, on the other hand, did film Shafter).

Bitzer then goes on to relate that, while he was some way inland he came across correspondent James Creelman, who had been hit in the shoulder by a Spanish Mauser bullet. Bitzer continues:

'I rushed up to him, picked him up, got him to put his good arm around my neck, and we started back. It was a slow descent. When we did reach first aid, they were able to stop the flow of blood. Slowly we wended our way from the battle, resting repeatedly. As the journey from Kettle Hill, which we were on, to Siboney was some fourteen miles and we had to walk all the way, it took us almost two days to get back.'<sup>102</sup>

Much of this is credible. Creelman was indeed wounded at the battle of El Caney on 1 July in leading an assault against a Spanish fort (incidentally, a further example of a war correspondent intervening in the events).<sup>103</sup> But Bitzer wasn't the only one to claim to have rescued Creelman: John Hemment stated that he 'lugged James Creelman... out of the fight when he became wounded, carrying him some three miles on a tree bough litter'.<sup>104</sup> It seems likely that Bitzer and Hemment actually saved their fellow journalist Creelman together, but, as usual in accounts by war correspondents, they fail to mention heroics by anyone but themselves.<sup>105</sup> A further clue that the rescuer wasn't Hemment alone comes from a throwaway phrase from Creelman himself, who writes that his litter was carried by 'several correspondents' – Bitzer could well have been one of these.

They must have reached the coast at Siboney by 3 July, for the naval battle of Santiago took place just a few miles away on that date, and Hemment photographed the aftermath on 4 July. This time again he was based on Hearst's yacht *Sylvia*, and used a large plate camera to take some fifty views of the destroyed fleet including the wreck of the *Vizcaya*.<sup>106</sup> A film of the latter was made too, and I would suggest it was shot by Bitzer.<sup>107</sup> This film was later released as *The Wreck of the Vizcaya*, and it survives: it is a tracking shot from another, moving vessel – presumably the *Sylvia* – along the side of the wrecked *Vizcaya*, showing the still-smoking hull, partially sunken in the sea.<sup>108</sup> The film was screened the following month in London, along with Biograph's

film of the *Vizcaya* prior to the war, as a vivid ‘before and after’ depiction of the US victory.<sup>109</sup>

Soon after photographing the wreck, Bitzer and the wounded Creelman returned to the USA on the *Sylvia*, and by this time Bitzer was sick with fever.<sup>110</sup> To avoid having to spend a lengthy time in quarantine he disembarked covertly in Baltimore, but this proved a precarious action for a man in his condition, for he was seriously ill. He wandered around in a state of confusion through Hoboken and New York, where finally he was taken in at Post-Graduate Hospital. He recalls that he was sick for many weeks afterwards with typhoid malaria.<sup>111</sup> Some of this account by Bitzer has some near contemporary corroboration, with one article saying of him (though not by name):

‘...when he eventually reached New York, he sent in his films — and disappeared completely. After weeks of tracking and manhunting, it was found that he had suffered so severely from his exposure that he became delirious, and walked about the streets in a semi-unconscious manner, finally stumbling into a hospital, where for a long time he lay in a precarious state.’<sup>112</sup>

There is some limited contemporary corroboration for other aspects of Bitzer’s account of filming in Cuba. This is important to state, as much of my above account has been based on his autobiography, published over seventy years after the events. An article of 1901 noted: ‘The first war operator, William Bitzer, was landed at Siboney with the American forces and succeeded, in spite of almost overwhelming odds, in catching many stirring scenes until he was stricken with tropic fever’.<sup>113</sup> A Biograph publication of 1898 adds that cameramen for the company, ‘were in Santiago for the landing of the troops; they were with our soldiers on battle fields and in camp, and the results of their efforts form a complete pictorial history of the war’.<sup>114</sup> This is rather an exaggeration, but the aim had certainly been to create a pictorial report on the war, much as the news media were doing. And Bitzer’s working closely with Hemment and Creelman underlines just how closely filmmakers were linked to the established press during this war. A Biograph film showing ‘a charge by American troops in Cuba during the late war’, may well be Bitzer’s work, though it is possible that it was a US-shot fake. Four frames of this film of 900 frames were reproduced in *The Quaker* (1899, p.468). [Fig. 3]

## **EDISON’S CAMERAMAN: WILLIAM PALEY**

### **Paley’s pre-war filming in Key West and Havana**

Though the Edison company had less expertise in filming news and actualities than Biograph, by early in 1898 it was increasingly likely that war was approaching, and this would be such a major event that Edison could not let Biograph have the field to themselves. Lacking a cameraman with sufficient experience, the Edison executives decided to hire William Paley.<sup>115</sup> Born in England, William C. Paley (1857-1924) emigrated to the United States, where

he became a photographic technician and showman.<sup>116</sup> He moved into the film business in 1897, and was soon working as a cameraman.

Paley was offered a contract by the Edison company on 7 March 1898 to film the Spanish-American War, the arrangement to last a year. Edison was to supply Paley with raw stock and then to pay him \$15 for each film that he shot for them, plus a 30 cent royalty on every copy sold.<sup>117</sup> Over the next four months he would film aspects of the war successively in Key West, Havana, Tampa, and then with the invasion forces in southern Cuba. Paley's experience therefore would be similar to Bitzer's in that both went twice to Cuba: in the run-up to conflict and during the war itself. Both too became seriously ill.

To facilitate Paley's work, Edison had made a deal with Hearst's New York *Journal* whereby the newspaper supplied transportation for Paley on their press dispatch yacht, *Buccaneer*, and also offered him a collaborator in the form of Karl Decker. Decker was one of the *Journal's* most energetic reporters: 'a Viking by nature and appearance', as a fellow journalist put it.<sup>118</sup> He had already been in Cuba, where, true to the *Journal's* motto of 'the journalism that acts', he had arranged the escape from jail of a young woman opponent of the Spanish regime, Evangelina Cisneros, and brought her to the US, this being a major coup for the *Journal*.<sup>119</sup> The benefits for Paley of teaming up with Decker were considerable, for a second person in the camera team, especially a go-getter like this one, would be a great help to any news cameraman. Equally, the offer of passage on the *Journal's* yacht was a great boon, for hiring boats could cost hundreds of dollars a day.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, it is not at all clear what the *Journal* got out of this linkup with Edison, and as we've seen, they had made a similar deal with Biograph. They didn't need money (Hearst had plenty of that) even if Edison had offered any, so perhaps the *Journal* was helping Paley simply for the publicity value of an association with the very newest medium of communication, the cinema, which had the magic name of 'Edison' attached.

For the first stage of his assignment, in the pre-war period, Paley left New York City on about 15 March 1898, his initial assignment with Decker being to film US military activities related to the Cuban crisis in the Key West area (Florida).<sup>121</sup> As American forces assembled, the new team of Paley and Decker initially shot several films of US battleships, sometimes photographing from Hearst's yacht on the move. They shot *U.S. Battleship "Indiana"*, for example, and the film is described as follows:

'...shows the most powerful fighting machine in the world to-day as she lies at anchor taking on coal. The decks are covered with marines and sailors. ... The view is taken from a moving yacht and gives the effect of the vessel itself passing through the water.'<sup>122</sup>

The *Journal* praised these films, taken from their own yacht: 'The moving battle ships shown by this method give a better notion of their great size and power than could be obtained by really seeing them unless one had exceptional facilities for getting very close to them'.<sup>123</sup> Paley and Decker also

shot a kind of promotional scene for Hearst, *New York Journal Yacht "Buccaneer" War Correspondents on Board*; and on 27 March in Key West filmed the funeral cortege for the *Maine*, released as *Burial of the Maine Victims*.

They then travelled down to Cuba itself, arriving at Havana Harbour probably in early April, where the plan was to continue the *Maine* theme by filming the wreckage of the battleship itself. This proved to be as difficult an assignment for Paley and Decker as it had been for Bitzer a few weeks earlier, and was to be less productive than Bitzer's mission. They were working in a city where Americans were highly unpopular both with the Spanish authorities and with many of the inhabitants. Paley and Decker made three attempts to film in the vicinity of Havana, but, as an ad for Edison films stated, 'They were run out of the city by Spanish officers, insulted, and spat upon by the people'.<sup>124</sup> But Paley proved resilient, the *Journal* reporting in mid-April:

'Mr. Paley was warned that if he took his photographic apparatus to Havana the Spanish officials would make him pay dearly for such a reckless proceeding, for they do not desire the *Maine* and its surroundings reproduced. When he entered the harbor at Havana the pilot attempted to throw the photographic apparatus overboard. This caused a personal encounter, in which Mr. Paley was victorious. Spanish officers also boarded the yacht and attempted to arrest the photographer.<sup>125</sup> [possibly the latter is a reference to the previously mentioned pilot]

A later article, probably based on Paley's own statements, claimed that the cameraman suffered further persecution at the hands of the Spaniards, who:

'...threw him into a dungeon in Morro Castle, where he could hear a firing squad launching souls into eternity. They had caught him with eighteen moving pictures of the *Maine*. When the American consul got him out he started filming again and a Cuban tried to stiletto him. Daddy Paley chucked him into the harbor.'<sup>126</sup>

Some of these latter two accounts may be embroidering the facts, but harsh treatment of journalists was not unusual in Cuba at the time, and, as I've mentioned, other photographers visiting Havana reported similar hostility. Despite these difficulties, Edison optimistically claimed that Paley and Decker 'managed to evade them [the Spanish authorities] sufficiently to get all the important scenes that are worth reproducing in the harbor'. The company's executives expressed themselves very satisfied with Paley and Decker's work in Havana and Key West, boasting on 9 April that the filmmaking pair were 'sending up negatives of most supreme interest of the Cuban imbroglio'.<sup>127</sup> The two men were genuinely working as a team, apparently, and 'Karl Decker rendered all assistance possible in aiding' Paley.<sup>128</sup>

By 10 April all Americans were having to leave Havana, and the filmmaking pair departed at this time too (about the same date as Bitzer). They had been in the city, it would appear, only about a week.<sup>129</sup> This was surely less time

than had been planned and the trip was remarkably unproductive, for it seems that all that came out of it were some shots of the *Maine* and views of Morro Castle, which is less than Bitzer managed to achieve during his admittedly longer stay in the city.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps this paltry result was partly because the Spanish authorities had confiscated some of Paley's films (such as the eighteen films of the *Maine*, mentioned above) ?

### **Paley back in the USA**

In the United States Paley and Decker continued filming war subjects together and the Maine theme was maintained when they filmed Captain Sigsbee, ex-commander of the *Maine* with the Secretary of the Navy, John D. Long, on the steps of the Navy Department in Washington. The *Maine* outrage was, of course, a major story in the printed press at this time, and Paley's moving picture coverage was in this respect 'led' or at least mirrored by the newspaper agenda.

Paley returned to New York City about 14 April.<sup>131</sup> But this was just a brief respite. War was now looming, and Edison called upon the cameraman's services again. On 20 April Paley sent a letter to the Edison company agreeing to go to film in Key West and Havana again, 'to take animated pictures of the hostilities'. He also agreed that he would send the negatives to Edison as quickly as possible, 'with proper descriptions'. The latter is an especially interesting clause of the contract. Descriptions were and are vital for documentary/news films, where the subject of the film is all important, and not always apparent from the film image alone: unlabelled or anonymous scenes might be virtually useless. (A film taken at a battle site, for example, would be far more valuable than a film of another location).

Edison offered Paley an advance of \$500, which he was to return if the war was over quickly (war's end would make the films of less value, or even unsaleable).<sup>132</sup> [Fig. 6] Altogether this deal was, as Edison representative F.Z. Maguire confessed to a fellow executive (but didn't of course tell Paley), 'a very good arrangement for us. The trip will practically cost us nothing'. Maguire noted that their rivals, Biograph, had paid out a thousand dollars for their first expedition to Cuba and were currently 'spending money without stint', and even hiring a special yacht. (In fact Biograph's financial arrangements for boat transport are unclear, and both they and Edison may have made deals with Hearst.) The plan was that Paley would travel back to Cuba on one of the *Journal's* yachts, the *Buccaneer* or the *Anita*, (as with his previous trip), though eventually he made other arrangements.<sup>133</sup> This time Paley was to work on his own, without Decker or apparently any other colleague to assist. This was to prove a mistake.

The day after his new agreement with Edison – he had been back in New York only about a week – on 21 April Paley set off to Florida for a second time, in anticipation of a declaration of war. He had with him 3,500 ft of negative – enough for some fifty films. He had instructions from Edison that if there was time before he boarded the ship for Cuba, to try and film the troops in Florida, and this he indeed managed to do, as the departure of the expedition was delayed for another couple of weeks.<sup>134</sup>



By the end of April, the municipality of Tampa was becoming the assembly point for the invasion of Cuba, and thousands of men were arriving at makeshift camps. Paley filmed the troops in various day-to-day activities as they prepared for their mission. He also filmed escaped Cuban *reconcentrados* – Cubans who had escaped to Florida from forced ‘concentration’ centres on the island. In addition, he managed to get a shot of the first ship to leave with troops to the front, the transport *Whitney*, which carried a battalion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

He sent the resulting films back to Edison in West Orange, where they were processed and then listed for release in ‘War Extra’, a special supplement to the Edison Manufacturing Company’s catalogue.<sup>135</sup> This bulletin promised that the motion pictures it listed would be ‘sure to satisfy the craving of the general public for absolutely true and accurate details regarding the movements of the United States Army getting ready for the invasion of Cuba’. Unfortunately some of these films shot by Paley before the invasion suffered from poor registration on his Gaumont camera – such as *Colored Troops Disembarking*<sup>136</sup> – but presumably he solved this problem, as his later films during this assignment are well in register, though the camera was not to prove reliable in other respects.

While Paley was filming in Tampa, the Edison company sent a telegram (signed by Thomas A. Edison himself) to the Secretary of War in Washington requesting a war correspondent’s pass for Paley who, the company said, would be taking ‘kinetoscopic records’ of the war. This was granted the same day by the War Department, with Paley being described on the pass as a war correspondent ‘from Edison’s laboratory’.<sup>137</sup>

### **Paley goes to Cuba again**

After the long wait in Tampa, finally on 8 June the troops assembled in Port Tampa to go aboard the flotilla of transport ships bound for Cuba. As the soldiers arrived, Paley was ready with his camera in the rail yard adjacent to the dock, and he even appears in a still photograph of the yard – a rotund figure, standing confidently next to his tripod and camera in the midst of the crowds of soldiers – apparently about to start filming. [Fig. 7] The film that he took from this position survives, entitled *71st New York Volunteers Embarking for Santiago*.<sup>138</sup>

At this point there was another delay, with the fleet held up off the Florida shore, but on 14 June the ships started on their way. Paley was with them, sailing, it seems, on the hospital ship, *Olivette*.<sup>139</sup> A dedicated press boat would have been more suitable for his assignment, but perhaps the arrangement to travel on one of the Hearst boats had broken down, along with the partnership with Decker?

The troops started landing in Cuba, at the jetty of a small town called Daiquiri or Baiquiri, on 22 June and were fully landed by the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month. On one of these days Paley took what was probably his first film of the Cuban

Expedition: *U.S. Troops Landing at Daiquirí, Cuba*. [Fig. 8] Some time later he filmed the mule trains as they made their way from Daiquiri toward Santiago.

He later claimed to have taken a variety of other shots during the next few days. He mentioned some especially interesting-sounding subjects: Teddy Roosevelt and General Wood going into action, a US gun battery firing during the advance on Santiago on 1 July, an exchange of prisoners, and, he adds, other 'action stuff'.<sup>140</sup> But there is no record of these kind of shots in what was released, so either these scenes are simply spurious, or were among the negatives he lost later on when his troubles began, as we shall see below.<sup>141</sup>

He undoubtedly managed to secure a shot of Major-General William R. Shafter, the commander of the U.S. Expeditionary Force, for this survives, though it is probably the least effective of Paley's efforts. Shafter appears fleetingly on horseback, moving swiftly through the frame and partially masked by other riders. This seemingly grabbed shot does not suggest that Shafter had been very cooperative, and so doesn't support Paley's later claim in an article that he and Shafter had become friends in Cuba. He claimed they were drawn to one another by their similarly vast size and weight – Paley was over 6 ft tall and tipped the scales at 335 pounds, and Shafter was 20 pounds more. Because of this, says the article, 'Paley was given every facility to pursue his work'.<sup>142</sup> Yet there is no indication in Shafter's swift progress through frame that the General was willing to make any effort to help the filmmaker to get an effective shot. This was entirely in character, for Shafter was not an easy person to deal with, and many of the correspondents heartily loathed him.<sup>143</sup>

### **Paley as war cameraman**

By contrast with Shafter, Paley was of a far more affable disposition, and was soon known affectionately among the war correspondents as 'the Kinetoscope Man'. With his huge bulk and his novel camera, he cut a conspicuous figure in the Cuban expedition; evidently industrious in his work, though facing difficulties due to his weight, as one journalist recounted:

'He is a large man, corpulent and slow-moving, and his work with the navy and the army during the present war has been more difficult than a younger and more wiry man would have found it. He has had to climb in and out of small boats that tipped dangerously under his weight, and the personal discomforts he endured while following the troops in Cuba would have discouraged a less plucky man. With it all he was so good-natured that the war correspondents, in whose company he found himself often, liked him immensely and assisted him in his work whenever the opportunity offered.'<sup>144</sup>

Sheer size was not his only problem. On this second trip to Cuba he was without any other colleague to assist and advise: the energetic Decker would have been a great help, though a colleague with military experience might have been even better, for Paley's lack of knowledge of military affairs soon became apparent. I have discovered a unique account of Paley during the Cuban war, which sheds light on his problems and disappointments, as well

as on his unrealistic expectations about the kind of films he hoped to obtain of the war, and on his character.

Stephen Bonsal was a correspondent with the forces in Cuba, and wrote a book about his experiences, *The Fight for Santiago*, published the following year.<sup>145</sup> He met Paley, 'the kinetoscope man', during the Cuban expedition, and described him, accurately, as 'a stout man, almost as big as Shafter'. Bonsal seems to have spent some time talking to Paley, and he writes that the cameraman was 'to me one of the most interesting of the irregular forms of energy displayed upon the outskirts of the army'. Bonsal relates with some sarcasm that Paley had high expectations for the historic footage that he would take of the war in Cuba:

'...he often told me that he could not have endured what he did had the purpose of his mission simply been to amuse the patrons of dime museums and country fairs. He was inspired with a nobler purpose. "My idea is," he said, "that when the war is over and Congress meets, they will vote to have my pictures strung around the Capitol on revolving screens, where everybody can see them. You see it's un-American, those old Greek façades and Roman porticos, with which we have been putting up so long. The people of the United States want something with a little snap and go to it, and won't they be pleased when they see my pictures moving and quivering with life right under their eyes, as they move around the base of the Capitol."

Though Bonsal is making fun, it seems plain that Paley had a genuine sense of mission to posterity. Perhaps these hopes for recording his nation's history were one reason why he accepted this assignment from Edison for such a low rate of remuneration? In any case, Paley was soon to be disappointed by the war, for like other correspondents present, he expected more action, especially, it seems, cavalry charges. Bonsal met him at one point at the start of the campaign and describes the encounter as follows:

'With a speed that was altogether surprising, and altogether honorable for a man of his weight and girth, I now met him as he came prancing up the road carrying his pack and perspiring – well, profusely... He shouted as he saw me, "Have the cavalry charged yet ?" And when I assured him they had not, he sat down with a sigh of relief. His inquiry showed finer artistic perception than actual knowledge of the army; and when I told him that all the cavalry were dismounted, he almost wept, and wished he had not come. We walked on, however, he hungering and thirsting for epic incidents to catch on the fly and commemorate for all time. At this moment we stumbled upon General Shafter in his shirt-sleeves, with his grip on the telephone trumpeter, talking so energetically that the back of his head rolled up in wrinkles. "Is the general ordering the cavalry to charge ?" he inquired suspiciously. For a moment he evidently thought that I had lulled him into a false sense of security. "No," said the orderly, "he's only cussing at the quartermaster's folks at Siboney for not getting more sour-belly and grub up to the front." It seemed to me, as he sat down with a sigh upon

the turf, that the kinetoscope man now began to regard his heavy pack with a certain aversion. Then he said, with the weary accents of a man with whom all illusions are over: "Well, I don't think there is much in this campaign for the kinetoscope." And there wasn't.'

Again I suspect that Bonsal here is exaggerating Paley's disappointment for comic effect, for it was common knowledge that few horses had been brought to Cuba on the transport ships because of space limitations. Even Teddy Roosevelt's so-called 'Rough Riders' regiment fought in Cuba without their mounts. But the writer may be roughly correct in describing the cameraman's general sense of frustration in trying to film the war, and he noted that Paley soon became, 'the most disgusted and disillusioned' of the correspondents. Certainly his physical size contributed to his ordeals, as an increasingly sarcastic Bonsal relates:

'Personally, the kinetoscope man had had a very hard time during the week after landing. Physically he had been designed to sit in a great, broad-backed, soft-cushioned chair and take in gate-money. He had waited some days for the American Army to carry him and his outfit up to the front, and when the American Army failed to do so, he turned to our Cuban allies, and ordered General Garcia to detach a body of men to serve as porters and carriers of his machine. He thought everybody ought to contribute to perpetuate and popularize the story of the war. General Garcia paid no attention to his request, which was a pity; though, of course, the general had some other things to attend to. The kinetoscope man asserted that in all his life he had never been disappointed in any people so much as he had been with the Cubans.'<sup>146</sup>

Bonsal's account of Paley is scarcely sympathetic, and much of it may be exaggerated and even made up.<sup>147</sup> But my suspicion is that the core points of his description are probably correct: that Paley arrived at the Cuban war with high hopes of capturing this landmark event – America's first colonial adventure – and that he was sadly disillusioned with the little that he could film. The nature of modern war, in which the enemy remained hidden and the commanders operated by telephone from far in the rear, was not to the liking of Paley nor of the other 'romanticists' (as Bonsal called them) among the press corps, who had an old-fashioned conception of the commander leading his troops into battle.<sup>148</sup>

### **Paley's mishaps**

Paley's filmic output from the war was not substantial: I count only six films that he shot during the war in Cuba (and which survive). I suspect that the reasons for this paucity were partly the intrinsic problem that I have just mentioned of filming modern warfare, combined with the fact that Paley was less-than-fit, and that, as we shall see, he became ill. A number of accounts, however, try to go further than this, and suggest that Paley suffered particular war-related accidents which hindered his work and may even have stopped him filming.

Some of these anecdotes do not name Paley, though clearly do refer to him: trade journalist Homer Croy noted that during an American assault in Cuba, a cameraman started filming, but 'just as the hill was won, his camera had buckled and all that he had to show for his efforts was a quantity of twisted film'.<sup>149</sup> Another anecdote stated that while filming the war an unnamed operator's 'large and cumbersome' camera 'was upset in the San Juan River, together with its unfortunate corpulent operator, and never took a picture'.<sup>150</sup> The 'corpulent operator' must refer to Paley, though the anecdote is clearly untrue, for Paley managed to film several scenes which survive.

Some stories about Paley's mishaps, often giving his actual name, suggest that the mishap involved a bullet hit. An article from many years after the events states that Paley 'got a Spanish bullet through his camera' at the battle of San Juan Hill, but stoically he 'went on cranking'.<sup>151</sup> Another article – also it seems based on information from Paley himself – says a Spanish bullet tore through his coat sleeve and smashed a hole in the film box on his camera. Paley plugged the hole and thereby managed to save the film inside: when developed it was just slightly fogged, 'but was shown with a sub-title explaining the incident'.<sup>152</sup> I have found no report of such a subtitled film being screened, so this part of the story remains in the 'doubtful' category.

The bullet incident itself, though, receives some support from a more contemporaneous source – the *Phonoscope* magazine in 1899 – which claims that while filming the war, an unnamed 'daring operator... was shot through the shoulder'. This source goes on to state that the apparently wounded operator then entrusted his precious packet of films to a Cuban boy, with instructions to mail them back to the USA, but the boy was killed by a Spanish shell, and the 'absolutely unique' films were lost.<sup>153</sup> The account is vague as to the extent of the cameraman's injuries, and other accounts are inconsistent; but the accounts taken together – from the period and from later – do suggest that Paley did suffer some kind of incident with a bullet strike, perhaps just a bullet through his sleeve. Equally one might conclude that a river mishap of the kind described is not out of the question, though there is no solid evidence for it. But if these filming incidents are debatable, there is no doubt about the more serious problems of illness which were soon to strike the hapless Paley.

### **Paley becomes ill**

In the Spring of 1898 one of the main worries among the military about launching a war against Cuba was that the rainy season was fast approaching, when disease regularly became rife on the island. For this reason, preparations for the expedition were hurried as much as possible, but even so the invasion didn't begin until June, and as was soon to become apparent, it had been left too late. Inevitably sickness struck, and struck with a vengeance. Less than a week after the Spanish surrender there were 5,000 men in the US army Corps in Cuba ill with fever.<sup>154</sup> By the end of July Shafter reported 75% of troops were unfit for duty. The problem had been exacerbated by poor rations and supplies, and when troops did get sick the treatment facilities were minimal.<sup>155</sup> Disease was to kill more American soldiers who fought in Cuba than Spanish bullets: while only 365 soldiers died in action in Cuba, some two and a half thousand would die of disease.<sup>156</sup> This

was a wake-up call for the American military and, arguably, they never made such logistical mistakes again.

The journalists were as badly affected by disease as the troops, partly because, it was said, some of their number chose to stay at Siboney in the former huts of Cubans which were contaminated with fever, and this, combined with the hot sun and lack of proper food, 'incapacitated over thirty of the newspaper representatives'.<sup>157</sup>

Paley was one of the worst affected, and as the story of his tribulations has never been told before, I offer it here. Being overweight certainly didn't help when he was exposed to the Cuban climate and disease, and Paley already had a history of sickness. Indeed just a few days before leaving for his first assignment to film in Key West, he had written to the Edison Company to say that he had done no filming for a while, 'having been confined to my bed for over a week with a severe sickness'. Though he added that he hoped to be working again in a few days time.<sup>158</sup> [Fig. 5]

As we have seen, Paley was initially unable to secure ground transport for himself and camera equipment from the coast at Siboney to nearer the action. It seems that he finally managed to find a wagon to take him nearer the front line. This according to a British journalist at the front, Charles Hands, who met the cameraman at this point, and noted that, 'Paley got an army teamster finally to carry his machine and himself from Siboney to Shafter's headquarters'.<sup>159</sup> But Hands adds that Paley's problems then really started, for on the way to El Caney (where a battle took place on 1 July) the wagon broke down, and Paley was forced to sleep out that night. To make matters worse, it rained.

When he finally got into El Caney an exhausted Paley found that his camera wouldn't work. As Hands relates: 'Whether it was water-soaked or whether it had got broken by the jolting in the rough wagon I don't know, but anyway, it refused to take pictures'.<sup>160</sup> Paley was 'pretty well broken up' by this, and with the British journalist's assistance he made his way disconsolately back to the coast. Incidentally, Hands himself was in poor shape, having been wounded while reporting on one of the battles.<sup>161</sup> Obligated again to spend the next two nights in the open and the rain, by the time Paley arrived back at Siboney 'he was a wreck', as his companion Hands put it.<sup>162</sup> The two men managed to get passage out of Cuba on the *Seneca*, supposedly fitted out as a hospital ship, but here the cameraman's ordeal only continued.

The *Seneca* departed Cuba on 14 July.<sup>163</sup> It was loaded with sick and wounded military personnel, along with a score or so of civilians and journalists, at least half of whom were sick, including Hands and Paley. But if the passengers on the *Seneca* thought that they were escaping the disease-ridden conditions on the island to recover on a well run hospital ship they were to be sadly disappointed. Indeed the *Seneca* was later known as 'the first of the horror ships' – the first of a number of badly prepared ships bringing the sick and wounded from Cuba back to the USA. According to Irving Hancock, one of the dozen or so journalists aboard:

‘There were next to no medicines ; despite the fact that the commissary at Siboney was well stocked, there was so little food on the *Seneca* that the passengers were compelled to subsist on two scanty meals per day. The water aboard was two months old.’<sup>164</sup>

Hancock adds that though fever had been anticipated, there wasn’t even a thermometer aboard for taking patients’ temperatures. The ship’s surgeon had no instruments and had to do operations with his pocket knife; there were no bandages.<sup>165</sup> While a couple of the medical personnel aboard did their best, some officers on board treated the sick with disdain.<sup>166</sup> A major newspaper ran a headline, ‘Voyage full of misery’, and its correspondent went on to describe the suffering of Paley in particular:

‘When William Paley, the Vitascope man, was brought aboard the *Seneca* there was no doubt he was a sick man. There was no berth for him and Paley threw himself down upon the aft part of the main deck. He did not have a blanket for three days, and began getting weaker, and at times talked deliriously. Paley’s condition finally became so bad that an appeal was sent to one of the contract doctors to examine him. It was a day before this appeal was answered – in fact, three different requests had to be made before Paley was given attention.’<sup>167</sup>

The *Seneca* arrived in New York on 20 July, after six days voyage from Cuba.<sup>168</sup> During the journey seven cases of fever had developed and one report noted that ‘William Paley, the Vitascope man, is in the worst condition’. He was among several patients to be quarantined as suspected of having yellow fever. The health officer reportedly found the ship at this stage to be in ‘an almost unbelievably bad condition... the passageways were described as too filthy to walk through’.<sup>169</sup>

The *Seneca* suffering created quite a stir: ‘the whole country was aghast’, said one observer.<sup>170</sup> Other ‘horror ships’ returned full of sick soldiers: many of the once strong and healthy troops who had gone out to fight full of patriotic pride, returned to their country and ‘...were shattered beyond recognition’.<sup>171</sup> Many came back to the recovery and quarantine centre at Camp Wikoff (or Wyckoff) on Long Island, where conditions were far from ideal. A film taken there, *71st Regiment, Camp Wyckoff*, revealed the pitiful condition of the returnees, as the Biograph catalogue noted:

‘Of the thousand and more men who left New York for the Cuban Campaign, scarcely three hundred were able to shoulder their rifles to march before the Biograph camera at Camp Wikoff. The picture shows many of the companies reduced to seven or eight men, and the whole regiment, rank and file is in a sad condition.’<sup>172</sup>

As for Paley, he was lucky to escape death, and he was kept in quarantine (while other *Seneca* passengers were discharged). Fortunately it turned out that he didn’t have yellow fever, and he did finally recover.<sup>173</sup> Some time later he returned to camerawork, and continued in that capacity for many more

years, though mainly in the relative comfort of studio dramas – he was cameraman on Gaston Méliès' American films, for example. Paley was held in great regard and affection by many in the industry, in later years his nickname being 'Daddy'.

### **Paley's accomplishments**

It may seem from the foregoing that Paley's filming of the Spanish-American War was a failure. But it would be a shame and a mistake, I believe, to dismiss it as such, though it is true that only six short films came out of his time in Cuba with the military expedition, before his camera malfunctioned and he became sick.<sup>174</sup> These were probably all filmed in the ten kilometre stretch between Daiquiri and Siboney – i.e. between where he'd landed and where he departed – and none, I believe, were shot far inland where the battles took place. Not an impressive track record it seems. But to those six films should be added the many views he managed to secure in the run-up to the war, of the troops in Tampa and in pre-war Cuba. In all, some 44 films related to the war may be attributed to Paley.<sup>175</sup> No mean achievement, especially given the high quality of these films: I have viewed at least half of his Spanish-American War films, and find that most of them are skilfully made and better than the run-of-the-mill actuality from this period.

Despite being portrayed in such a sarcastic fashion by Bonsal, it is evident that Paley knew his business, and the great efforts he made to film the war, and the great suffering he endured were not without result. In early cinema, when films mainly consisted of one (usually static) shot, camera position is crucial. Paley's films are almost all well-composed, and taken from an appropriate angle and standpoint for the subject (see critical appraisal in **Box**). However, his filming of the war cannot be judged a success, and going to Cuba alone was a mistake: Paley's travails on this trip, in contrast to his relatively untroubled previous visit to Cuba, proved the value of a two-man unit instead of a lone operator. His earlier successful collaboration with Decker showed that the newspaper press could offer practical support to filmmakers as well as a guiding agenda, and that particular lesson should have been learned. However, even when alone, Paley's footage from Cuba continued to follow the principles of the press in terms of content, so in that sense the newspaper influence never deserted him.



## Box:

### William Paley's Spanish-American War films: a critical appraisal of selected titles

It is very apparent from viewing Paley's films that he had the photographer's instinctive understanding of good composition. For example, *Pack Mules With Ammunition on the Santiago Trail* is beautifully framed, and taken from an ideal camera position in relation to the sun and in order to observe the subject to best effect.<sup>176</sup> The mules and handlers are seen to come past camera in both background and foreground. This use (or allowance, rather) of foreground space is unusual in early cinema, for most cameramen tried to prevent subjects coming too close to the lens. The use of action in foreground is seen again in Paley's *Roosevelt's Rough Riders Embarking for Santiago* and to some extent in his *War Correspondents*.

Paley was not afraid of filming from unusual angles if this was suitable for the subject: his *Burial of the Maine Victims* is shot from a high enough position to show the action and to see over the heads of spectators watching in the foreground, but not too high to feel overly distant from this highly poignant scene. Similarly in his *10th US Infantry Battalion Leaving Cars* the choice of a high camera position means that not only is the movement of the troops clearly seen, but they are beautifully backlit by the sun. Taking shots from a moving position was a novelty at this time, but Paley did not hesitate to do so, for example in *Morro Castle Havana Harbor*, or equally in *Military Camp at Tampa Taken From Train*.

Perhaps the technique that best distinguishes Paley from an average operator is his use of appropriate backgrounds. His first film shot in Cuba, *US Troops Landing at Daiquiri* is taken from about the best angle one could imagine for this subject, given the inability to pan. The soldiers come ashore along a jetty, toward and past camera, while in the background we can see ships and the sea. Interestingly, a war artist, and a very good one, H.C. Christy chose to depict this scene from the other direction, from the ocean side, which, while successfully showing a sea full of transport ships and the landscape of Cuba beyond, gives less emphasis to the men arriving to fight.<sup>177</sup> Paley's view, on the other hand, throws the emphasis on the men coming toward us, while behind we can clearly see the ships on which they arrived. The whole story of a military force coming from across the seas is effectively told in a single static shot (which is all he had available).

A similarly well-judged 'one-shot aesthetic' applies to *Packing Ammunition on Mules, Cuba*. This clearly shows the action of the packing, but beyond this is a background of several US transports moored in the sea. The shot tells us very simply that this ammunition has come to the *island* of Cuba from overseas, with the insinuation that it has come from America to liberate Cuba. Even Paley's *Major General Shafter* – disappointing because Shafter is seen so fleetingly and so far away in the shot – is framed pleasingly, with the action on a diagonal, the ocean beyond, and trees tempering the white of the sky.

## CONCLUSION: THE WAR, THE CINEMA AND THE PRESS

No discussion of filming the Spanish-American War could be complete without understanding the press context. The newspapers made a massive effort to cover this war, and the filmmakers inevitably hung on their coat-tails in two senses: for practical support, and in following their news agenda.<sup>178</sup>

All three cameramen who filmed this war in the region of Cuba – Marvin, Bitzer and Paley – received material assistance from Hearst's empire in terms of boat transport. Two of them worked directly with Hearst journalists: Bitzer with photographer John Hemment, and Paley with reporter Karl Decker. In addition, as none of the cameramen had any previous experience as war correspondents, they doubtless received vital assistance from some of the veteran press men in Cuba with whom they came in contact (such as Charles Hands).

As for the news agenda, with cameramen often sent to the same places as newspapermen, films were shot which mirrored press coverage, both in terms of stories covered and in patriotic attitudes to those stories. Clearly the cameramen were working with more or less the same assumptions and guidelines as newspaper reporters, viz., broadly, to profile the forces of 'our' side and the victories that they were accomplishing, and to denigrate the opposition. For example, films of the activities of US troops showed Americans in a positive light, while the view of the stricken Spanish vessel the *Vizcaya*, showed the feebleness of the Spanish forces. In short, whether the medium was the newspaper page or the photographic moving image, the message was much the same. As Lauren Rabinovitz has astutely observed about films of the conflict, 'Many of these views seemed to illustrate the front-page stories in William Randolph Hearst's chain of newspapers ardently covering the war'.<sup>179</sup>

The filming of the war had important consequences, for it affected the future direction of the moving picture industry: the steep rise in numbers of news films produced, and their sheer popularity, had the effect of changing the balance of production in the USA. Whereas before 1898, most actuality films had been non-topical subjects – views of scenic places, general activities, street scenes, etc – the reporting of the conflict introduced greater current awareness to the new medium. Indeed Terry Ramsaye maintained that the most important development in cinema in 1898 was 'the birth of a topical or news bearing function in connection with the war'.<sup>180</sup> Later film historians have dubbed this new war-influenced role for cinema as that of a 'visual newspaper', and this role continued to be important ever afterwards.<sup>181</sup> In this shift to news, the moving picture in 1898, in reporting on the biggest story of the day, also acquired a higher status, helping the US public to realise that, in the words of a later commentator, 'films had other than amusement values'.<sup>182</sup>

The cameramen of the Spanish-American War, therefore – heavily influenced by their press counterparts – pioneered the genre of moving picture news. However, it was a small beginning in a sense, for it must be said in summing up the achievements of these war cameramen, that they managed to take

relatively few films of the military events, and none of the decisive battles. To give audiences a sense of the Spanish-American War as a whole would need more than the scanty images that people like Paley and Bitzer could provide. It would need artifice in producing dramatised versions of the war as well as skilful exhibition programming of a wide diversity of war-related images – all of which is the subject of our next two chapters.

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> As the war neared its end the US ambassador to England, John Hay, wrote to Theodore Roosevelt: 'It has been a splendid little war; begun with the highest motives, carried on with magnificent intelligence and spirit, favored by that fortune which loves the brave.' Quoted in Frank Burt Freidel, *The Splendid Little War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), p.3. Freidel adds sensibly that for some participants the conflict was grim rather than splendid.

<sup>2</sup> This chapter and the next are heavily dependent on the ever reliable work of Charles Musser. My account adds to Musser's, mainly in changing the emphasis from the motion picture industry to the war film as such, and in adding some more information about the personalities involved, such as details of Paley's filming work in Cuba.

<sup>3</sup> New historiographical work is suggesting how, as an American victory became more likely, the composition of the rebel movement shifted from being mainly black and mulatto to becoming more white and urban. See Rebecca J. Stott, 'The provincial archive as a place of memory: the role of former slaves in the Cuban war of independence (1895-98)' *History Workshop Journal* no.58, Autumn 2004, p.156-7.

<sup>4</sup> *Leslie's Weekly* (LW) 31 Mar 1898, p.199 and 7 Apr, p.215 notes the 'frightful privation in Cuba'. *Leslie's* correspondent in Havana claimed half a million of one and a half million population of Cuba had died in last two years from hunger and privation. Spanish officials apparently agreed with these figures.

<sup>5</sup> For example, one soldier asserted in his account of the war in Cuba, that they 'were here to fight for' the Cubans. Herbert O. Hicks and Fred A. Simmons, *Company M and Adams in the War with Spain* ([Adams, Mass.]: Press of the Adams Freeman, 1899), p.32. Another man enlisted after the affront of the *Maine* explosion, which he thought was the work of the Spanish government, whose General Weyler, he added indignantly, had killed thousands of Cubans. See Carl Sandberg, *Always the Young Strangers* (NY, 1952), in final chapter, 'Soldier'.

<sup>6</sup> Clodfelter's apt phrase. Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts : A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991* (Jefferson, N.C.; London: McFarland, 1992), p.550. In this period in America, there was a widespread sense that the nation had come of age, and now could and should do good works and uplift others, both domestically and in other countries. See David Traxel, *1898 : The Birth of the American Century* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1998), passim, and TLS 22 May 1998, p.27. This interest in foreign affairs was relatively new. As late as 1892 the *New York Herald* was proposing the abolition of the State Department as it had so few foreign matters to address. The events of 1898 changed all that, and foreign intervention came onto the US agenda, and stayed there. See Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers : Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, NY: Random House, 1987), p.246.

<sup>7</sup> Cuba made great fortunes for some Spaniards in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by the 1890s the Spanish colonies were estimated to bring in annual revenues of some \$43 million, though this was not such a vast sum, and the majority of the Spanish population didn't benefit significantly. For fortunes, see: Hugh Thomas, 'Cuban Fortunes, National Tragedy', *TLS*, 7 Aug 1998, p.6. For revenues, see: *The Spanish-American War: The Events of the War Described by Eye Witnesses*, (Chicago & New York: Herbert S. Stone & Co., 1899), p.227. The latter book adds that Spanish losses from the war were put at about \$1 billion, including the value of lost of territory. Some claimed that the real reason for conquering the Spanish territories was that they'd add to America's national strength and the new citizens would be purchasers of American goods. A *Washington Post* editorial to this effect is quoted by Michael

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Chanan in *The Cuban Image* (London: BFI, 1985), p.33. This is a partial reading of the evidence, however, as Gleijeses' research (below) makes clear.

<sup>8</sup> H. Paul Jeffers, *Colonel Roosevelt : Theodore Roosevelt Goes to War, 1897-1898* (New York ; Chichester: John Wiley, 1996), and George J. A. O'Toole, *The Spanish War, an American Epic – 1898* (New York, N.Y.: Norton, 1984), argue strongly for Roosevelt as a main instigator. President McKinley had other views and probably wanted to negotiate with Spain, but was pushed into war by the bellicosity of his fellow politicians, the media and public opinion.

<sup>9</sup> Spain declared war and the US followed suit. Thomas H. Johnson and Harvey Wish, *The Oxford Companion to American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.740.

<sup>10</sup> Some say the expedition to Cuba was 12,000 men, but Abbot says 17,000 men. See Willis John Abbot, *Blue Jackets of '98. A History of the Spanish-American War* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899), p.194. They were sent on 32 troop ships with an escort of 14 war ships. Richard Harding Davis, *The Cuban and Porto Rican Campaigns* (London: W. Heinemann, 1899), p.83. James W. Covington, 'The Rough Riders in Tampa', *Tampa Bay History* 20, no. 1, Spring/Summer 1998, p.5-16, says that at the 14 June departure from Tampa thirty-five transport ships were filled with 803 officers and 14,935 enlisted men. The US army at this time was 'small in the extreme' with only 25,000 men all told. (*Naval and Military Magazine*, May 1898, p.82.) Most of the nation's army was sent to Cuba: 18 out of 25 regiments of infantry and 6 out of 10 of cavalry. Herbert Howland Sargent, *The Campaign of Santiago de Cuba* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1907), vol 1, p.105.

<sup>11</sup> On 1 July, though America made her greatest military gains in the Cuban war, she also suffered her greatest losses of personnel, with over 80% of the entire US battle casualties occurring on this one day alone.

<sup>12</sup> The so-called Teller Amendment pledged that the U.S. would guarantee self-rule to Cubans. Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts : A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991*, p.445. But in 1902 a London newspaper claimed that Cuba was in effect under the US thumb. Cited in Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, op. cit., p.33.

<sup>13</sup> There was much discussion and editorialising on this 'Anglo-Saxon' theme. See Paul Alexander Kramer, 'Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910', *Journal of American History* 88, no. 4, March 2002, p.1315-1353; Enrique de Alba, *Latins & Anglo-Saxons, Etc* (Paris: Librairie A. Charles, 1898); John Randolph Dos Passos, *The Anglo-Saxon Century and the Unification of the English-Speaking People* (New York ; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1903). Frank Norris who reported from the war, wrote of the thrill of capturing Santiago, which he put down to the Anglo-Saxon practice of 'conquering and conquering'. Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s. Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967).

<sup>14</sup> Significantly, in the years after the Spanish-American War, celebrations for the Grand Army of the Republic included southern veterans. Cecilia O'Leary, "'American All:' Reforging a National Brotherhood, 1876-1917', *History Today*, Oct 1994. During the war southern songs like Dixie became popular. See 'Martial spirit in song', *The Phonoscope*, May 1898, p.14. Some modern scholars fail to appreciate the widespread admiration for black soldiers in this war, one arguing that in Spanish-American War films, blacks are perceived as a threat. Amy Kaplan, 'The Birth of an Empire', *PMLA* 114, no.5, Oct 1999, p.1074.

<sup>15</sup> Charles H. Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1967), p.11.

<sup>16</sup> By 1898 almost half the dailies in 26 major cities were 'yellow', says *ibid.*, p.19. A 1900 study concluded that about a third of US newspapers were 'yellow', based on the prominence given to sensational stories. Gerald F. Linderman, *The Mirror of War : American Society and the Spanish-American War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), p.157.

<sup>17</sup> From March 1895 to April 1898 there were fewer than 20 days when Cuba was not in the day's news in New York. Joseph Ezra Wisan, 'The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (1895-1898)', Ph.D., Columbia University, 1934, p.458. For a satire on sensational newspaper headlines about naval battles between America and Spain, see *Punch* 7 May 1898, p.209.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>19</sup> Photographs of the offices of the New York *Journal* and *Tribune* in adjacent buildings show war news boards outside. In Stan Cohen, *Images of the Spanish-American War, April-August 1898* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories, 1997), p.29-30. See also *Photographic History of the*

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*Spanish-American War*, (New York: Pearson Pub. Co., [1898]), p.45 – a photo of ‘Newspaper Square’ in New York with a crowd looking up at the *Journal and Tribune*’s boards of war news; and similar is in the *Graphic*, 21 May 1898, p.628, and in Nathaniel Lande, *Dispatches from the Front : A History of the American War Correspondent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.126.

<sup>20</sup> *Le Petit Journal* supplement illustré had several full page coloured illustrations about the Spanish-American War in May and June 1898 (courtesy Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk), and the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News* published many reports and images about the conflict from Spain and the USA. *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, sometimes spelled *Illustrierte*.

<sup>21</sup> Piero Gleijeses, ‘1898: The Opposition to the Spanish-American War’, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35, no. 4, 2003, p.681-719. This excellent article is based on the author’s reading of dozens of US and foreign newspapers in the months leading up to war.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Andrew Bailey, *The Man in the Street : The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (New York; Gloucester, Mass.: Macmillan Co. ; Peter Smith, 1948), passim.

<sup>23</sup> John M. Hamilton, et al, ‘An Enabling Environment: A Reconsideration of the Press and the Spanish-American War’, *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 1, Feb 2006, p.78-93.

<sup>24</sup> Wisan, ‘The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (1895-1898)’, in his Preface. Even in 1898 the press influence was admitted: in an extensive study of the yellow press, one commentator suggested that ‘yellow journalism forced him [McKinley] into a declaration of war’. Elizabeth L. Banks, ‘American “Yellow Journalism”’, *The Nineteenth Century*, Aug 1898, p.328-340. For a brief overview of the various opinions on the role of the press in fomenting the war, see the section on the press/newspapers in Brad K. Berner, *The Spanish-American War : A Historical Dictionary* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Wisan, ‘The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (1895-1898)’, p.458. A more recent study, though, has found no conclusive evidence that the Spanish American War was greatly influenced by the yellow press newspapers. W. Joseph Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> James Creelman, ‘My Experiences at Santiago’, *American Review of Reviews* 18, no. 5, Nov 1898, p.546.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image* (London: BFI, 1985), p.23.

<sup>28</sup> According to fellow *Journal* war correspondent, James Creelman, Remington’s telegram to Hearst read: ‘Everything is quiet. There is no trouble here. There will be no war. I wish to return.’ Hearst, so the story goes, replied: ‘Please remain. You furnish the pictures. I’ll furnish the war.’ Michael L. Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes of Age* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p.58. Also quoted in Wisan, ‘The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (1895-1898)’, p.459. A 1906 version gives the reply as: ‘Stop where you are: you provide the pictures, I will provide the war.’ Capt. G. Windsor-Clive, Major G.J. Farmer, and Capt. R.J. Drake, *Shafter’s Expedition to Cuba, 1898* (1906?), p.6. Campbell doubts this ever happened. See Campbell, *Yellow Journalism: Puncturing the Myths, Defining the Legacies*. Interestingly, a possible allusion to the anecdote appears in a story by a former Cuba war correspondent: in ‘A derelict’ the manager of a press syndicate offers the advice to its correspondents: ‘We do not want descriptive writing... We do not pay you to send us pen-pictures or prose-poems. We want the facts, all the facts and nothing but the facts.’ Richard Harding Davis, ‘A Derelict’, in *Ranson’s Folly* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1902), p.110.

<sup>29</sup> A photograph taken 18 May 1898 indicates the extent of press coverage at home. It shows so-called ‘Newspaper Row’ at Camp Black, Long Island, New York, with a prominent New York *Journal* War bulletin board and a sign for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. This is reproduced in Cohen, *Images of the Spanish-American War, April-August 1898*, p.147 and is held in the Museum of the City of New York/Byron Collection/Getty Images.

<sup>30</sup> R.H. Davis called these weeks of waiting in Tampa ‘the rocking-chair period of the war’. (*Scribner’s Magazine*, Jul-Dec 1898, p.131). Military officers and the better paid correspondents like Davis stayed in the opulent, oriental-style Tampa Bay hotel, which he described as ‘like a Turkish harem with the occupants left out’. Davis, *The Cuban and Porto Rican Campaigns*, p.46. The departure was repeatedly postponed for one reason or another from mid-May until 14 June. See Paul Eugen Camp, ‘Army Life in Tampa During the Spanish-American War: A Photographic Essay’, *Tampa Bay History* 9, no. 2, Fall/Winter 1987, p.17-28; see also Gary R. Mormino, ‘Tampa’s Splendid Little War: A Photo Essay’, *Tampa Bay History* 4, no. 2, Fall/Winter 1982, p.45-60.

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<sup>31</sup> See Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War*, p.206-208, 274-5, 446. Brown captures the mood in saying that these reporters were 'as unruly as schoolboys on a picnic'. There may be even more names than 300. Files about war correspondent passes are held in the National Archives at RG 107/E.80 from approximately file no. 2462 onwards. These passes were issued beginning on 21 April, numbered consecutively, and go up to at least no.400, 11 July 1898 (RG 107/E.80/5212) and there may be more after that, which I didn't manage to ascertain. Some familiar names in these files include: Decker, Crane, Hands, Davis, Hearst, Hemment, and Hare.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.446. Berner, *op. cit.*, p.89 gives a figure of 300.

<sup>33</sup> Miley states that some 89 war correspondents accompanied the expedition, while Archibald says about 165 went to Cuba, adding contemptuously that hardly a score of them knew anything about war or things military. John D. Miley, *In Cuba with Shafter* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899), p.45. James Francis Jewell Archibald, 'The War Correspondents of to-Day', *Overland Monthly* 37 [ser.2] Mar 1901, p.790-803. Berner, *op. cit.*, p.90 gives a figure of over 150.

<sup>34</sup> See for example, Richard C. Gotshall, 'John J. Poppendieck, Jr.: Spanish-American War Correspondent', *Milwaukee History* 3, no. 2, Summer 1980, p.59-64. This article notes that in 1898 correspondent Poppendieck accompanied the Wisconsin regiments through their training and then (15 July) set off with them to Puerto Rico.

<sup>35</sup> These were Kathleen Blake Watkins, Anna Benjamin and Mrs Trumbull White. See Barbara M. Freeman, "'An Impertinent Fly": Canadian Journalist Kathleen Blake Watkins Covers the Spanish-American War', *Journalism History* 15, no. 4, Winter 1988, p.132-140.

<sup>36</sup> H. Irving Hancock, *What One Man Saw : Being the Personal Impressions of a War Correspondent in Cuba* (New York: Street & Smith, 1900), p.133. In addition, at least two other women applied for official war correspondent passes: Elizabeth Cherry Haire of Ohio requested a pass 14 May 1898, and received pass no.372 on 28 June 1898, too late to go to Cuba. RG 107/E.80/3754 and 3828. Clara B. Colby also applied for a pass (see file no.4851).

<sup>37</sup> Edwin Emerson, 'The Making of a War Correspondent', *The Reader Magazine* 4, no. 2, July 1904, p.168. A publisher told Emerson that in time of war a third of the running costs of his illustrated weekly went to 'correspondents, and artists and photographers in the field'. At \$1.20 per word, a single telegraphed despatch could cost \$2000, so correspondents had to keep plenty of cash on them, 'preferably in gold'. It was claimed that circulation of newspapers quadruple during a war, but on the other hand the reporting costs are such that had the Spanish-American War continued for two years, one expert stated, it would have bankrupted every paper in New York city. Berner, *op. cit.*, p.297.

<sup>38</sup> George F. Kennan, *Campaigning in Cuba* (Port Washington ; London: Kennikat Press, 1899 [1971]), p.31. Berner, *op. cit.*, p.298 claims there were over 20 press boats.

<sup>39</sup> William Athelstane Meredith Goode, ed. *With Sampson through the War ... Being an Account of the Naval Operations of the North Atlantic Squadron During the Spanish American War of 1898* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co.; Thacker, 1899), p.33. For more on news dispatch boats at the war, see Trumbull White, *Pictorial History of Our War with Spain for Cuba's Freedom ...* ([Boston]: Freedom Pub. Co, 1898), p.29. For some useful opinion on press reporting during this war, see Murat Halstead, *Full Official History of the War with Spain* (New York: W. W. Wilson, 1899), p.20-21, 'Preface'. See also Jess Giessel, 'Black, White and Yellow: Journalism and Correspondents of the Spanish-American War', on the website [www.spanamwar.com/press](http://www.spanamwar.com/press) ; and John Baker, 'Effects of the Press on Spanish-American Relations in 1898' (2001) on website at [www.humboldt.edu](http://www.humboldt.edu)

<sup>40</sup> Examples are in the Hulton/Getty picture library, credited to the New York *Journal's* staff and from *Black and White*, 7 May 1898.

<sup>41</sup> No historian has as yet fully dealt with photography in relation to the Spanish American war, though there is a good section on this theme in Freidel, *The Splendid Little War*, p.308 etc.

<sup>42</sup> BJP 19 Jan 1900, p.38, from *American Annual of Photography*. This article mentions Hare and Hart as a team who photographed the wreck, though it's not clear if this refers to Jimmy Hare. See also *National Geographic*, Feb 1898, p.132 for a stereo photo of a diver on the wrecked *Maine*. A trade journal reported that a Mr. Guth of Kansas City planned to 'take pictures' (still photographs) of the stricken *Maine*, the fleet and divers, and would be gone about two weeks. See 'General news', *The Phonoscope*, Feb 1898, p.9.

<sup>43</sup> Robert E. Hood, 'The Intrepid Jimmy Hare', in *12 at War; Great Photographers under Fire*, edited by Robert E. Hood (New York,: Putnam's Sons, 1967), p.31-3. Lewis L. Gould, Richard

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Grefe, *Photojournalist : The Career of Jimmy Hare* (Austin ; London: University of Texas Press, 1977), p.11-30.

<sup>44</sup> See Genoa Caldwell, *The Man Who Photographed the World : Burton Holmes : Travelogues, 1886-1938* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977), p.198. A film crew at work appears in this image: possibly Paley?

<sup>45</sup> Davis, *The Cuban and Porto Rican Campaigns*, p.176. Photographers Charles M. Sheldon, William Dinwiddie and Gomez Carrera are mentioned in LW 18 Aug 1898, p.138, 150-1; 20 Oct 1898, p.279; 30 Mar 1899, p.246.

<sup>46</sup> Floyd Campbell was a notably brave photographer, says Davis: see *ibid.*, p.214, 221, 248. One photographer, E.C. Rost, accompanied the US Army: see Donald M. Goldstein, et al, *The Spanish-American War : The Story and Photographs* (Washington, D.C.; London: Brassey's, 1998), p.1. *Harpers Weekly's* pages in the second half of 1898 include several photographs from Cuba by James Burton and some by Harold Martin. Re Lieut. Hugh D. Wise of the 9<sup>th</sup>, see 'The Santiago Campaign', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 4 Apr 1899, p.3, and Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera at War...* (London: W.H. Allen, 1978), p.53. Corporal Babcock of the 71<sup>st</sup> New York took pictures during the San Juan fighting in Cuba, and a brief interview with him is in LW 17 Nov 1898, p.382. Also photographing with the 71<sup>st</sup> was Wagoner Frank K. Potter (or Frank R. Potter), says the illustration credit in John Emerick Elmendorf, *Memorial Souvenir; the 71st Regiment New York Volunteers in Cuba* (New York: priv. print, 1899).

<sup>47</sup> The behaviour of this man (unnamed, but who was from Boston) was described contemptuously by war correspondent H.C. Christie in LW 29 Sep 1898, p.246.

<sup>48</sup> James Burton, 'Photographing under Fire', *HW*, 6 Aug 1898, p.773-74.

<sup>49</sup> The exploding *Maine* image is in LW 3 Mar 1898, p.136-7.

<sup>50</sup> William Culp Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Nashville, Tenn.: Land Yacht Press, 1997), p.143, 190, 194. The 'genres' of these stereographs seem to mirror early war film genres, up to a point – eg. there are images of training camps, naval vessels, field hospitals, public celebrations, and war personalities – though Darrah doesn't list any fakes or symbolic images among stereo views of the conflict.

<sup>51</sup> A. S. Draper, *The Rescue of Cuba : An Episode in the Growth of Free Government* (Boston; New York [etc.]: Silver, Burdett and company, 1899), p.163.

<sup>52</sup> He is among the passenger list of the *Seneca*: see 'Voyage full of misery', *Chicago Tribune* 22 July 1898, p.3.

<sup>53</sup> BJP 14 Apr 1899, p.226. See also, 'History photographed', LW 20 Oct 1898, p.302.

<sup>54</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.255, 257. Cohen, *Images of the Spanish-American War, April-August 1898*, p.323-6. This was on 16 May.

<sup>55</sup> Veyre showed films on 24 Jan 1897. Alfonso J. Garcia Osuna, *The Cuban Filmography, 1897 through 2001* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2003), p.9-10. It has been claimed for Veyre that, 'as a condition of being allowed into the country, he was required by the Spanish authorities to take military propaganda scenes, views of the artillery in action and of troops on the march'. Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image* (London: BFI, 1985), p.29.

<sup>56</sup> Information from Frank Kessler.

<sup>57</sup> BJP 29 Apr 1898, p.260. On another theme, the journal argued that taking stills photographs of actual battles might be possible for the first time in this war, due to the availability of faster gelatine emulsions.

<sup>58</sup> AP 6 May 1898, p.350.

<sup>59</sup> *St. Louis and Canadian Photographer* July 1898, quoting 'Photos of the Conflict', *Indianapolis News* 6 June 1898. From the interesting website: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/aq/war/recep1.htm>. The first half of this article appears in BJP 22 July 1898, p.475. The ship was a passenger steamer, the *John Inglis*, recently purchased by the Government, and renamed the *Relief*. The photographer is unnamed but may refer to pioneer X-ray expert Dr. William Gray, who did go on to serve in Cuba aboard the *Relief* during the Spanish-American War. The other photographic equipment was to be some 'photo-micrographic appliances' and an X-ray machine for taking 'shadowgraphs' of bullet wounds.

<sup>60</sup> The article adds: 'the expert in charge hopes to obtain satisfactory views of one or more of the battles at sea or possibly of the storming of Havana'. The Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight film referred to had been a big success in 1897.

<sup>61</sup> AP 6 May 1898, p.350.

<sup>62</sup> Reproduced in *The Photogram* May 1898, p.153. This claims that it first appeared in the *NY World* in its issue of 21 March, but I cannot find it in this source. The same idea of delaying or

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rearranging a battle to film it appears during later wars: in 1900 – see my Boxer Uprising chapter – and *Punch* in 1912.

<sup>63</sup> I hope to cover this issue in more detail in a future article.

<sup>64</sup> Charles Edward Hastings, 'A Cameraman Runs into a War', *Moving Picture World*, 29 January 1927, p.327, 362; 'Around the world with a kinetoscope', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 31 Dec 1899, p.17.

<sup>65</sup> William Basil Courtney, 'History of Vitagraph', *Motion Picture News* (14 and 21 February, 1925), p.662 and 793.

<sup>66</sup> Albert E. Smith, and Phil A. Koury, *Two Reels and a Crank* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1952), p.56-66.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Chanan takes Albert Smith's account of travelling to Cuba to film the war at face value, and repeats the story in a new edition. Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image* (London: BFI, 1985) p.22, 25 and 31 and *Cuban Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). Raymond Fielding in *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972) assumes Smith is telling the truth (p.31-32) though mentions some doubts on the matter (p.321). The author of a study of journalism during the war also seems to swallow Smith's account whole, and quotes from the book at some length. Brown, *The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War*. A recent text book on the war also takes the claim as fact. (Berner, op. cit., p.251). Theodore Huff's review in *Films in Review*, 4, no.2, Feb 1953, p.99-102 queried Smith's accuracy, though, curiously, not in relation to the alleged Cuba trip; see also Smith's hurt reply in the May issue.

<sup>68</sup> Marian Blackton Trimble, *J. Stuart Blackton: A Personal Biography* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1985), p.13; historian Anthony Slide told me of this conversation with Marian in a letter of 12 Nov 1992.

<sup>69</sup> In order to have got to Cuba (with the Rough Riders) and filmed there, Smith and Blackton would have had to have left the US about mid June and returned about a month later. But Blackton had been hired by Proctor's Theatre in New York on 6 June for two weeks, and then the pair exhibited films there after that. Also they were definitely in New York on 12 July, as a subpoena was served on them in person on that day – ironically, for infringing copyright on war films. See Musser, 'American Vitagraph...', p.34-37.

<sup>70</sup> Musser, 'American Vitagraph...', p.37-8.

<sup>71</sup> See G. W. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer; His Story* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p.33-40. Bitzer's account appeared over 70 years after the events, so must be read with some caution, but some of the events he describes are corroborated by others. There is a suggestion elsewhere (McCardell, p.231) that Arthur Marvin went to Cuba as well, but neither Bitzer nor other sources mention Marvin in Cuba. One historian claims that 'The site of the wreck was filmed by Cuba's own film pioneer, José G. González.' This is possible, though I think it more likely that this is a confusion. Perhaps González filmed the wreck when it was salvaged over a decade later? Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, op. cit., p.24. Chanan adds, p.32, that González was an innovator in advertising too.

<sup>72</sup> John C. Hemment, *Cannon and Camera: Sea and Land Battles of the Spanish-American War in Cuba, Camp Life, and the Return of the Soldiers* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), p.3. He was not the only photographer in Cuba to cover the victims of the *Maine* explosion, as we have seen.

<sup>73</sup> 'John C. Hemment', MPN 3 Aug 1912, p.8. The 'foremost snap shottist' is claimed in: 'John C. Hemment', *The Photo-American* 9, Aug 1898, p.315-7. J.C. Hemment, 'How I met the Admiral', LW 9 Sep 1899, p.200, 210.

<sup>74</sup> A letter from W.J. Arkell to Russell A. Alger, 17 Nov 1898 states that Hemment photographed the reconcentrados. In RG107/E.80/#8300, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>75</sup> Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.3, 19. After release he went back to work and took a photograph of the US ship *Montgomery*; and also took one of the Spanish fort in Havana, 'just for spite', as he put it. Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.3.

<sup>76</sup> A photographer, Mr. Halstead, was arrested while photographing in Porto Rico for the *New York Herald* which led to protests in the British parliament and a formal request to Madrid for his release, which was finally granted in August. BJP in 1898: 10 June p.372; 22 July p.469; 29 July p.484; 26 Aug p.550.



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<sup>77</sup> See 'The Biograph', *BJP Supplement* 6 May 1898, p.40, and a reference in *The Era*, both quoted in Barnes. See also 'Cinematography and the War', *BJP* 6 May 1898 p.293 and Musser, *Emergence*, p.245.

<sup>78</sup> Re Bitzer's date of arrival: He states that he reached Havana on 19 February morning, but adds wrongly that this was a Wednesday, 'four days after the news broke' of the *Maine* explosion. Actually the explosion happened on 15 Feb and the news broke 16 Feb. I suggest he departed the US on the 19<sup>th</sup>, for that is the day John Hemment states he departed New York on the *Seguranca* – Bitzer was also on board – which arrived in Havana on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The 23<sup>rd</sup> was indeed a Wednesday, so that at least tallies with Bitzer's autobiography. See Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.3. Re Bitzer's date of departure from Cuba: in his autobiography he states that 'we were ordered back to New York on the same day Ambassador Fitzhugh Lee evacuated Havana'. Lee departed Havana 10 April, Easter Sunday (says O'Toole, 1984). Bitzer writes in his autobiography: 'it was not until April 21 (my twenty-sixth birthday, incidentally) that I returned, as war was then declared by the United States'. His implication is that this was the date he *returned to Cuba*, but this date is unrealistic as this was well before US forces were sent to the island. If 21 April has any significance, I suggest it might be the date of his *return to the US* after his first trip, though 11 days to get back to America seems too long.

<sup>79</sup> The Biograph frame clippings files (in MoMA), from about image no. 500 onwards, reproduce frames from many of these war-related films.

<sup>80</sup> 'Taking views a perilous art', *The Phonoscope* 3, no.6, June 1899, p.10.

<sup>81</sup> An ad in the *New York Clipper*, 21 May 1898, p.200, stated: 'American Biograph authentic war views. Camera now following North Atlantic squadron on New York Journal yacht, Anita'. The *Buccaneer* and the *Anita* were among the first press boats to be chartered. John Randolph Spears, 'Afloat for News in War Times', *Scribner's Magazine* 24, October 1898, p.501. British periodicals were reporting from 29 April that Biograph was maintaining a private yacht off Cuba to film war-related events. See *The Music Hall* 29 Apr 1898, p.10, and also reported in *Variety* and in *London Entr'acte* on 30 April. Biograph executive Koopman stated that 'We have a yacht cruising about in the vicinity of hostilities', wrongly implying that it was his own company's boat, rather than Hearst's. 'Life through a Lens: Mr.Koopman on the Biograph', *The Rival* (London) 21 May 1898, p.65. See also illustration of sending carrier pigeons from the *Anita* to Key West. *Graphic* 28 May 1898. A photograph of Marvin on board the *Anita* operating the huge Biograph camera is reproduced in Musser, *Emergence* and other sources.

<sup>82</sup> 'Life through a Lens', op. cit. Koopman had been asked by the interviewer: 'I presume you are busy with war pictures?' and he replied 'Very busy'.

<sup>83</sup> See Edwin Emerson Jr., 'Chased by a Spaniard', *LW* 9 June 1898, p.371.

<sup>84</sup> R.H. Mere, 'The Wonders of the Biograph', *Pearson's Magazine* 7, Feb 1899, p.196.

<sup>85</sup> Spears, 'Afloat for News in War Times', p.504. Both the Spanish and American navies were blockading some Cuban ports.

<sup>86</sup> Marvin does not give the date, but the bombardment indeed happened on 12 May. See O'Toole, p.209.

<sup>87</sup> 'Taking views a perilous art', *The Phonoscope*, June 1899, p.10, reprinted in 'Perils in Photography: men who take the Biograph pictures are often in danger', *The Sun* (NY), 13 Aug 1899, section 3, p.2. A briefer account of these run-ins with the Spanish navy appears in R.H. Mere, op. cit., p.196.

<sup>88</sup> While Marvin didn't manage to film the bombardment, other representations of the event were produced. For example, a vivid artist's impression of the action, in glorious colour, appeared in *Illustrated War News* (New York: F. Tousey), no.2 – a large format periodical, with superb quality of photographs and coloured, drawn illustrations.

<sup>89</sup> This might sound exaggerated, but it is confirmed in other accounts. *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 25, 1898, p.555 reported that the *Anita* was chased by two gunboats from Puerto Rico all the way to St. Thomas, and kept ahead 'only by pouring coal oil into its furnaces'. A fictionalised – but apparently factually-based – account of such a night escape in the war also describes pouring oil into the boilers and having flames come out of the funnel. See: Stevens Vail, 'A Night Escape: An Episode of the War', *Scribner's Magazine* 24, Nov 1898, p.633.

<sup>90</sup> They arrived back 15 May, says Edwin Emerson Jr. in 'Chased by a Spaniard', op. cit.

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<sup>91</sup> R.H. Mere, op. cit., p.196: the entire adventure is reported in this article. It is also described, replicating Marvin's account fairly closely in 'Chased by a Spaniard', op. cit., which reproduces an illustration of this night chase by F. Cresson Schell, *Leslie's* war artist aboard.

<sup>92</sup> 'Taking views a perilous art', op. cit. Another account suggests that some of the films never made it out of the boat, as they were eaten by a goat on board(!) It wrongly attributes the adventure in Puerto Rico to cameraman 'Dickinson', i.e. W.K.-L. Dickson, and given this misattribution of person, it is hard to credit the goat anecdote in this account. 'A Plucky Biograph Man', *Pittsburgh News*, 6 Feb 1900: from Biograph scrapbook, Seaver Center.

<sup>93</sup> G.W. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer, His Story*, p.35. Neither of these two ships, *Yale* and *Harvard*, are listed among those leaving Tampa but perhaps they were smaller landing craft which wouldn't necessarily have been listed as part of the fleet. See Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures: Filmography*, p.450. Troops started coming ashore at Siboney on 23 June. See O'Toole, p.269.

<sup>94</sup> Shown in Britain at a Biograph screening at the Empire, London. See *Brighton Society*, 10 Sep 1898, p.5.

<sup>95</sup> This 'cinematographe picture' was exhibited by showman Dwight L. Elmendorf. See 'The Santiago Campaign', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 4 Apr 1899, p.3, col.2. Cited in Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p.326. The same account seems to suggest that another film was also screened during this show, depicting Cubans coming ashore, apparently fearful of the water.

<sup>96</sup> George Mitchell, 'Billy Bitzer..' p.692.

<sup>97</sup> *Billy Bitzer, His Story*, p.35. An account from 1899 of the misadventures of an unnamed Biograph 'photographer', could be a garbled version of this part of Bitzer's experiences. It states that as the press yacht approached the Cuban coast, a Spanish vessel passed and sighted the yacht and gave chase. The cameraman on board was set ashore and had to wait there, unable to move his heavy camera, but not daring to leave it. 'So there he remained for four or five days, with mighty little to eat and not knowing at what moment the Spaniards might come up and capture him.' From: 'Taking views a perilous art', *Phonoscope*, op. cit. R.H. Mere says the cameraman was on the beach for 3 days and 3 nights.

<sup>98</sup> *Billy Bitzer, His Story*, p.36. O'Toole, p.286 confirms that Hearst was present at this time. The yacht had been there from well before the commencement of the US invasion.

<sup>99</sup> Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.65. A problem regularly faced by photographers, and later by cameramen, in working in the tropics, was that an over warm development might damage the film photographically or physically, hence ice was advisable.

<sup>100</sup> *Billy Bitzer, His Story*, p.36-37.

<sup>101</sup> Bitzer claimed to have witnessed the Rough Riders at the battle of El Caney, but this doesn't seem credible.

<sup>102</sup> *Billy Bitzer, His Story*, p.37.

<sup>103</sup> James Creelman, 'My Experiences at Santiago', *American Review of Reviews* 18, no. 5, Nov 1898, p.542-6. Such intervention by a war correspondent would be frowned upon today, but Creelman considered himself virtually part of the US forces: he was, he tells us, p.545, wearing clothes indistinguishable from those of American officers. (cf. Ackerman in the Philippine War).

<sup>104</sup> 'John C. Hemment', *The Photo-American* 9, Aug 1898, p.316. Hemment had gone ashore at Siboney and photographed during the battles of 1 and 2 July. See Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.76; also letter from W.J. Arkell to Russell A. Alger, 17 Nov 1898. In RG107/E.80/#8300, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>105</sup> Hemment's account is more likely to be correct in the detail as he was interviewed only a month or so after his return from the front, whereas Bitzer was reminiscing half a century later.

<sup>106</sup> Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.214. states that he photographed the wreck of the *Vizcaya* on 4 July. A photograph of it is on p.208 of his book. His *Vizcaya* images were taken on a large 11 x 14 format, whereas the land battle ones were shot on 6 x 10, because such mobile work required a more portable camera. Arkell later offered the US War Department a set of all Hemment's Cuban war photographs in an album – 500 to 600 images – for some \$3,000, but the offer was turned down. Letter from W.J. Arkell to Russell A. Alger, 17 Nov 1898 and reply Alger to Arkell, 18 Nov 1898. In RG107/E.80/#8300, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Arkell was associated with *Leslie's Weekly*.

- <sup>107</sup> I have found no actual data about the filming of the wreck. The closest thing to information about this is probably misinformation: a contemporary article claimed that Arthur Marvin 'was present at the battle of Santiago aboard the *Journal's* despatch-boat and got pictures of the destruction of Cervera's fleet'. McCardell, p.231. I suggest that rather than the actual battle, it was the *aftermath* which was filmed, and Bitzer is more likely to have been the cameraman than Marvin, for he was already near at hand at Siboney, as we have just discussed.
- <sup>108</sup> Musser *Emergence*, p.248. The film survives in the Library of Congress. (Also see photograph of Hearst in *Cosmopolitan*, vol.25, 1898, p.545.)
- <sup>109</sup> Shown at the Palace, London, according to *The Music Hall* 19 Aug 1898, p.122.
- <sup>110</sup> Creelman, p.546, notes that while waiting, wounded, for the *Sylvia* at Siboney, 'beside me lay another civilian down with yellow fever'. Presumably this was Bitzer.
- <sup>111</sup> G.W. Bitzer, *Billy Bitzer, His Story*, pp.33-40. William Paley was also invalided out of Cuba with fever (see below).
- <sup>112</sup> R.H. Mere, op. cit., p.196. See also 'Taking views a perilous art', op. cit.
- <sup>113</sup> Roy L. McCardell, 'Pictures That Show Motion', *Everybody's Magazine* 5, August 1901, p.231.
- <sup>114</sup> *The Mutoscope – a Money Maker* (New York: AMC, November 1898). This is in Musser, Motion Picture Catalogs microfilms, op. cit.
- <sup>115</sup> This section relies on the solid work of Charles Musser, especially his admirable Edison filmography.
- <sup>116</sup> Paley's middle initial is something of a mystery. I have followed Terry Ramsaye in making it 'C'; d'Agostino's *Filmmakers in the Moving Picture World* follows the *World* in making it 'A'; *Variety* makes his middle name "Daley" or "Daly". More detailed biographies of Paley appear in Stephen Bottomore, 'Book Review', *Film History* 11, no. 3, 1999, p.387-391; and in 'The Daddy of Them All', *American Cinematographer* 2, no. 19, 15 Oct 1921, p.6-7.
- <sup>117</sup> William E. Gilmore to Paley 7 Mar 1898, Edison Historic Site, file 'Motion picture – film'. The contract was backdated from 21 February 1898. Paley agreed to these terms in a letter of 12 March.
- <sup>118</sup> George Clarke Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba: A Personal Account of the Cuban Insurrection and Spanish-American War* (London; Cambridge, U.S.A. [printed]: Gay & Bird, 1899), p.103 etc.
- <sup>119</sup> Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War*, p.95. Decker and the girl made their escape on the *Seneca*, ironically so, given that this was the same 'horror ship' on which the sick Paley was to come back from Cuba. Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba*, p.104. Musgrave notes that Decker had come up with another rescue plan in the winter of 1897-98, to snatch Alfred Dreyfus from Devil's Island, but the sinking of *The Maine* disrupted this extraordinary scheme.
- <sup>120</sup> It is not stated, but Edison were apparently getting Paley's berth free of charge, though even if a fee had applied this would surely be cheaper than hiring their own yacht. The lowest rental fee for a tug was \$1000 per week, and port and telegraph charges added a lot more. John Spears of the *Sun* estimated that his newspaper spent \$1000 a day on their war boat. Spears, 'Afloat for News in War Times', p.504.
- <sup>121</sup> Paley to Edison Mfg Co., 12 Mar 1898, Edison Historic Site. He was also contracted to film in Cuba itself.
- <sup>122</sup> Edison *War Extra* catalogue. This film was shot off the islands of Dry Tortugas, some 80 miles west of Key West, where the navy had a fort and other facilities.
- <sup>123</sup> 'The Journal's vivid moving war pictures', *Journal* (New York) 16 Apr 1898, p.11: quoted in Musser Edison catalogue p.421. I don't describe some of these films in detail, as they are well covered in this catalogue by Musser.
- <sup>124</sup> Ad, F.Z. Maguire and Co., *NY Clipper*, 30 Apr 1898, p.153.
- <sup>125</sup> 'The Journal's vivid moving war pictures', op. cit.
- <sup>126</sup> Paul H. Dowling, 'He's Sixteen Years Ahead of All War Photographers', *Photoplay* 11, no. 4, March 1917, p.122-23. One wonders what happened to those 18 films of the *Maine*?
- <sup>127</sup> Ad by F.Z. Maguire and Co. 'Special! Cuban War Pictures', *NY Clipper* 9 Apr 1898, p.99.
- <sup>128</sup> 'Cuban War Pictures' *The Phonoscope* 2, no.4, April 1898, p.7.
- <sup>129</sup> Paley remained in Cuba until US Consul Lee departed, states 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit.
- <sup>130</sup> 'The Journal's vivid moving war pictures', describes the Morro film as showing: 'the narrow passage by Morro Castle, under the very walls of the grim Cabanas and up to the side of the

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Viscaya and Alfonso XII'. The article adds: 'This series of moving pictures give the first adequate idea of what will probably be a scene of battle in the near future'. Paley's films apparently included a scene of the wrecking companies' tugs at work, though this might simply refer to the view of the wrecked *Maine* in which tugs are visible.

<sup>131</sup> Date given in: New York *Journal* 16 Apr 1898, p.11: cited in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures: Filmography*.

<sup>132</sup> Paley to F.Z. Maguire and Co., 20 April 1898, Edison Historic Site.

<sup>133</sup> F.Z. Maguire to William E. Gilmore, 20 Apr 1898.

<sup>134</sup> F.Z. Maguire to William E. Gilmore 20 Apr 1898.

<sup>135</sup> *War Extra* came out 20 May 1898.

<sup>136</sup> According to Musser, *Emergence*, p.252. The film is indeed very 'jumpy'. Incidentally, 'colored' was a common term for African Americans at the time, but although racism was rife in this era, the Spanish-American War was something of a turning point in that the major contribution of black troops was recognised.

<sup>137</sup> War Correspondent's Pass no. 202, issued 10 May. RG107/E.80/#3208, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>138</sup> The photograph is captioned by hand, 'The Kinetoscope [sic] and the Santiago Expedition 1900(?)'. It appears in Paul H. Dowling, op. cit.; and in 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit. The photograph seems to bear the inscribed number 1180. By chance, I have found two similar photos of the 71<sup>st</sup> New York infantry at the docks, captioned/numbered in the same style, 1176 and 1179, reproduced in Cohen, *Images of the Spanish-American War, April-August 1898*, p.186; and photo 1179 is in Frank Tennyson Neely, *Neely's Panorama of Our New Possessions* (New York [etc.]: F.T. Neely, 1898). The three photographs were apparently taken only minutes apart, probably by the Ensminger Brothers; no.1179 is held in the archives of the University of South Florida. According to another source, the 71<sup>st</sup> went aboard their transport ship, the *Vigilancia*, at Port Tampa on 10 June. See Riley Brothers, *The Spanish-American War*, lantern set no. 1047.

<sup>139</sup> 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit. The *Olivette* was later filmed by Bitzer in Siboney.

<sup>140</sup> 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit. This article is also inaccurate in giving his departure date as being after the Spanish surrender ceremony on 17 July, whereas in fact Paley departed Cuba on 14 July (on the *Seneca*). A film of the surrender is wrongly credited to Paley in the Edison catalogue, March 1900, p.9-11.

<sup>141</sup> 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit. Though this same article states that 'with the help of General Shafter he managed to get all his film safely away to the Edison company'.

<sup>142</sup> 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit. This article about Paley, presumably based on the cameraman's own words, mentions the supposed friendship as due to 'the fellowship that naturally exists between men of large displacement'. The British military attaché wrote of Shafter: 'Physically he was gross beyond belief, over 25 stone in weight, and he had not glimpsed his feet for years'. Alan Clark, *A Good Innings: The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham* (London: J. Murray, 1974), p.63.

<sup>143</sup> General Shafter's manner of speech was rough and he didn't care whom he offended, 'so he alienated all the correspondents, paying for this in public reputation', said the British military attaché (ibid). He managed to antagonise the journalists from the outset, keeping them at sea during the landing, for the cynical reason, one scribe believed, 'to prevent the correspondents from seeing any possible bungling'. (Charles Hands in *Daily Mail* 14 July 1898, p.4.) Even the eminent Richard Harding Davis was held back, and in his subsequent accounts of the war had nothing good to say of the General. E.J. McClernand, 'The Santiago Campaign', *Infantry Journal* 21, no. 3, Sep 1922, p.280-302. One correspondent, Sylvester Scovel, became so infuriated that at one point he slapped Shafter's face. (*Daily Mail* 20 July 1898, p.5.) While some military analysts generally applauded Shafter's leadership in the Cuban war, the correspondents disagreed. Sargent, *The Campaign of Santiago de Cuba*, vol.2, p.162-3. Atkins asked, why land in a yellow fever area instead of making straight for Santiago as Admiral Sampson had wanted? J. B. Atkins, *The War in Cuba: The Experiences of an Englishman with the United States Army* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1899), p.286. Photographer Hemment criticised the gross mismanagement of the war, comparing it unfavourably to the 'triumphal' campaign by Kitchener in Sudan. Hemment had problems in photographing Shafter, though in the event managed to secure a good image, and better than Paley's filmed version. See Hemment, *Cannon and Camera*, p.260-1, 90-2. The General continued to restrict the correspondents, refusing access to the surrender ceremony for all but

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a favoured few. Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba*, p.347-8. (Musgrave was one of the few allowed to attend.)

<sup>144</sup> Monte Cutler, 'Bill Paley, the Kinetoscope Man', *The Phonoscope*, August 1898, p.7-8.

<sup>145</sup> Stephen Bonsal, *The Fight for Santiago: The Story of the Soldier in the Cuban Campaign from Tampa to the Surrender* (London: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1899), p.161-162. As a mark of the value of patience in historical research, I found this unique account of Paley after looking at some 27 other accounts of the war by correspondents (not to mention periodical articles).

<sup>146</sup> Bonsal continues poetically: 'He sat on the beach at Siboney until the battle began, and the booming of the big guns announced that the pictures he was to perpetuate for all time were being exhibited by the god of war.' Bonsal, 1899, op. cit. The jibe about taking in gate-money might be a reference to Paley having at one time been an exhibitor.

<sup>147</sup> Bonsal notes, for example, that Paley carried his movie camera around in some kind of pack, though the description is whimsical and puzzling: 'The pack of a kinetoscope man is a difficult pack to carry. It seems to consist of a chest, which you must carry on the end of a pole, suspended about thirty feet up in the air.' Perhaps this 'pole' is an exaggerated description of a tripod?

<sup>148</sup> Bonsal notes, p.160, that during the crucial battles of San Juan and El Caney on 1 July, General Shafter, rather than being in the thick of the action, was well in the rear, from where he was constantly talking to front-line units by telephone (Bonsal says admiringly that he seemed to be talking common sense). This commanding from the rear was one of the inglorious aspects of the war which put off some correspondents.

<sup>149</sup> Homer Croy, *How Motion Pictures Are Made* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1918): see chapter, 'Motion Pictures of the War', p.257, though it doesn't actually mention Paley by name.

<sup>150</sup> 'An instrument of warfare', *Reel Life* 31 Jan 1914, p.10: from the description of the cameraman as 'corpulent', it must surely refer to Paley.

<sup>151</sup> Paul H. Dowling, op. cit.

<sup>152</sup> 'The Daddy of Them All', op. cit.

<sup>153</sup> Stated by a certain Robert Pitard, a 'cinematographe expert', in 'Trick pictures: How Strange Effects in Moving Photographs are Produced', *The Phonoscope* 3, no. 7, July 1899. Pitard noted that the destroyed films '...would have created a sensation'. The report doesn't mention Paley by name, so this could in theory refer to Bitzer, who was also filming on the island at about this time.

<sup>154</sup> Roosevelt reported that only a fifth of his men were fit for duty. Abbot, *Blue Jackets of '98. A History of the Spanish-American War*, p.302-304.

<sup>155</sup> By the end of the first week of July most troops were living on hard tack and hard bread; there were no kettles so water couldn't be boiled, and troops were forced to drink polluted brook water; there was little provision for shelter, and sick soldiers lay unattended on the bare earth. Wexler, 'The Santiago Campaign of 1898', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 18, no. 1, Feb 1976, p.59-73, especially p.66-67.

<sup>156</sup> O'Toole, *The Spanish War, an American Epic – 1898*, p.374-5.

<sup>157</sup> Almost all war correspondents at the front suffered from fever, partly due to having been poorly equipped with tents, clothing etc by their employers, the press. Only one or two escaped sickness. Richard Harding Davis, 'Our War Correspondents in Cuba and Puerto Rico', *Harper's Monthly* 37, no. 588, May 1899, p.947.

<sup>158</sup> See letter from Paley to Edison Mfg. Co., 12 March 1898, Edison Historic Site. A few years earlier Paley had given up work as an X-Ray exhibitor as his health started to suffer from the effects of this apparatus.

<sup>159</sup> Hands is quoted in: Monte Cutler, 'Bill Paley, the Kinetoscope Man', *The Phonoscope*, August 1898, p.7-8. Charles Hands was a British newspaperman covering the war for the *Daily Mail* of London. He was notably popular, and fellow correspondent Philip Gibbs later described him as a small man who made many friends due to 'his dead honesty of mind, his whimsical humour, his gift of comradeship with all manner of men...' He concluded, 'Everyone loved Charlie Hands'. One of Hands' greatest talents, demonstrated in his help offered to Paley, was an ability to manage even in desperate circumstances. Gibbs noted: 'He could find a good dinner in the midst of ruin, or in a war-beleaguered city'. Philip Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years : An Autobiography* (London ; Toronto: William Heinemann, 1946), p.41.

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<sup>160</sup> Perhaps this was the same Gaumont camera which had malfunctioned back in Florida, losing registration.

<sup>161</sup> Hands had witnessed the storming of a hill during this campaign (possibly San Juan Hill or El Caney) and was wounded going down the hill from the battlefield on 3 July, as noted in his last reports about the war in *Daily Mail* 4 Aug 1898, p.4; and 5 Aug, p.4.

<sup>162</sup> A later article about this ordeal stated, probably based on the cameraman's own words, that Paley succumbed to fever 'and he staggered miles through calf-deep mud and the rain, in the night, to reach a hospital ship that had no quinine'. Paul H. Dowling, op. cit. This wrongly says that he had yellow fever.

<sup>163</sup> Hancock, *What One Man Saw : Being the Personal Impressions of a War Correspondent in Cuba*, p.174-75. The *Seneca* was chartered for the war on 10 May 1898. She was 2,729 tons, with a capacity for 627 men, though some 900 were aboard for war service. The *Seneca* brought to Cuba the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry, two companies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Massachusetts Volunteers and the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade HQ of 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Grace Inez Smith, 'Cuban Expedition, 1898: Mobilization at Tampa' (M.A., Univ. of California, 1943), 98, 124. Her chief officer at this time was called 'Decker' (not Karl Decker, of course).

<sup>164</sup> Hancock, *What One Man Saw : Being the Personal Impressions of a War Correspondent in Cuba*, p.174-5, 177.

<sup>165</sup> Abbot, *Blue Jackets of '98. A History of the Spanish-American War*, p.302-304.

<sup>166</sup> 'Voyage full of misery', *Chicago Tribune* 22 July 1898, p.3. There was also favouritism, and some influential passengers were allowed to leave the ship at will in the US and not go into quarantine.

<sup>167</sup> 'Voyage full of misery', op. cit. This is by correspondent John Maxwell, a fellow passenger. Also quoted in Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War*, p.434. Maxwell added that the ship's officers were often drunk. Incidentally, war correspondent Emerson described the plight of an unnamed English photographer (possibly Hare?) whose case parallels Paley's, for he too went down with fever in Cuba and had a hard time returning to America. He was then offered little support by his editors. Emerson, 'The Making of a War Correspondent', p.165-6. Paley's sufferings on the *Seneca* are also mentioned in Joyce Milton, *The Yellow Kids : Foreign Correspondents in the Heyday of Yellow Journalism* (New York; London: Harper & Row, 1989), p.346.

<sup>168</sup> John Maxwell of the *Chicago Tribune* gave this date. Brown, *The Correspondents' War : Journalists in the Spanish-American War*, p.434.

<sup>169</sup> All in *Chicago Tribune* 21 July 1898, p.1. Another report listed only six men to be quarantined on Swinburne island, including Paley. It also referred to the extreme crowding on the ship and a failure to control 'the accumulation of filth'. See 'The *Seneca* quarantined', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 20 July 1898, p.3. A list of sick and wounded civilians from the *Seneca*, detained at Hoffman Island in New York is given in 'Voyage full of misery', op. cit., as part of the news report. This lists the following 13 individuals, many of them correspondents, though not including Paley for some reason: H.C. Christie, New York; Charles G. Hands, London *Daily Mail*; J. O'Donnell Bennett, *Chicago Journal*; M. Smith, *Atlanta Journal*; H.I. Hancock, *Golden Hours*, New York; C.R. Francis, *Minneapolis Times*; J.C. Wheat Jr., Photographer for General Ludlow; K.G. Bellairs; J.C. Ewan, *Toronto Globe*; L. Langland, *Chicago Daily News*; J.E. Chamberlain, *Boston Transcript*; G.F. Harris, *Chicago Record*; H.L. Beach, Associated Press.

<sup>170</sup> Stephen Bonsal, op. cit, p.536.

<sup>171</sup> Hancock, *What One Man Saw : Being the Personal Impressions of a War Correspondent in Cuba*, p.175, 177. Many of the troops returned to the US 'as mere shadows of their former selves', wrote a doctor who accompanied one regiment. Quoted in Freidel, *The Splendid Little War*, p.295, and see 298.

<sup>172</sup> Biograph picture catalogue. The film was 55 feet in length. Biograph made additional films at Camp Wikoff in September, including *President McKinley's Inspection of Camp Wikoff*, no.783; and at Camp Meade: *22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Kansas Volunteers*, no.785. Cited in Musser, *Emergence*, p.248/250.

<sup>173</sup> Monte Cutler, op. cit.

<sup>174</sup> The six titles are: *U.S. Troops Landing at Daiquiri, Cuba*; *Mules Swimming Ashore at Daiquiri, Cuba*; *Major General Shafter*; *Packing Ammunition on Mules, Cuba*; *Pack Mules with Ammunition on the Santiago Trail, Cuba*; *Troops Making Military Road in Front of Santiago*. The last film (film no. 600 in Musser's catalogue) was copyrighted 3 Sep 1898, about a month

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after his five other films of the US forces in Cuba. The late copyright date might indicate that the film was sent back at a later date than the five other films – possibly because of Paley's sickness?

<sup>175</sup> Not including some war fakes, possibly attributable to him. Some 23 Spanish-American War films by Paley are on the Library of Congress website, among 68 films produced during the war and the Philippine Revolution at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/>. This site, 'The Spanish-American War in Motion Pictures', also includes a list of the films in chronological order along with essays offering a historical context for their filming. A good general article on films of the two wars is Karen C. Lund, 'The Motion Picture Camera Goes to War : the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Revolution', *LC Information Bulletin* 57, March 1998, p.48-49, 53.

<sup>176</sup> A film, possibly this one, of 'a train of these pack mules bound for the front' was described enthusiastically by a reporter as a 'capital cinematographe'. 'The Santiago Campaign', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 4 Apr 1899, p.3, col.2. The film was shown by Dwight L. Elmendorf. Hemment also covered the ammunition mule trains – in still photographs: see LW 18 Aug 1898, p.129.

<sup>177</sup> LW 1 Sep 1898, p.178.

<sup>178</sup> Even prior to the war, the Biograph company was developing plans for news filming based on an agenda similar to that of newspapers of the time, and using press agencies and other sources as a means of alerting the company's cameraman to hot news stories. See Stephen Bottomore, "'Every Phase of Present-Day Life": Biograph's Non-Fiction Production', *Griffithiana*, no. 66/70, 1999/2000, p.147-211.

<sup>179</sup> Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure : Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p.108.

<sup>180</sup> Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: a History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1964), p.389.

<sup>181</sup> Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film, 1895-1915 : a Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), p.139.

<sup>182</sup> Lee Royal, *The Romance of Motion Picture Production* (Los Angeles: Royal Publishing Company, 1920), p.9, 11. David Nasaw writes that thanks to the Spanish-American War, '...the moving pictures leapt out of the realm of cheap novelty amusements to assume a new and relatively exalted role as visual newspapers and patriotic cheerleaders.' David Nasaw, *Going Out : The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.149-150.

**Chapter 6**  
**THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR**  
**II. Re-staging a war for the moving pictures**

**INTRODUCTION**

While film companies and individual cameramen like William Paley made great efforts to film the events of the Spanish-American War, no-one could pretend, either at the time, or in retrospect, that the filmic reporting of the war had been a total success. Few films shot by the actuality cameramen gave much sense of the intense military conflict on the ground; none could portray the stirring geopolitical events which were taking place, whereby one nation lost its empire and another, the United States, for the first time became an imperial power. Nor did these little vignettes of troop movements and the like of themselves slake the patriotic ferment that was sweeping America's entertainment venues. The early film business had to do something more. That 'something' came in two main forms: staging and programming.

In the following chapter we will describe how exhibitors programmed together war-related films to create extensive shows about the conflict. In this chapter we deal with the production of war-related staged films, which might also be called 'imaginative representations', including fakes. Of course this was not the first time that such films had been produced: the previous year Méliès had made his four 'artificially arranged scenes' of the Greco-Turkish War. But during this war with Spain the numbers and variety of such films increased greatly, with several identifiable sub-genres emerging. Their common feature was that they were not straight recordings of events, but had been dramatised or staged. I will deal with these in three categories: symbolic or allegorical films, re-staged battles using actors, and re-staged naval battles using model ships.

**SYMBOLIC AND FLAG FILMS**

The symbolic film is a rarely discussed genre of early cinema, yet one which was quite significant. Such films used national symbols such as 'Britannia' or 'Uncle Sam' or various flags, to express and evoke nationalist feelings and emotions. Interestingly, it seems that symbolic films about conflict in Cuba were some of the first moving pictures ever shown in America. These scenes, dealing with the preceding conflict between Spain and Cuban nationalists, were entitled *Monroe Doctrine* and *Cuba Libre* and featured in a programme at Koster and Bial's music hall for the week of 20 Apr 1896.<sup>1</sup> The latter film, also known as *Cuban Liberty*, was a burlesque based on a press cartoon about Uncle Sam bringing to a close the disagreement between Cuba and Spain.<sup>2</sup>



By 1898 there was intense interest among Americans in the Cuban issue, and filmmaker Edward Hill Amet (1860–1948) – a name we shall come across again in this chapter – filmed short allegorical tableaux, such as *Freedom of Cuba* (aka *New Republic*), to crystallise public feelings.<sup>3</sup> This film is rich – indeed overflowing – with symbolism, with five separate emblematic characters presenting a triumphant version of Cuba’s liberation. The action has President McKinley and Admiral Dewey parting to reveal Columbia (or ‘Liberty’) entreating Uncle Sam (with an unaccustomed rifle and bayonet in hand) to intervene on behalf of helpless ‘Cuba’. Cuba, portrayed as a child – implying that the country was incapable of self-rule – then drops the Cuban flag, grasps the US flag and is wrapped in its folds.<sup>4</sup> [Fig. 2]

The ‘Stars and Stripes’ appears in several films of this time, along with other flag combinations, and these – what I will call ‘flag films’ – were so common that they virtually became a genre in themselves. The most celebrated and influential was made by Albert E. Smith (1875-1958) and J. Stuart Blackton (1875-1941). This pair, both originally from England, began collaborating in the film business in 1897. When the Spanish-American War loomed early the following year, they were both still working as exhibitors, but the renewed interest in cinema in these militant times, and the need for new subjects, encouraged them to go into film production, using a camera that the inventive Smith had devised.

In the Spring of 1898 they made their film, *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* (aka *The Spanish Flag Pulled Down* or *The Spanish Flag Torn Down*) which was shot in their little studio on top of the Morse building in New York. The shooting date has conventionally been given as 21 April.<sup>5</sup> However, the cash ledger for Smith/Blackton’s company reveals a purchase for 3 May of ‘2 flags – 20 cents’, which strongly suggests that the film was made soon after that. This later date would make some sense, in that Dewey had sunk the Spanish fleet on 1 May, and subsequently there would be a big demand for any film which could celebrate the US victory.<sup>6</sup>

The film doesn’t seem to survive (see below), but there are several descriptions of it, though all seem to date from many years after it was produced. The earliest I have seen (from 1914), probably originating from Blackton, describes the beginning of the film as showing, ‘a Spanish flag fluttering proudly on the breeze. For fully thirty seconds there was nothing to be seen but this hated emblem’. He continues: ‘... then a hand appeared; slowly the great hand reached towards the flag of the enemy, grasped the hostile banner and dragged it down, and by the same movement, the Stars and Stripes was run up in its place!’<sup>7</sup>

To film this piece of propaganda was quite simple to arrange, as Blackton recalled: ‘Our background was the building next door. We had a flag pole and two 18" flags’.<sup>8</sup> The camera was operated by Smith and it was Blackton’s hand which apparently appeared in the shot. While it has been suggested that the extant *Raising Old Glory Over Morro Castle* (Vitagraph, 1899) might be the film in question under a different title, I have viewed it and there is no hand that pulls down the flag: the Spanish flag is simply lowered and the US one is

raised in its place, against a painted background of the castle.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that Blackton's recollection was in error about the hand, but even the film's title does suggest a flag actually being torn down.

Smith called their film an 'intensely patriotic vignette' and recalled that it was a great success.<sup>10</sup> Blackton agreed, stating that they '...sold hundreds of copies of this film'.<sup>11</sup> He added that it was their '... very first dramatic picture and it is surprising how much dramatic effect it created. The people went wild'.<sup>12</sup> Ramsaye described this audience reaction:

'Cheers rocked the vaudeville houses and hats were tossed into the orchestra pits when the hand of righteous destiny reached out to tear down the Spanish banner... Hundreds of copies of the subject were sold by Smith and Blackton. And from obscure sources dozens of imitations of it sprang up to meet the market demand.'<sup>13</sup>

While the 'hundreds of copies' is probably exaggeration, the claim of imitation is probably correct, for during the course of 1898 and 1899 several flag films were released which may indeed have been inspired by Smith and Blackton's example.<sup>14</sup> The copycat versions included a Biograph film which showed 'a Jack Tar climbing up a mast, hauling down the Spanish flag in Puerto Rico and replacing it by the Stars and Stripes'.<sup>15</sup> [Fig. 1] This played at Keith's Theater in New York as *What We Are Going to Do in Puerto Rico*, and as it was shown, a reviewer reported, 'the audience vents its enthusiasm in a hearty cheer'. The same film ran for weeks at Keith's in Philadelphia, and the pianist played 'Hot time in the old town tonight' as the US flag triumphed.<sup>16</sup> Amet too made a flag film which, though it simply showed the US flag flying, had the distinction of being in colour, roughly tinted, frame by frame.<sup>17</sup> (The practice of hand colouring films began early in film history, but it was certainly an innovative process in America at this time, no matter how crudely done by Amet.) One title actually preceded the Smith/Blackton version: an Edison film of March 1897, *American and Cuban Flag*, which showed the American and then the Cuba Libre flags one after the other.<sup>18</sup>

Flag films of this kind were in a sense reflecting what was happening outside the theatres, for by the early Spring of 1898 America had become swathed in the Stars and Stripes. As one witness put it, 'everywhere over this good, fair land, flags were flying'.<sup>19</sup> When a British writer arrived in New York in April he found the city 'decked out for a carnival', with American flags everywhere, along with war bulletins and bunting.<sup>20</sup> Other flag imagery also became current at this time, including the theme of the coming together of the 'Anglo-Saxon races': on this subject, a Biograph film, shown in London as early as February, depicted the company's representative bowing to the camera 'before a background where the English and American flags are tastefully united'.<sup>21</sup>

But Smith and Blackton's, *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* was the most significant of all, and was to be a very important film for the pair, not only because it was one of their first, but also because its success marked them as potential winners in the field of film production, and this perceived success led

to a strengthened relationship with the Edison company.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, it was seen to bring something new to the screen. Vitagraph's historian writing in the 1920s, claimed that the film was something of a fresh step in filmic narrative and representation, being:

'... the pioneering step away from the old order, and the *very first* moving picture that was a *picture play* and that told a story in the *fluid continuity of pictured pantomime*. ... it was an unprecedented reliance upon the intelligent ability of audiences to understand the significance of picture pantomime ... the first step toward the realization that a new art was in hand.'<sup>23</sup>

Blackton had analogous views of the importance of this film, later writing that wherever screened it created huge excitement among audiences, and:

'It was suddenly apparent that these little squares of film possessed the power to arouse public feeling to a tremendous pitch of patriotic and emotional fervor. The motion picture was no longer a pleasing novelty. Intelligently directed, it possessed hitherto undiscovered, potential forces. Its latent drama could stir human emotions to their depths. It was capable of moulding and influencing the minds of people to a degree and to an extent impossible to predict, but even then dimly discernible. To thinking minds, it began to loom large as an overwhelming power for good and evil.'<sup>24</sup>

While this and the previous quotation might be making rather larger claims for this very brief and basic film than it warrants, *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* was certainly an interesting development in representing abstract ideas – the nation, global power, military success, etc – on screen. Such abstract imagery would be especially important in the early history of the war film, for the simple reason that if the real event could not be filmed, then moving images of emotive national symbols might be just as effective in satisfying the audience.

## **STAGED RE-ENACTMENTS WITH ACTORS**

A year after Méliès' fake films of the Greco-Turkish war appeared, by the time of the Spanish-American War producers seem to have developed tremendous confidence in making re-enacted (fake) films. Certainly the numbers were much greater, as befitted a more significant conflict, with at least two dozen fake films with actors being made about this war by various different producers in France and especially the USA. War fakes became a significant genre at this time, and were possibly seen just as frequently as actuality subjects about the war, or indeed more so, if we are to believe an early exhibitor, William Swanson. He recalled that because of the interest in war films, 1898 was a boom year for himself, and he showed a number of war subjects which mainly consisted of fakes, of both naval and land battles.<sup>25</sup>

## Fakes made in France

A year on from producing the world's first war fakes, Georges Méliès was quickly back at work on this new war, and turned out four films on the theme:

*The Blowing up of the 'Maine' in Havana Harbor*

*The Wreck of the Maine*

*A View of the Wreck of the 'Maine'*

*Defending the Fort at Manila*

The first three were probably made in April 1898, and the last in May.<sup>26</sup> The films were shot on studio sets with actors, though the first may have involved a model. This film, *The Blowing up of the "Maine" in Havana Harbor* appeared in Méliès' French catalogue as *Quais de la Havane (Explosion du Cuirassé le Maine)* with two catalogue numbers, being twice the normal length. This suggests that there were two shots, one perhaps being an actuality view.<sup>27</sup> In one venue in the USA the film was characterized as 'illustrating the manner in which the Spaniards blew up our Battleship' (the American exhibitors being in no doubt that the Spanish were responsible for the blast).<sup>28</sup> The term 'illustrating' suggests a non-actuality view, and these exhibitors also, interestingly, described it as 'a prearranged picture' – so there was no attempt here to deceive the audience into thinking they would be shown the real thing. The Warwick catalogue also suggested to purchasers that the film was not genuine, stating that it was, 'A faithful portrayal of this deplorable incident of the Spanish-American War'.<sup>29</sup>

The only one of these Méliès films to survive is *The Wreck of the Maine*, which depicts a scene of the sunken *Maine* at the bottom of the sea – the underwater effect being achieved by filming through an aquarium in which fish were swimming.<sup>30</sup> Divers in diving-suits come down a rope-ladder to get to the sea bed (a typical and delightful example of Méliès' humour), and they pull one dead sailor out of the ship. This latter action might have been viewed in America as in poor taste, though it is not clear if the film was shown in the US at the time. This was the most celebrated film of the series, singled out from the others in a French review on 1 May as 'du plus vif intérêt' (of the greatest interest).<sup>31</sup> Méliès himself later described it as his 'masterpiece' (chef d'oeuvre), noting that fakes like this were how one 'moved the masses'.<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, the third film released was entitled *A View of the Wreck of the "Maine"*, but I can find no further details about this, and it may simply have been another version of *The Wreck of the Maine*.

The final film, *Defending the Fort at Manila*, is described in an original French source as follows (my translation): 'The interior of a fort. A big gun fires a salvo at the enemy. Many shells hit the fort and smash the walls. An enemy shell falls on the artillerymen, killing and wounding some of them'.<sup>33</sup> The Warwick catalogue described the film more simply as: 'showing the shelling of Fort and Battleships'. It is interesting that Méliès had chosen in this film to depict a relatively minor aspect of the Manila battle – the shelling by the Americans of shore fortifications – rather than the major action of the battle, the sinking of the Spanish fleet; and also that he had chosen to show the action at the Spanish receiving end, rather than seen from the US ships which

were doing the shelling. This suggests sympathy for the Spanish viewpoint, and probably reflects the general support in France for Spain versus America during this war (which may have been Méliès' view too).

Also in France, the Gaumont company listed a couple of fake war films in their 1899 catalogue, though it is not known if they (Gaumont) also produced them. *Explosion of the Merrimac* (my translation of this and the following) is described as showing 'A Spanish fort in Cuba. Explosion of a ship. Cannonade directed on the shipwrecked men'. This is based on a real incident: an attempt, under heavy Spanish fire, to block the entrance of Santiago harbour by scuttling an old collier, the USS *Merrimac*.<sup>34</sup> The other film was *An Incident in the Spanish-American War*, which depicted 'Spanish soldiers surprising rebels in a house during an attack'.<sup>35</sup>

### **Fakes made in the USA**

Given that this was a popular war in America, and that the US film industry was among the most advanced in the world at this time, it is not surprising that most of the fakes of the war were made in the United States: produced by Amet, Edison, Lubin, Selig, and later, Biograph.

While Edward Amet is better known for his model work (see below), he probably started his war-related moviemaking with live action fakes. The performers in these films were residents from his community and possibly members of his family.<sup>36</sup> The films included 'several scenarios of off duty military camp activities', says one film historian, and while the films in question don't survive, there are some stills from these productions, showing 'soldiers' off duty in camp mess and in 'close order drill'.<sup>37</sup> [Fig. 3] The scenes supposedly being set in military camps look fairly authentic, with the players in apparently realistic US military attire.

But Amet's other scenes portraying fighting may not have been so true to life, to judge from a production still of his re-enactment, *Battle of San Juan Hill*. This was shot in a flat landscape, with not a hill in sight! The still shows a group of American soldiers firing their rifles from prone positions, with an officer commanding, and some of the film crew including Amet standing nearby, observing the action. The film seems to have involved the soldiers taking casualties, for one of the players later recalled that because of his young age, he was given the role of a 'drummer boy' who was to be killed in the battle.<sup>38</sup> The still indeed shows the drummer boy lying on the ground, as if dead. [Fig. 4] Precise production dates of Amet's live action war films are not known.<sup>39</sup>

The Edison company had filmed actualities of Roosevelt's Rough Riders preparing for the war, and the focus on the Rough Riders continued in a series of fake skirmishes they made in New Jersey. Edison produced some seven films of this type from 1898, many of them directed by James H. White. The titles in question were *Shooting Captured Insurgents*; *Cuban Ambush*; *Surrender of General Toral*; *Sailors Landing under Fire* (all 1898), and the following year the company released *Battle of San Juan Hill*; *U.S. Infantry Supported by Rough Riders at El Caney*; *Skirmish of Rough Riders*.<sup>40</sup> Some

of these were re-enacted with the New Jersey National Guard costumed as American soldiers and – strangely – African-Americans to play the Spaniards, though it seems there were some production disputes with the cast.<sup>41</sup> Some of the films (which survive as paper print versions) are quite impressive for sheer numbers of actors and lively action: in *Battle of San Juan Hill*, for example, as the US soldiers come from behind camera, the air thick with smoke from their rifle fire, one of their number is wounded by enemy fire and is stretchered away. As Charles Musser has covered the story of these fakes so thoroughly in his books, I will not dwell further on them or their details of production. Suffice it to say that they showed plenty of shooting and explosions, with the Americans triumphing. One further, unrelated Edison dramatisation, produced later is worth mentioning: Edwin Porter's dramatisation of the Samson-Schley controversy (1901).<sup>42</sup>

The Lubin company also made or released fakes about this war (sometimes distributed by the F.M. Prescott company): indeed they were even more prolific in this type of production than Edison, releasing eleven films from June 1898 (in addition to duping footage from other companies). The titles in question were: *Capture of a Spanish Fort near Santiago*; *Battle of Guantanamo*; *Hoisting the American Flag at Cavite, near Manila*; *Fighting near Santiago*; *Execution of the Spanish Spy*; *Spanish Infantry Attacking American Soldiers in Camp*; *After the Battle*; *Charge of the Rough Riders at El Caney*; *Death of Maceo and His Followers*; *Charge at Las Guasimas*; *Repulse of the Spanish Troops at Santiago by the American Forces*. These films were full of action and depicted hand-to-hand fighting. For example, of *Fighting near Santiago* the catalogue stated: 'This is an animated scene, showing a fight, in which the Americans are finally victorious'. The catalogue emphasised the realism of particular films in this group, or stressed that a film adhered to an actual event. For example, *Repulse of the Spanish Troops* is described as 'an exact reproduction of the fight as it occurred'.<sup>43</sup>

Most of Lubin's re-enactments of battles were staged in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. One anecdote mentions an attempt to film a reconstruction of an attack by an all-black unit with some three hundred local African Americans. This frightened a family riding in a carriage through the park, and when the police were summoned, the scene was ruined. It is claimed that Lubin also attempted to make a model-based film of the sinking of the *Maine* in the family bathtub, but it was so ineffective that he didn't release the film.<sup>44</sup>

The F.M. Prescott company distributed some of the Lubin films, among some 70-odd Spanish-American War films ('for sale only by us') listed in their 1899 catalogue, and evidently many of them were fakes. They introduced these views in vivid terms:

'In these superior films can be seen the dead and wounded and the dismantled cannon lying on the field of battle. The men are seen struggling for their lives, and the American flag proudly waves over them and can be plainly seen through the dense smoke. The brave American and Cuban soldiers show their valor and superiority in fighting the hated Spaniards. You think you can hear the huge cannon

belch forth their death-dealing missiles, and can really imagine yourself on the field witnessing the actual battle.<sup>145</sup>

Selig also released a couple of fakes of this war: a film entitled *Soldiers Firing on Train* in 1899 and, probably later, *Charge at Las Guasimas* (the latter was presumably the Lubin film).<sup>46</sup> Biograph produced a few battle scenes or re-enactments at Camp Meade in September, but long after Lubin and others had already made films of this kind.<sup>47</sup>

### **Believability**

A year after the war, a certain 'cinematographe expert' was interviewed about films portraying the conflict, and was asked specifically: 'Were they fakes or the real thing?' He replied:

"A little of both. The pictures showing soldiers in action were mostly fakes, but they were very good ones... Real soldiers went through all the motions of firing and charging right there on the ground and now and then one would seem to topple over dead. Such scenes were tremendously realistic."<sup>48</sup>

He was probably referring to the Edison fakes which were indeed filmed with real soldiers. But 'realistic' is not the word that modern spectators would use to describe some of these Edison war fakes: the performances of the soldiers, especially, look 'acted' to a modern eye. But many early spectators had seen few films till then, let alone films of war, and in such circumstances people might not have had the experience to know whether certain films were fakes or not. For example, the soldiers throw up their hands and 'die' in melodramatic style, but this was a conventional way to 'die' in that era, and might have been seen as realistic by some spectators.

One newspaper man urged viewers to use their critical faculties when looking at war films, and to ask themselves about the *plausibility* of these scenes. He scoffed at the gullibility of some audiences in accepting such films as real:

'How any sane person can believe that a motion-picture outfit can be taken on a battlefield and worked directly in front of a lot of riflemen firing directly at the camera, I don't see; but you hear "Oh!" and "Ah!" "Weren't those men *brave*, George, who took that picture at San Juan Hill?" etc. etc., all over the theatre when those interesting but fraudulent pictures are being shown.'<sup>49</sup>

This and similar anecdotes, even if only partially true, do suggest that some viewers of the 1898 fakes were taken in, and the writer was probably being unrealistic in thinking that a logical form of thought such as plausibility would have applied when the more immediate influence on viewers was the showman, who may have been confidently touting these films as 'the real thing'. What is more, films showing such hand-to-hand fighting taken from 'impossible' line-of-fire camera positions were not the only kind of fakes being produced, and some of the model-based fakes were indeed fairly convincing.

## STAGED RE-ENACTMENTS WITH SCALE-MODELS

### Smith and Blackton's floating photographs

As we have seen, live action fakes with actors had already been made of the Greco-Turkish war, and so the real innovation in war fakery of the Spanish-American War was not acted fakes, but model-based films. Examples of these were made by the team of Smith and Blackton as well as by Edward Amet.<sup>50</sup> Smith and Blackton's flag film had been in a sense an early example of model or miniature work, made with a small-ish flag which on screen seemed to look larger and more impressive. But their even more significant contribution to the use of models was *The Battle of Manila Bay*, a re-enactment of Dewey's naval victory of 1 May.

This was probably shot in their small studio in New York, in an improvised canvas tank.<sup>51</sup> It is a near certainty that it was made in May, some three weeks after Dewey's victory, because records survive proving that appropriate props and other materials were purchased by Smith/Blackton at that time: entries in their account book or cash ledger for 19 May 1898 reveal that on that date they purchased 'Fireworks – 40 cents', and 'Gunpowder and gypsum(?) – 17 cents'.<sup>52</sup> Also purchased were two naval books, a photograph, cards, plus photographic chemicals and raw film stock.<sup>53</sup>

What did they do with these materials? There are a number of accounts of the filming process from Smith, Blackton and others, all of which broadly tally with one another and also make sense of the list of materials just given, suggesting that these accounts are correct in general if not in all details. Smith's account from his autobiography is worth quoting in full:

'At this time street vendors in New York were selling large sturdy photographs of ships of the American and Spanish fleets. We bought a set of each and we cut out the battleships.<sup>54</sup> On a table, topside down, we placed one of artist Blackton's large canvas-covered frames and filled it with water an inch deep. In order to stand the cutouts of the ships in the water, we nailed them to lengths of wood about an inch square. In this way a little "shelf" was provided behind each ship, and on this shelf we placed pinches of gunpowder – three pinches for each ship – not too many, we felt, for a major sea engagement of this sort. For a background, Blackton daubed a few white clouds on a blue-tinted cardboard. To each of the ships, now sitting placidly in our shallow "bay," we attached a fine thread to enable us to pull the ships past the camera at the proper moment and in the correct order.

We needed someone to blow smoke into the scene, but we couldn't go too far outside our circle if the secret was to be kept. Mrs. Blackton was called in and she volunteered, in this day of nonsmoking womanhood, to smoke a cigarette. A friendly office boy said he would try a cigar. This was fine, as we needed the volume.

A piece of cotton was dipped in alcohol and attached to a wire slender enough to escape the eye of the camera. Blackton, concealed behind the side of the table farthest from the camera, touched off the



mounds of gunpowder with his wire taper – and the battle was on. Mrs. Blackton, smoking and coughing, delivered a fine haze. Jim [Blackton] had worked out a timing arrangement with her so that she blew the smoke into the scene at approximately the moment of explosion.

...

It would be less than the truth to say we were not wildly excited at what we saw on the screen. The smoky overcast and the flashes of fire from the "guns" gave the scene an atmosphere of remarkable realism. The film and the lenses of that day were imperfect enough to conceal the crudities of our miniature, and as the picture ran only two minutes there was not time for anyone to study it critically.<sup>55</sup>

The film survives, and is indeed quite realistic, at least by comparison with some other fakes of this era. An early observer of the film industry, insider Epes W. Sargent, recalled that the film was fairly convincing, and was, he added, 'accepted as genuine by most of the audience'.<sup>56</sup> It was, like their flag film, a big success, and was exhibited, Smith says, at Pastor's and Proctor's theatres 'to capacity audiences for several weeks'. Blackton recalled that '...crude though it was the audiences cheered wildly when the Spanish fleet jerkily disappeared beneath the waters of the canvas tank'.<sup>57</sup> Some sources give the title of this film as *The Battle of Santiago Bay*, suggesting that it represents the July victory in Cuba rather than Dewey's 1 May battle, and presumably exhibitors could get away with claiming it portrayed either battle.

Some accounts say that Blackton suffered a mishap during the making of this film. A 1914 article noted that: 'Mr. Blackton had one hand on the powder box when a chance spark ignited the contents... the interior of his hand was burned almost to a cinder'.<sup>58</sup> A historical article about Vitagraph of similar vintage also describes the accident, and adds that Blackton then told inquiring friends that he had received the wound at the actual battle. Perhaps this is how the partners began to spin their yarns about having gone to film in Cuba?<sup>59</sup> Both partners later trumpeted their film as pioneering the use of miniatures in cinema.<sup>60</sup> Blackton, for example, wrote: 'That was the beginning of making the miniature look like the real large thing'.<sup>61</sup> This is a reasonable assessment of their achievement, though it was an achievement shared with Amet, as we shall see. An indication of the importance they attached to this film is in the fact that the making of it was re-enacted for Blackton's *The March of the Movies* (aka *The Film Parade*), a historical film which he made in the early 1930s. Both Blackton and Smith appeared in this film, performing their work with miniatures as they had originally done over thirty years earlier.<sup>62</sup>

### **Edward Amet's scale-model ships**

The other pioneer to make model-based re-enactments of Spanish-American War naval battles was Edward Amet, but using three-dimensional scale models rather than Smith/Blackton's technique of mounted cut-out photographs. In later years Blackton was keen to denigrate the achievements of this rival producer:

'At this time Amet had a lot of expensive models made of the vessels and photographed them. And when photographed they looked like

models, but ours being photographs of photographs looked like the real thing, except when they jiggled on their wooden blocks.’<sup>63</sup>

While Blackton is clearly biased, a more impartial writer, Kirk Kekatos, takes the opposite point of view, seeing Amet’s model films as in ‘marked contrast’ to the ‘particularly feeble’ *Battle of Manila Bay*.<sup>64</sup> Kekatos is surely correct in placing Amet’s films ahead of Smith and Blackton’s in historical significance, in that his were actual models, in anticipation of modern film modelling methods, whereas Smith/Blackton’s use of cut-out photographs was more or less a dead-end in film technique. Kekatos concludes that Amet ‘pioneered the use of automated miniatures in motion pictures, now a commonplace attribute of “special effects” in today’s motion pictures’. One must agree.

### **Production details of Amet’s films**

Amet seems to have started making model films after producing his live action fakes, though I suspect that there may have been some overlap.<sup>65</sup> He claimed that he began making fakes of the war after being refused permission from the American Government to go to Cuba and film the actual event, though I have found no evidence for such an application or refusal.<sup>66</sup> Whereas the Vitagraph founders made only two fake films related to the war, and only one with models, Amet was more prolific. Charles Musser lists five naval battle re-enactment films made by him in 1898 (and there might have been others).<sup>67</sup> The following are the titles given by Musser, together with longer/alternate titles for three of the films taken from a Lyman Howe programme of mid September, and I have numbered the films for clarity (for a more detailed list, see **Box**):<sup>68</sup>

1. *Flagship “New York” Under Way*
2. *Bombardment of Matanzas ; aka The Bombardment of Matanzas by the Flagship “New York” and Monitor “Puritan”*
3. *Firing [a] Broadside at Cabanas ; aka The Flagship New York Bombarding Cabanas Fortress*<sup>69</sup>
4. *Dynamite Cruiser “Vesuvius” ; aka The Dynamite Cruiser, “Vesuvius” [sic] in Action*
5. *Spanish Fleet Destroyed*

Kekatos has described the process of filming these productions (or some of them) in detail. With the help of family and friends Amet constructed a shallow water tank some 18 feet by 24 feet, with a painted backdrop showing a shoreline and mountainous terrain beyond.<sup>70</sup> [Fig. 5 and 8] The miniature ships, complete with guns, flags, and other fittings, were constructed of sheet metal and built to 1/70 scale, ranging in size from 3½ to 5½ feet long and 2½ to 3 feet high. That is surprisingly large for film models, and indicates the ambition and magnitude of this enterprise.<sup>71</sup> Terry Ramsaye noted that, ‘The models were proportioned to the lens angle to create perspective with great accuracy’.<sup>72</sup>

The scaled-down ships replicated major American naval vessels, including USS *New York*, *Olympia*, *Puritan*, *Oregon*, *Vesuvius*, *Iowa*, as well as the Spanish ship, HMS *Viscaya*, and they were powered by electricity.<sup>73</sup>

Camphor-soaked cotton wadding provided the smoke issuing from funnels, and each ship was fitted with working gun turrets, with gunpowder and blasting caps for firing.<sup>74</sup> During filming, a fan simulated sea waves, and water jets within the tank gave the effect of the ships' prows ploughing against the waves. Amet was an experienced inventor, and clearly his mechanical abilities were invaluable in this work.

Ramsaye wrote a vivid description of the process of filming one naval battle, with Amet giving instructions and operating the camera, and an assistant, William H. Howard ('Billy'), manning an electrical control panel off camera:

"Number One, Billy!" Then the black smoke rolled from the funnels of the ships under forced draught.

"Number two." Another button and the ships were under way with a curling bow wave at the cutwaters.

"Number three." Every ship went into action with shells bursting about, splattering on the armor. A destroyer charged the USS Iowa and a twelve inch rifle lowered and fired point blank. The destroyer lurched under the impact, settled by the stern and sank with a mound of waves rising as the bow went out of sight. So the battle raged.<sup>75</sup>

#### **Amet's films: dates and identification**

It seems that there is precious little hard information about exactly when Amet made his model-based fakes of the war, though one can attempt some rough dating based on the events and ships portrayed, and dates of the films' first exhibition. At the start of the Spanish-American War, the flagship *New York* headed the squadron of ships assigned to the Caribbean, and she bombarded Matanzas (on the north shore of Cuba) on 27 April, and Cabañas (on the southern shore, near Santiago) a few days later. The squadron included the *Puritan*, and the *Vesuvius* may also have taken part.<sup>76</sup> These ships were all represented in Amet's fakes. The Caribbean naval engagements were followed by the sinking of the Spanish fleet at Manila bay on 1 May.<sup>77</sup> This intense period of US naval action, lasting from 27 April to 1 May, might well have been what inspired Amet to set up his tank and make his models.<sup>78</sup>

A latest date limit for production is established by the fact that one of Amet's films, probably the *Cabanas* or *Matanzas* title, was available by the end of June/early July, because it was described on 2 July in a New York periodical (see below). I suspect therefore, that at least the first four titles that I listed above were filmed in May 1898, and late in May seems most likely, because detailed news of these actions only became available in the middle of the month, and Amet would have needed some time to construct the models, etc. This is roughly the same date that Blackton and Smith were making their *Manila Bay* film.

Amet's model-based fake films were apparently based on war events reported in the news, and he was guided in the design of his ships and settings by pictures published in the illustrated press. So claimed Terry Ramsaye, noting that Amet made the models with military details 'all to fit exactly with the pictures and descriptions in the periodicals'.<sup>79</sup> Kekatos draws attention to

press illustrations that might have guided the filmmaker: for example, *Harper's Weekly* in its issue of 14 May 1898 carried fifteen pages devoted to events of the Spanish-American War, including 27 illustrations of various notables and military events. Three full page illustrations depicted the naval engagements at Manila Bay, Cabanas and Matanzas, drawn from on-site observation or from naval reports.<sup>80</sup> These artists' impressions in *Harper's* would have been an invaluable blueprint for Amet to make his models and scenic backgrounds.<sup>81</sup> Incidentally, this cross-fertilisation is another example of the influence of the press on the filming of this war.

There are some problems of film identification. The last film on the list, *Spanish Fleet Destroyed*, is alternatively titled, *Cruiser Vizcaya Under Heavy Fire, Beached And Burned*, and on the face of it, this would seem to represent the Battle of Santiago Bay, 3 July 1898.<sup>82</sup> Ramsaye certainly thought so, and stated that in making fakes of the war, Amet was 'centering his efforts on the sinking of the Admiral Cervera's fleet at Santiago. In miniature he constructed the Bay of Santiago in a tub', and Ramsaye's vivid description quoted above of Amet's filming a sea battle refers to the Santiago Bay event.<sup>83</sup> However I am not so sure Ramsaye was correct in this. It seems to me likely that, rather than Amet setting up his tank and models on a second occasion to film the battle of Santiago Bay in July or later, this film was originally shot to represent the battle of Manila Bay of 1 May, which would mean it would have been shot in May like the other four titles.<sup>84</sup> Re-titling of Amet's films was widespread – and of early war films in general – and a film of the Manila naval battle could easily be said to represent the Santiago battle. Kekatos, like me, also believes that *Spanish Fleet Destroyed* was originally shot as a re-enactment of the Manila Bay battle. He gives a number of examples where the Amet films were re-titled to represent different events.<sup>85</sup>

Amet's model films were apparently distributed quite widely in 1898 and afterwards. An early exhibitor recalled showing a number of fake war films in 1898, including naval fakes, and noted, 'Most of these naval battles took place on a small lake in Wisconsin'. This is probably a confusion for the word 'Waukegan', Amet's home town in Illinois, where he shot the naval re-enactments.<sup>86</sup> Another instance is a screening of a film entitled 'the Bombardment of Fort Matanzas', presumably the Amet production, which was a feature attraction in Omaha's Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898, where it was advertised prominently on the frontage.<sup>87</sup> [Fig. 7 and 9]

### **Believability of Amet's films**

Amet's films were both vivid and, to some spectators, realistic, and this raises the general issue of the believability of fake films, which we previously discussed in relation to acted fakes of this war and in the Greco-Turkish war section. A good example of this issue emerged when the showman Lyman Howe screened some war films in the mid-West in September 1898, including at least three of Amet's naval re-enactments. A local pressman seemed convinced that the films were genuine, claiming that they were 'war scenes photographed on the spot'. He stressed, 'the great risk taken in getting these photographs', noting that 'some of them are so thrillingly realistic that the audience broke out in the most enthusiastic applause'. Probably part of the

reason for their believability was that Howe mixed up the fakes with war-related actualities – genuine films of troops embarking for Cuba, camp life, etc which, the press report noted, were also ‘enthusiastically received by the audience’.<sup>88</sup>

Earlier in the year another reviewer described one of the Amet films, probably *Bombardment [or battle] of Matanzas*, [Fig. 6] as if he were describing a genuine film of the battle:

‘This is a most marvelous picture; in the distance can be seen the mountains and shore line where are located the Spanish batteries. The flag ship *New York* and the monitor *Puritan* are in full action pouring tons of iron and steel at the masked batteries on the shore. Volumes of smoke burst from the monster guns, while shot and shell fall thick and fast. Some shells are seen to burst in the air, scattering their deadly missiles in all directions, while others explode in the sea, throwing volumes of water in the air. A final shot from one of the thirteen inch guns of the *Puritan* lands exactly in the centre of the main battery, completely blowing it out of existence.’<sup>89</sup>

This review implies that the film was not just a re-enactment with models, but had been shot during the naval action itself with a telephoto lens: ‘The new TELESCOPIC LENS is a triumph of modern photography. It is possible to obtain accurate pictures at very long range’.<sup>90</sup> This was not an isolated instance of this claim. One spectator recalled that when a film of the Battle of Manila Bay – quite possibly one of the Amet films – was exhibited in New York, the lecturer told an enthusiastic member of the audience that the battle had been shot from five miles away with ‘a telescopic lens’.<sup>91</sup> Terry Ramsaye confirms that Amet's pictures ‘went out as having been made with a telescopic lens on a camera aboard a dispatch boat at six miles distance from the action’. This suggests a regular pattern of misrepresentation about the alleged lens use, and perhaps Amet’s company had suggested to showmen that they spin this yarn. (The use of a telephoto for filming was claimed during other wars too, as I describe in an Appendix). Perhaps, too, the boast helped to persuade spectators that they were seeing the real battles. Indeed Ramsaye states that ‘the pictures met many a critical eye’, and adds a further anecdote about their perceived realism. When Amet projected the films to a body of officers (at the U.S. Naval Training Station at Lake Bluff, Illinois after the war), Ramsaye tells us the scenes were generally accepted as true-life, but:

There was only one doubting Thomas, an officer who had been aboard the old dynamite ship U.S.S. Vesuvius... This dynamite gunner watched the terrific upheaval caused by one of these bombs.

"I don't see how you could have got that picture – we only operated at night."

"Easy," replied Amet, with one hand on his magniscope projector and the other covering a grin. "You see we used moon-light film."<sup>92</sup>

Ramsaye follows this dubious anecdote with another, stating that a copy of an Amet fake was bought by the Spanish Government to be placed in the

national archives in Madrid. But in 1943 a Spanish film historian, Carlos Fernández Cuenca, made enquiries of officials connected to the Spanish navy, and no record could be found that such a film was ever acquired.<sup>93</sup> Like many early film anecdotes, Ramsaye's stories clearly need to be taken with a pinch of salt, but this should not lessen the central point of this section, that Amet's fakes were probably perceived by some spectators as convincing. The lesson may not have been lost on later filmmakers, in that model work became a central part of filmed special effects, whose central aim – often successful – was to make models resemble the real ships or other large objects. Both Amet and Smith/Blackton's model fakes stand as pioneering examples of such work, and showed that in some circumstances such films could seem almost like the real thing and be highly popular with audiences.

## **CONCLUSION : STAGING, SYMBOLISM AND THE PRESS**

Before the Spanish-American War, the range of film genres had been relatively restricted, and was dominated by 'slices of life' type actualities. During the war, as well as various kinds of actuality films, new genres emerged, based on staged scenes or 'imaginative representations' of the conflict. Staged or faked battles were produced in large numbers, some with actors and some using model ships. The latter were a new genre, invented specifically to re-stage actual events in this war. Also produced for the first time were symbolic or emblematic films, depicting national figures, or showing flags (mainly US) flying. It is striking that such relatively sophisticated forms of representation had emerged so quickly in film history.

One reason for this rapid progress – as for so many apparently 'rapid advances' in early cinema – is doubtless that there were existing models in other media. One key influence (again) was the press, and practices long employed by newspaper and magazine editors provided some guidance for making both symbolic and faked films. As far as the former were concerned, national symbolism was in the air at this time, and was commonly to be seen in the press. For example, *Leslie's Weekly* had potent images of Uncle Sam on its covers in both March and April of 1898: in one case he was brandishing a sword, and in the other standing defiantly before the 'Stars and Stripes', with the caption 'Remember the "Maine"'.<sup>94</sup> [see illustrations for Chapter 2: Fig. 3] Another manifestation of national symbolism – flags – were (as we have mentioned earlier), to be seen flying all over America in 1898, so the flag films that I have described were in a sense a cinematic version of a national trend.

In terms of re-staging and faking, again the American press provided ready-made models. As far as making re-staged films of actual incidents (mainly scale-model naval re-enactments), the press forbear was the artists' impression which was regularly used to show readers how a current news event might have looked as it happened. As for dramatised films of imaginary incidents on the battlefield, these too might have been based on 'invented stories' in the press. While it was officially frowned upon, there was a tradition of deception and faking in newspapers (notably in the yellow press). Sometimes news stories were partially or totally untrue: for example, many

stories in Hearst's *Journal* about resistance and battles in Cuba were total fabrications.<sup>95</sup> The alleged quotation from Hearst comes to mind here: 'You furnish the pictures. I'll furnish the war.'

These, therefore, were some of the existing practices of the press which early filmmakers were able to draw on in making staged representations of the war of '98. These innovative films did not come out of nowhere, they emerged from a media world – especially of the press – which already had a quite sophisticated understanding of artificial, abstract, and indeed mendacious, representation. Nevertheless, these filmmakers were innovators in their own right, in creating an impressive variety of iconic and re-staged scenes within only a couple of years of the origin of the movies. Among their particular achievements, I would highlight two.

The model work of Amet was remarkable not only for its sophistication and ambition (the large size of the models and tank are particularly impressive), but also for the skill with which the films were made. That some audiences thought that these were genuine records of the events is surely testimony to Amet's abilities as a filmmaker, and also a pointer to the future power of cinema – through special effects, for example – to create a convincing illusion of reality. Just as significant were the symbolic moving images produced during the war, such as films of nationalist icons like Uncle Sam or of flags – a theme which was developed even further, as we shall see, during the Boer War. These were some of cinema's first allegorical representations, and opened the door for film to do more than merely reproduce everyday life – it could be a vehicle for abstract ideas too.

Important as these advances were, however, it is arguable that the leading cinematic innovators of the war of '98 were the exhibitors, who programmed these and other films with a sophistication and complexity never seen before. Their achievements are covered in the following chapter.

## Box:

### Edward Amet's films: as exhibited by Lyman Howe, September 1898

With review details from *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 17 September 1898, p. 5.<sup>96</sup>

Film numbers added for clarity.

1. *Flagship "New York" Under Way.*
2. *Bombardment of Matanzas* ; aka *The Bombardment of Matanzas by the Flagship "New York" and Monitor "Puritan"* – ‘... shows the bombardment of Matanzas by the New York and the monitor Puritan. Shot after shot are thrown into the city and the awful possibilities of the modern war vessel are seen in the rapidity with which the shells are sent on their way of destruction.’
3. *Firing [a] Broadside at Cabanas* ; aka *The Flagship New York Bombarding Cabanas Fortress* – ‘... shows the bombardment of Cabanas Fortress by the New York. The vessel steams briskly by the fortress, throwing shell after shell against it. The ship rocks and heaves from the concussion and seems instilled with life, the smoke pouring in volumes from her stacks and the shells flying from her sides. Shells may also be seen coming from the fortress but they fall in the water, the aim of the Spaniards being poor. After the bombardment great holes may be seen in the fort, showing the work of destruction.’
4. *Dynamite Cruiser "Vesuvius"* ; aka *The Dynamite Cruiser, "Vesuvius" [sic] in Action* – ‘The dynamite cruiser Vesuvius in action is one of the best of the series. The vessel looms up in the picture as a small craft, but it is readily seen that she is one of the most destructive war machines yet invented. From her pneumatic guns may be seen coming the terrible charges of guncotton and their effect in tearing away portions of a hill over a mile away creates a deep impression on the audience. One of the shots takes away the whole side of the hill. The ship scarcely makes a quiver while working this awful damage.’
5. *Spanish Fleet Destroyed.*

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> The films were shown with the Vitascope. See Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1964 [orig 1926]), fig. opposite p.236.

<sup>2</sup> Musser, Edison Motion Pictures: Filmography, film no.240.

<sup>3</sup> *Freedom of Cuba* is preserved in the Museum of Modern Art (New York).

<sup>4</sup> My description is based on that in *Treasures from the Film Archives* and by Kirk J. Kekatos, 'Edward H. Amet and the Spanish-American War Film', *Film History* 14, no.3-4 (2002), p.405-417. One writer, Castonguey lapses into unnecessary jargon in his account of the film, describing Uncle Sam as having 'an overdetermined military phallus', meaning his gun.

<sup>5</sup> This date is given by Ramsaye, op. cit., p.389. Blackton gives the same date, in stating that, 'It was made the day after the declaration of war with Spain'. See John C. Tibbetts, and J.



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Stuart Blackton, eds., *Introduction to the Photoplay : 1929: A Contemporary Account of the Transition to Sound in Film* (Shawnee Mission, Kan.: National Film Society / AMPAS, 1977 [1927]), p.31. A resolution for war was signed by McKinley on 20 April (though officially war was declared by the US on the 25<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> From the account book of the Commercial Advertising Bureau (forerunner of Vitagraph), Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, UCLA. This source also contains the following details: 25 April: 'Films (Cuban Maguire) – \$87'; 2 May: 'Card hocks(?) and rigs – \$1.05'.

<sup>7</sup> 'A New Belasco: the Story and Views of a Man Who Has Won Big Success in Motion Pictures', *The Blue Book Magazine* 19, no. 2 (June 1914), p.245-6. Courtney wrote that: 'the whole picture was only about fifty feet long'. William Basil Courtney, 'History of Vitagraph', *Motion Picture News*, 14 and 21 February 1925, p.662.

<sup>8</sup> John C. Tibbetts, and J. Stuart Blackton, eds., *Introduction to the Photoplay*, op. cit., p.31. Blackton recalled that, 'It was taken in our 10' x 12' studio room'.

<sup>9</sup> Musser lists this film, *Raising Old Glory over Morro Castle*, as no.647, shot approx 2 January 1899. Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures*, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Alan Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry, 1898-1980* (New York; London: Garland, 1983), p.99-100, quoting from a 1917 court case in which Albert Smith gave evidence.

<sup>11</sup> Manuscript of Blackton's 'The World in Motion', p.6-7. In Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, 'Newspaper clippings', UCLA.

<sup>12</sup> John C. Tibbetts, and J. Stuart Blackton, eds., *Introduction to the Photoplay*, op. cit., p.31. Blackton's biographer (and daughter) adds (without giving any sources, probably because this is supposition): 'This film whipped New York theatregoers to a frenzy of patriotism and sent hundreds of young men stampeding to the enlistment offices'. Marian Blackton Trimble, *J. Stuart Blackton : A Personal Biography* (Metuchen ; London: Scarecrow, 1985), p.12.

<sup>13</sup> Ramsaye, op. cit., p.389. He added that, 'Tearing Down the Spanish Flag was a tremendous success'.

<sup>14</sup> Flag films included: *The American Flag* (1898), *Freedom of Cuba* (Amet, 1898), *Hoisting the American Flag at Cavite, near Manila* (Lubin, 1898), *How the Flag Changed in Cuba* (Lubin, 1898?), *Old Glory and Cuban Flag* (versions 1 and 2) (USA, Edison Mfg. Co., Mar, 1898), *When the Flag Falls* (nd), *Defending the Colors* (no production details, but advertised in *The Phonoscope*, Jan 1899), *What Our Boys Did at Manila* (AMB, 1898).

<sup>15</sup> E. W. Mayo, 'The Making of Moving Pictures', *The Quaker*, Oct 1899, p.476. Mayo noted the brief shelf life of such patriotic, war-time films: 'That picture never failed to rouse enthusiastic cheers wherever it was shown a year ago. Now it is much less effective'. On p.469 several frames are reproduced of 'Photographs from a reel of nine hundred views illustrating a popular change of flags in Puerto Rico'. One assumes that this is the same film referred to on p.476 of the article?

<sup>16</sup> *The Era* 20(?) Aug 1898, p.17. M.J. McCosker, 'Philadelphia and the Genesis of the Motion Picture', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (Oct 1941), p.416. McCosker's informant recalled the film running for weeks and the 'hot time' song being played.

<sup>17</sup> One historian describes the process: '...each stripe on each image was tinted with a line of red, and each field of forty-five stars was covered with a stripe of blue. Naturally this process for making a color picture could only be inaccurate, and the colors danced on the screen, but patriotic Americans were delighted'. Peter J. Talmachoff, 'The Wizard of the West', *Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Quarterly* 8, no.2 (Fall 1969), p.13. A 35-mm clip of this survives in the Theisen Collection at the Seaver Center, Los Angeles County Natural History Museum: E.H. Amet item 110b. There were only 45 stars because when the film was made there were still only 45 states – Utah was the 45<sup>th</sup> in 1896, and the 46<sup>th</sup> was to be Oklahoma, added in 1907.

<sup>18</sup> This was remade in March 1898. Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900*, op. cit., films no. 290 and no.529.

<sup>19</sup> William Allen White, 'When Johnny Went Marching Out', *McClure's Magazine* 11 (June 1898), p.199. See image on p.204, showing flags and a public bulletin board of war news. See also Charles H. Brown, *The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1967), p. 158; Frank Burt Freidel, *The Splendid Little War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> J. B. Atkins, *The War in Cuba : The Experiences of an Englishman with the United States Army* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1899), p. 9, 17.

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<sup>21</sup> The representative was Charles Morton, manager of the Palace Theatre, where the film was screened. *The Era* 5 Feb 1898, p.18. Presumably he meant the British flag rather than the 'English'.

<sup>22</sup> William Basil Courtney, op. cit., p.662 wrote: 'Smith and Blackton made and distributed direct the prints from this first negative, but presently Edison again took notice of the work of his youthful competitors, borrowed their negatives, and made and sold prints from them on a royalty basis'.

<sup>23</sup> See William Basil Courtney, op. cit., p.662. Courtney adds pompously: 'An elaborate argument could be based on the premise that the only important contribution of the Spanish-American War to the history of the United States lay not in the acquisition of territories and pension lists, but in the impetus it gave to the work of Smith and Blackton in placing the foundation blocks for the motion picture industry'. (p.794) As Blackton himself put it: 'It was a great emotional and financial success and gave Blackton-Smith an idea of what might be done with this new medium of real drama'. MSS of Blackton's 'The World in Motion', p.6-7, in Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, 'Newspaper clippings', UCLA.

<sup>24</sup> From 'Hollywood with its hair down', a manuscript version of Blackton's autobiography, p.52, held at AMPAS, J. Stuart Blackton Collection, folder 31. Probably written in the late 1930s. Quoted in David A. Gerstner, *Manly Arts: Masculinity and Nation in Early American Cinema* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2006), p.6.

<sup>25</sup> He added, 'You can accept my word for it, however, that none of the pictures depicted were taken within five hundred miles of either Cuba or the Philippines'. William H. Swanson, 'The inception of the "black top"', *MPW* 15 July 1916, p.369. He correctly recalled that the land battles were by Lubin, Selig and Edison, and stated that the naval films were made in Wisconsin, a confusion for Amet's base (see below). Swanson also described placing images about the war outside his show as publicity, and employing an 'outside spieler' with a loud voice.

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Malthête suggests that Méliès released five films about the Spanish-American War, including number 143, *Collision et Naufrage en Mer (Collision and Shipwreck at Sea)*, but, despite Mr Malthête's always admirable scholarship, personally I am not persuaded that the latter film was related to this war. See Jacques Malthête, (ed.) 'Les Actualités Reconstituées de Georges Méliès', *Archives*, no. 21, March 1989. My April dating is based on the review for film 147 of 1 May which I cite below, and films 144-6 would presumably have been made before. My May dating for the last film is based on the fact that the Manila battle took place on 1 May, and Méliès would no doubt have made a film version soon afterwards.

<sup>27</sup> The French titles of the four films, with their Méliès numbers, were: 144-145 *Quais de la Havane (Explosion du Cuirassé le Maine)*; 146 *Visite de l'Épave du Maine*; 147 *Visite Sous-Marine du "Maine"*, aka *Le Cuirassé "Maine"*; 150 *Combat Naval devant Manille*. In the UK, three of the films were released by Fuerst Brothers, including *Explosion of the Maine*, which was said to be '2 lengths'. The other two titles were *Divers on the Wreck of the Maine* and *Battle of Manila*. See BJP 30 Sep 1898, p.637.

<sup>28</sup> Programme of the Searchlight Theatre. Box C139, Searchlight Collection, Library of Congress, MPBRs.

<sup>29</sup> This and the following comments come from the Warwick Trading Company catalogue of 1899, p.55-6.

<sup>30</sup> The Warwick catalogue description noted the film as '...showing the bottom of the sea with waving sea-weed and live fishes swimming around the diver and the wreck'. Warwick assigned it film number 4147, based on Méliès' own numbering, as was common practice at Warwick.

<sup>31</sup> A report of Méliès' new films of the *Maine* at the Théâtre Robert Houdin in *l'Orchestre* 1 May 1898. Quoted in Jacques Malthête, (ed.) 'Les actualités reconstituées de Georges Méliès', 1989.

<sup>32</sup> 'Et voilà comment on émouvait les foules...' . Georges Méliès, 'A l'aube du cinéma: les souvenirs de Georges Méliès', *l'Image*: 19, 1932, p.14. Amusingly, in the same article Méliès says the *Maine* was a French ship! See also René Jeanne, *Cinéma 1900* (Paris: Flammarion, 1965), p.108-9.

<sup>33</sup> My translation from: 'Intérieur d'un fort. Un canon tire une salve sur l'ennemi. De nombreux obus touchent le fort et fracassent les murs. Un obus ennemi tombe sur les artilleurs en entuant et blessant un certain nombre'. Georges Méliès, and Jacques Malthête, *158 Scénarios*

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de films disparus de Georges Méliès (Paris: Association "Les Amis de Georges Méliès", 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Film no.130, *Explosion du Merrimac* (se fait en bandes de 20 ou 23 mètres), L. Gaumont et Cie., *Collection Elgé: liste des vues animées*, catalogue no.137, Mai 1899, p.10. In French the description reads: 'Scène d'actualité. Un fortin espagnol à Cuba. Explosion du navire. Canonnade dirigée sur les naufragés'. Thanks to Sabine Lenk for this reference from the Elgé catalogue collection in the École Louis Lumière. In this mission Lt. Hobson had the command and managed to sink the ship, but he and the other 7 volunteers were captured and held as prisoners of war for a short time. Hobson become a national hero as a result of his actions. (NB. this was not the Civil War *Merrimac*).

<sup>35</sup> Film no. 135, *Épisode de la guerre hispano-américaine*, described as, 'Scène de combat. Les soldats espagnols surprénant des insurgés dans une maison en font l'attaque'.

<sup>36</sup> Chicago film historian, Carey Williams, told the author that Amet got his friends and family to chase up and down in making the Spanish-American War fakes, whereas Kekatos doesn't mention family members.

<sup>37</sup> Reproduced in Kekatos, *Film History*, op. cit., p.412. The stills are in the Amet/Spoor Archives at the Lake County Discovery Museum, Wauconda, Illinois 60084.

<sup>38</sup> The boy was played by Frank Sherry, and he described the experience in: 'Waukegan vs. Chicago – "Interesting" Actor Recalls', *The Waukegan News*, Sunday, 8 December 1962, p.1-2. Cited in Kekatos, *Film History*, op. cit. The officer was played by Lew Hendee. Amet also filmed other land battles, says Kekatos.

<sup>39</sup> War films were apparently screened on one of Amet's Magniscope projectors by the 'Wargraph' company at Chicago's Clark Street Museum, 2 May 1898. Musser, *Emergence*, p.255. 'Wargraph' was a term used for many other shows that screened war films during this period. Kekatos suggests that this Chicago venue exhibited some of Amet's model film(s), though I would suggest that this date of 2 May was too early for his model work to have been completed.

<sup>40</sup> The first two films of 1898 were shot in the same location. Cameraman F. L. Donoghue, recalling the early days, said that almost all Spanish-American War scenes were manufactured on the 'shores' of New Jersey. See Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film, a Critical History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p.14, from *New York Journal*, 29 Jan 1937. Donoghue calls this *The Campaign In Cuba* series, which included scenes of American sailors *Landing Under Fire* and *The Battle of San Juan Hill* and the ensuing victory, *Our Flag Is There to Stay!* The reason for the variation in titles is not clear.

<sup>41</sup> "'Spaniards' would not fight', *The Phonoscope*, 3, no.4, Apr 1899, p.15. This source states that for the battle of San Juan Hill, made 'recently', the company 'engaged eighteen negroes' to play the Spaniards and an equal number of volunteers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment New Jersey National Guard as the US army. Each side was costumed appropriately and taken to the location on Orange Mountain. The 'Spaniards' were paid 75 cents each and given beer 'in order that they might be in fighting trim'. But when ready to film, the photographer found they had fled taking 200 rounds of blank cartridges. The Battle of San Juan Hill was directed by James White, who could be the 'photographer' in question.

<sup>42</sup> Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, p.181-4.

<sup>43</sup> *The Phonoscope*, April 1899. Charles Musser, *Emergence*, 257-8. The action in these films is described in 'War films' in F.M. Prescott, *Catalogue of New Films* (NY, 1899). See also 'War films', in *Lubin's Films* – catalogue of January 1903.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph P. Eckhardt, *The King of the Movies: Film Pioneer Siegmund Lubin* (Madison: Associated University Presses, 1997), p.28-9. His daughter recalled of the park incident that, 'we had to make the whole scene over again and take them way out in the country as it had frightened the whole neighborhood'. Lubin was able to offer forty films of the prelude to war, the war, and the victory celebrations. A photograph of Lubin's Cineograph theatre, 1899, with a sign for 'Battles in Cuba and Manila' appears in Musser, *Emergence*, p.285.

<sup>45</sup> 'War films' in F.M. Prescott, *Catalogue of New Films* (1899), p.22. On Musser microfilm.

<sup>46</sup> *Charge at Las Guasimas* may be attributed to Lubin or Selig, appearing in both *Lubin's Films* catalogue, January 1903 and in the 'War in Cuba and the Philippines' section, in the Selig catalogue, 1903.

<sup>47</sup> *The Last Stand*, no.799; *In the Trenches*, no.802; *Defence of the Flag*, no.804. See Charles Musser, *Emergence*, p.248-50.

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<sup>48</sup> 'Trick pictures: How Strange Effects in Moving Photographs are Produced', *The Phonoscope* 3, no. 7, July 1899, p.7. The expert was one Robert Pitard, about whom I have been unable to find any further details. He argued further that these films 'probably gave a better idea of an engagement than could have been obtained from photos taken during an actual battle'.

<sup>49</sup> 'The experiences of a newspaper photographer – by one of them', *Photographic Times Bulletin*, May 1905, p.203.

<sup>50</sup> There may have been another model fake of the Spanish-American War, produced in France. A French film pioneer, Henri Diamant-Berger, later recalled that at the 1900 exposition in Paris there was an exhibit showing a re-enactment of a naval battle, including a model of a ship which was sunk by a small explosion, and mechanical systems to make waves and to replicate shells hitting fortifications. Diamant-Berger stated that the Pathé director Zecca filmed this stand illicitly ('à la sauvette') and two years later this film was released, touted as an exclusive actuality of the Spanish-American war, and hundreds of copies were sold throughout the world. The same film, he says, was successfully released some years later as a record of the Russo-Japanese war. Diamant-Berger is confused about facts, saying that the battle showed the sinking of the *Maine*, whereas the *Maine* was not, of course, sunk in a battle, but in harbour. Like so many recollections this one is garbled, though there were such model exhibits of this war, such as the 'electrorama', as we'll see in the next chapter. See Henri Diamant-Berger, *Il était une fois le cinéma* (Paris: Jean-Claude Simoën, 1977), 42.

<sup>51</sup> Blackton says the naval battle reenactment 'was also done in this little 10' x 12' room. We had a canvas tank': from Tibbetts, p.32. (i.e. in the studio atop the Morse building, New York), though one writer says the tank was 'set up in a Brooklyn back yard'. See Sumner Smith, 'The Camera Lies', *Collier's Weekly* (21 Nov 1925), p.14 etc.

<sup>52</sup> I could not make out the word when I saw the entry – it looked like 'glycerine', though 'gypsum' (i.e. plaster of Paris) seems more likely. Cash ledger for Commercial Advertising Bureau (forerunner of Vitagraph), Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, UCLA.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Musser, 'American Vitagraph, 1897-1901', in *Film before Griffith*, edited by J. L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.33. Blackton gives the material/film costs of this as \$7.90. See MSS of Blackton's 'The World in Motion', Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, 'Newspaper clippings', UCLA.

<sup>54</sup> High quality photographs of all the US navy's ships appear in *Our Modern Navy* (Chicago; New York: Rand McNally and Company, 1898). This book was copyrighted in June, and so Smith's recollection that loose photographs were being sold in the streets the previous month seems quite plausible, given that these could be printed even more quickly than a book.

<sup>55</sup> Albert E. Smith, and Phil A. Koury, *Two Reels and a Crank* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952), p.66-7. He gives the title as *The Battle of Santiago Bay*, and also mentions a thirty-minute-long *Fighting With Our Boys in Cuba* which was also screened. Frames from the latter appear in 'Pioneer newsreels', *Image*, Sep 1953, p.39, but it doesn't look like Cuba, as claimed. In his book, Smith goes on to give more anecdotal material about the filming, while Courtney offers more about the office boy. William Basil Courtney, op. cit., p.793.

<sup>56</sup> Epes W. Sargent, 'The growth of the industry' 1 Jan 1910, p.17-20. Some wags dubbed these kind of films 'bath tub battles'. It was shown at the Giornate del Cinema Muto festival. For a discussion in Spanish of Smith/Blackton's war fakes, see Guillermo López García, 'Los inicios de la manipulación en el cine como informativo: La invención de la guerra de Cuba de 1898', in *L'origen del Cinema i les Imatges del S. XIX, Seminari Sobre Els Antecedents i Orígens del Cinema* (Girona: Fundació Museu del Cinema, 2001), p.153-5.

<sup>57</sup> See manuscript of Blackton's 'The World in Motion', Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, 'Newspaper clippings', UCLA. He adds that 'This was the first use of miniatures to simulate large objects in motion'. Also held in this collection at UCLA is a photograph of the filming he mentions (though probably it is the later reconstruction).

<sup>58</sup> 'A New Belasco: the Story and Views of a Man Who Has Won Big Success in Motion Pictures', *The Blue Book Magazine* 19, no.2 (June 1914), p.246. This article is about Blackton. Epes Sargent in 1910, op. cit., also mentions this accident, though says it was suffered while the two partners were filming a fake of the Windsor fire, not the Manila naval battle, and that it was Smith who was burned. (Sargent says that the first time he met Smith he had a huge bandage on his hand, which Smith said had been burned by an unintended conflagration of gunpowder).

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<sup>59</sup> MPW 8 June 1912, p.908: 'Immediately after the accident, while his hand was swathed in bandages, Mr. Blackton informed enquiring friends that he was recovering from a wound received at the Battle of Santiago Bay'. (Again note the confusion between this and the Manila Bay battle). Significantly, there is no assertion in this article – published little more than a decade after the events – of the partners *actually* going to film in Cuba or South Africa, which suggests that this myth grew up later, probably in Courtney's 1925 history.

<sup>60</sup> Blackton stated that, 'This was the first use of miniatures to simulate large objects in motion', while Smith wrote: 'Deception though it was then, it was the first miniature and the forerunner of the elaborate "special effects" technique of modern picturemaking'. See MSS of Blackton's 'The World in Motion', Albert Smith Papers, Box 1, 'Newspaper clippings', UCLA. See also Albert E. Smith and Phil A. Koury, op. cit., p.66-8.

<sup>61</sup> John C. Tibbetts, and J. Stuart Blackton, eds., *Introduction to the Photoplay*, op. cit., 1977 [1927]), p.31. Miniatures were of course to be vital in many subsequent Hollywood films.

<sup>62</sup> Anthony Slide has copies of this film. See endnote in Blackton's contribution to John C. Tibbetts and J. Stuart Blackton, eds., *Introduction to the Photoplay*, op. cit.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., Tibbetts, p.32.

<sup>64</sup> Kekatos, *Film History*, op. cit. Much of my account is based on Mr Kekatos' article, which I commissioned for *Film History*.

<sup>65</sup> Kekatos suggests that the model films were made *after* the live action fakes.

<sup>66</sup> I have found no such application by either Amet or Smith/Blackton, let alone a refusal, from my swift perusal of the hundreds of applications for press correspondent passes for the War. These are to be found in the National Archives at RG 107/E.80 from approximately file no. 2462 onwards.

<sup>67</sup> Musser, *Emergence* p.256-7. Taken from an advertisement for the films.

<sup>68</sup> Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures : Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), p.89, 308-9. There is no attribution of these titles to Amet in this Howe programme, but I am following Kekatos and assuming that Howe's titles are elaborations of the list of Amet's.

<sup>69</sup> There is a fuzzy frame still from MOMA film library of *Flagship New York Shelling Cabanas*, attributed to Amet, Sep 1897, in the Gordon Hendricks Motion Picture History Papers, NMAH, Series 3: box 1, folder 2: Edward H. Amet.

<sup>70</sup> The mountains were designed to look like those at Santiago Bay, claimed Earl Theisen in 'Story of the Newsreel', *The International Photographer*, Sep 1933, p.4. Kekatos says Amet was helped by brother Arthur, cousin William and Wilbur Blows. According to Ramsaye, Amet's assistant was William H. Howard – presumably this was the cousin mentioned by Kekatos.

<sup>71</sup> One author says Amet's ship models were very accurately built, with turrets and flags and smoking stacks, shot on a large constructed pond, with a painted backdrop. Peter J. Talmachoff, 'The Wizard of the West', *Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Quarterly* 8, no. 2, Fall 1969, p.13

<sup>72</sup> Terry Ramsaye, op. cit., p.390.

<sup>73</sup> In a letter attributed to Amet, cited by Kekatos, he stated that the operation of the model *USS Oregon* alone required 500 feet of electrical wiring

<sup>74</sup> Earl Theisen, 'Story of the Newsreel', *The International Photographer* (Sep 1933), p.4 says that the explosions were caused by firecrackers tied to the ships.

<sup>75</sup> Terry Ramsaye, op. cit., adds, p.390: 'Electrically controlled devices supplied waves, and push buttons controlled the guns and ship movements'.

<sup>76</sup> Ramsaye, p.391, says of 'old dynamite ship U.S.S. Vesuvius' that it was 'an odd experimental craft armed with three great air guns which tossed high explosive bombs a half dozen miles'.

<sup>77</sup> Both references from George J. A. O'Toole, *The Spanish War, an American Epic – 1898* (New York: Norton, 1984), p.201.

<sup>78</sup> As the actions at Matanzas and Cabañas were nearly contemporary events it would make sense that the films of these were also made at about the same time as one another, and the film of the *New York* as well, for this ship gained great renown through the two actions.

<sup>79</sup> Terry Ramsaye, op. cit., p.390.

<sup>80</sup> The pictures of actions at Manila Bay, Cabanas and Matanzas were drawn by illustrators Harry Fenn, Charlton T. Chapman and Rufus F. Zogbaum respectively, as special artists to

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*Harper's Weekly*. All this information from Kekatos, *Film History*, op. cit. An illustration of the Matanzas bombardment also appears in *The Graphic*, 28 May, p.652.

<sup>81</sup> I haven't yet made a direct comparison between any of his surviving films and the *Harper's* images to confirm that there was a direct influence. *Firing a Broadside at Cabanas* survives in MOMA, and *Bombardment of Matanzas* is in a stock library and is on display at Lake County Discovery Museum.

<sup>82</sup> Title from Musser, *Emergence*, p.257.

<sup>83</sup> Ramsaye, op. cit., p.390.

<sup>84</sup> Kekatos states that *Bombardment of Matanzas* was produced in late April 1898, but this date, just after the actual events, would not have given him enough time in my opinion to make models etc.

<sup>85</sup> Kekatos, *Film History*, op. cit., writes: '...the various moving picture showmen that purchased the 'War Films', changed the titles for easier public recognition of the subject matter. For example, *Spanish Fleet Destroyed* was widely advertised as *Battle of Manila Bay*, as in fact it was the re-enactment of that naval engagement in the Philippine Islands. *Bombardment of Matanzas* which shows the Cruiser USS New York and the monitor USS Puritan shelling the Spanish fortifications at Matanzas, Cuba was often called *Battle of Santiago* and is in fact available as such in video or DVD format, from The Killiam Collection'. *The Battle of Santiago Bay* is also known as *The Sinking of Cervera's Fleet*.

<sup>86</sup> William H. Swanson, 'The inception of the "black top"', MPW 15 July 1916, p.369.

<sup>87</sup> A photograph of the exterior of the showplace is reproduced in: Andrea I. Paul, 'Nebraska's Home Movies: the Nebraska Exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair', *Nebraska History* 76, no. 1, Spring 1995, p.22. It is from Nebraska State Historical Society no. T772-8.

<sup>88</sup> *Wilkes-Barre Record*, 17 September 1898, p. 5, quoted by Musser/Nelson, *Howe*, p.308-9. One of the live action fakes is described as follows: "'Defending the flag" is the title of a thrilling scene showing a land battle. Men and officers may be seen shot and falling on all sides. An officer who stands by the side of a cannon grabs the flag and holds it against all, defending himself with pistol and then with sword until all about him are dead and wounded.' This could be Amet's *Battle of San Juan Hill*. This press review stressing the film's realism may have been 'ballyhoo' planted by Howe or his agents for publicity, though to me it sounds like a genuine reaction by the reviewer.

<sup>89</sup> Ad in *NY Clipper*, 2 July 1898. Quoted in Musser, *Emergence*, p.256 and in Kekatos. The price of the film was \$30.

<sup>90</sup> The *Clipper* adds, again implying that the film was of the real event: '600 feet of this engagement was taken and it has been cut down to 100 feet, using only the best and most interesting parts'. The film survives, or at any rate a film of this description. Kekatos states that, for their permanent exhibit on Amet, the Lake County Discovery Museum acquired a 10-12 second film clip of *Bombardment of Matanzas* from a stock company which can be accessed via an interactive projection system by museum visitors.

<sup>91</sup> 'Observations by our man about town', MPW 28 Oct 1911, p.278.

<sup>92</sup> Terry Ramsaye, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> The director of the Museo Naval de Madrid wrote to Cuenca to say that, 'it doesn't seem at all sure that Spain acquired this film'. My translation of: 'no parece cierta la adquisición por España de tal película'. Reported in Román Gubern, 'La Guerra Hispano-Yanqui y los Orígenes del Cine Político', *Historia y Vida* 3, no. 25 (April 1970), p.37-38. George C. Hall has stated that Amet's ship model was so accurate that it was used, it is said, in the prosecution of Admiral Cervera after the war.

<sup>94</sup> *Leslie's Weekly*, 17 March and 28 April 1898.

<sup>95</sup> Brown, *The Correspondents' War*, p. 35, 444. And there would doubtless be other examples unrelated to the Cuban issue.

<sup>96</sup> *Wilkes-Barre Record*, quoted by Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p.308-9.

**Chapter 7**  
**THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR**  
**III. America's war on screen**

**INTRODUCTION**

Thus far in relation to the Spanish-American War we have mainly discussed film production, and have noted significant developments in that field, in news filming and in producing staged representations of the conflict. In film exhibition too the war stimulated far-reaching cinematic advances. Until 1898, films had largely been exhibited as separate, one-minute subjects – individual attractions which would be screened singly or in small sets, with little connection one to another. But during the war, prompted by the patriotic ferment which was sweeping America, some exhibitors proved to be highly enterprising in programming together multiple films and lantern images related to the conflict.<sup>1</sup> In such shows, many war-related films and slides were compiled into what were effectively 'documentaries', relating the history of the progress of the war. These were some of the first feature-length film exhibitions seen in America, and furthermore, as Charles Musser argues, in presenting a story of the war in this way, they played a pivotal role in the development of filmic narrative.<sup>2</sup>

These film programmes about the war also had political significance, with nationalistic, even propagandist, images playing to already impassioned audiences in America, so creating what might be seen as the first major examples of imperialist cinema. This extreme patriotic outlook was often found in other performance media at the time, and in this chapter we will briefly cover how the war was seen in theatre, sundry exhibitions and lantern shows.

Finally we will look at a hitherto ignored area: the reception of films about this war outside the United States, in countries such as Britain, France, and especially in Spain. These data demonstrate that, even at this early date in cinema history, war films were presented and perceived very differently by audiences in different countries, depending on their specific national and political outlooks. Film reception was already a two-way process in 1898, which depended on the specifics of both the film and of its spectators.

**WAR AND THE PERFORMANCE MEDIA**

The Spanish-American War was, arguably, more than any other war before or since, a hugely popular cause in the United States, evoking ardent emotions, as Americans felt their country was putting the world to rights. These emotions were expressed in virtually all the visual and performance media, in the context of a passionate, and sometimes almost festival-like mood. We

have dealt with the war and the printed press in an earlier chapter, so here I will describe some other ways in which this war was celebrated in the popular media.

### **Theatres and music halls**

The first arenas in which public emotion burst forth – and at its most intense – were in the theatres and music halls. In Chicago, for example, many local vaudeville houses featured military songs, as well as naval dramas. These included *The Ensign*, about the adventures of an American officer in Cuba.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of March *Leslie's Weekly* was reporting a 'tidal wave of patriotism... sweeping over the nation' and into its showplaces. Thousands of men were volunteering to fight.<sup>4</sup> Even in the best play houses of New York, where one might expect some decorum, *Leslie's* described vast audiences wildly applauding as patriotic songs such as 'Yankee Doodle' were sung. In many of the popular theatres the fervour was even more intense, and, *Leslie's* noted, the performers 'wave flags, wear military and naval uniforms, and interpolate lines red-hot with patriotic sentiment in their topical songs'. Audiences reacted to these displays with 'overwhelming' emotion, said the writer, making for 'a really impressive and thrilling scene'.<sup>5</sup> A British journalist who visited an American music hall at this time bore this out, reporting an extremely jingoistic atmosphere, with patriotic songs and a war demonstration as part of the advertised programme. Chants from the stage were met with answers from the floor: 'What's the matter with Dewey?' 'He's all right.' 'Who's all right?' 'Dewey!'<sup>6</sup> [Fig. 1]

The war fever had intensified after the destruction of the *Maine* in mid February, and this pivotal event also had a galvanising effect on song publishing, with more than 60 Maine-related songs being published within weeks of the sinking. Both the words of the songs and the covers of the music emphasized a popular desire to avenge the loss, and the sunken ship soon became a symbol for American unity and pride. The songs also stressed a new found mission to help liberate Cuba and the wider world from old-world tyranny represented by the Spaniards.<sup>7</sup>

### **Exhibits and sham battles**

Fairground showmen were quick to adapt some of their attractions to incorporate the war spirit. At one Coney Island side show in June punters could throw balls at a picture of General Weyler, with a sign nearby reading, 'Remember the Maine'.<sup>8</sup> An American showman in Britain had a large show-front constructed as a mock-up battleship, and the show inside featured model naval vessels; there was a similar American battleship facade for a show in Holland.<sup>9</sup>

At Keith's Theater, New York City, a mechanical device, the 'electrorama' was displayed, the scene representing Havana harbour with boats passing, among them the *Maine*, which was seen exploding. A lecturer meanwhile talked the audience through the show. Soon afterwards, this same model exhibit, or a very similar one, became hugely popular at the Electrical Exhibition at Madison Square Garden. On show from May 1898, just after Dewey's victory,



it involved a model ship being blown up in a tank of water, this being performed four times a day.<sup>10</sup>

Larger-scale spectacles about the war were also staged, though it seems that these only appeared after the conflict with Spain was over. In September a firework display depicting 'The Bombardment of Porto Rico' was to be seen in Denver, followed the next month by one representing 'The Fall of Manila'.<sup>11</sup> In 1899 Buffalo Bill's company staged a re-enactment of the battle of San Juan Hill with 16 veterans of the Rough Riders among the cast.<sup>12</sup> Some of the most popular exhibits at world's fairs and expositions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (at Omaha, for example) were about the war: notably re-enactments of the Battle of Manila, the sinking of the *Maine*, and the bombardment of the Spanish forts in Cuba. Some of these re-creations were extremely ambitious and costly. In St. Louis, the 'Battle of Santiago' was re-staged by a fleet of 21-foot battleships on a 300- by 180-foot lake.<sup>13</sup>

### **Magic lantern slides**

By the 1890s the lantern lecture was a well established format, and continued to thrive for several more years after the arrival of moving pictures, with shows regularly given in town halls, churches and other such venues in America.<sup>14</sup> Slides about the Cuban issue were probably available from the mid-90s, and after war began the floodgates opened, and it is striking just how many sets about the Spanish-American War came onto the market.

The Kleine Optical Company offered no fewer than four lecture sets about the Spanish-American War, each with 50 slides and a printed lecture.<sup>15</sup> The L. Manasse Company of Chicago had half a dozen slide sets related to the war, on various themes: their 'Spanish-American War' set told a chronological history of the war in 45 slides; another set depicted only warships, American and Spanish; a complete set was available just about Havana; and several individual slides depicted flags, including one of the American flag with its 'English' counterpart, reflecting a belief in the drawing together of the Anglo-Saxon nations.<sup>16</sup> Riley Brothers had a set of 60 slides (see **Box**) giving a history of the war, and also offered a prequel about the Cubans' independence struggle, culminating in the destruction of the *Maine*.<sup>17</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Company offered sets entitled 'Cuba, the Maine and the Cuban War' and 'The Spanish-American and Filipino wars', the latter including illustrations depicting the cruelty of the Spanish to the Cubans before the war and a vivid artists' impression of the battle of Manila.<sup>18</sup> Rau and Beale, both of Philadelphia, also offered slides.<sup>19</sup>

**Box:**

Riley Brothers, *The Spanish-American War*, lantern set no. 1047. (from a copy in NYPL).

**List of Slides:**

1. American and Cuban flags.
2. The Maine after explosion.
3. President McKinley.
4. Dying reoncentrados.
5. Senor Dupuy de Lome.
6. Gen. Woodford.
7. Gen. Lee.
8. Admiral Sampson's fleet at Havana.
9. Admiral Dewey.
10. Battle of Manila Bay.
11. Bay of Manila.
12. Recruiting Old Guard, New York City.
13. 8th Regiment Camp at Peekskill.
14. 65th Buffalo at Hempstead. [a negro regiment]
15. Camp Cuba Libre at Jacksonville.
16. Chickamauga, the mascot of the 5th Battery.
17. Camp Alger – 12th Regiment cleaning up Sunday morning.
18. Bringing in captured vessels.
19. Spanish fleet at anchor off St. Vincent, Cape Verde.
20. Town of Mindello, St. Vincent.
21. U. S. Battleship Oregon.
22. Capt. Clark. [this crossed out and handwritten: 'Spanish guerilla force']
23. The fleet before Havana.
24. Bombardment of Matanzas.
25. Bombardment San Juan, Porto Rico.
26. Fort and Harbor of San Juan, Porto Rico.
27. Approach to Fort of San Juan, Porto Rico.
28. Calle de Mendez Vigo, Mayaguez, Porto Rico.
29. Birdseye view of Santiago.
30. Bombardment of Santiago.
31. Lieut. Hobson and five of his men.

32. Lieut. Hobson about to blow up Merrimac.
33. Explosion of the Merrimac.
34. Escape from Merrimac.
35. Vesuvius shooting dynamite at Morro Castle, Santiago.
36. Line of transports at dock, Tampa, Fla.
37. Port Tampa – 71st N. Y. Regiment going aboard Vigilancia, June 10.
38. Gen. Shafter's big horse going aboard – June 13.
39. Roosevelt's Rough Riders on board Yucatan leaving wharf, Port Tampa, June 10.
40. Tampa – Putting aboard big siege guns to reduce Santiago, June 10.
41. Gen. Shafter.
42. Lieut.-Col. Roosevelt, Hamilton Fish and Hallett Allsop Borrowe on horseback – Tampa.
43. Troop Ship China leaving for Manila.
44. Gen. Merritt.
45. Aguinaldo, Insurgent leader.
46. The canal, Manila.
47. A native family, Manila.
48. Admiral Cervera.
49. American troops landing in Cuba.
50. American troops marching through Cuba.
51. In the trenches before Santiago.
52. Battle of El Caney.
53. Destruction of Cervera's fleet.
54. Ships burning on the beach.
55. Gen. Calixto Garcia.
56. The surrender of Santiago.
57. Gen. Miles.
58. Transports on way to Porto Rico.
59. Taking of Ponce. [this crossed out and handwritten: 'American troops in Cuba']
60. Clara Barton and staff.

[handwritten at bottom of list is:  
'Song: Cuba pearl of ocean']

Interestingly, some manufacturers' slide sets follow the same aesthetic principle found in illustrated periodicals (which I described in Chapter 1): mixing photographic views with artists' impressions or drawings. Apparently some of Kleine's slides were of this latter kind, such as 'Dewey at the Battle of Manila', though others were presumably photographs. There was a similar mixing in Riley's sets, to judge from their list (see **Box**), whereby, as in magazines of the time, images of action events such as battles or explosions were drawings, while slides of personalities and places before or after the battles were photographs. Thus no.33, 'Explosion of the Merrimac', was presumably a drawing, while no.3, 'President McKinley', was likely a photograph. These lantern shows, combining a variety of photographic and drawn images with a stirring lecture and sometimes the use of emotive music, may well have offered a model for the complex programmes of films/slides about the war which, as we shall see, were put together by showmen in 1898.

Slide sets continued to be available for many years after the events: the Sears, Roebuck and Company set, for example, still appeared in their catalogue almost a decade after the war. Slide sets were mainly accompanied aurally by a lecture, though songs were sometimes indicated, such as for the Riley set where the song 'Cuba pearl of the ocean' was suggested. The song slide performance format was starting to take off in the mid 1890s, and according to one chronicler, this innovation may have been partially triggered by the emotional mood during the Spanish-American War.<sup>20</sup> Lubin claimed to be selling slides for 22 illustrated songs about the Cuba issue and the war, and over 1000 individual slides on this theme.<sup>21</sup> Alexander Black's picture plays were a kind of combination of the lantern lecture and song slide show, and these too dealt with the war, one of Black's creations featured the *Maine*, and another, *The Girl and the Guardsman*, was described as 'an after-the-Spanish-War story'.<sup>22</sup>

## FILM EXHIBITION IN AMERICA

### War films throughout America

The various performance and visual media that I have mentioned – music hall, sundry exhibits, songs, lantern shows – represented the war as a great patriotic cause, and this attitude was duplicated in film coverage. War films were soon showing in many parts of America. By the early Spring of 1898 such films were being featured at vaudeville houses across the east and Midwest.<sup>23</sup> In Chicago, war-related motion pictures proliferated, local newspapers reporting that 'the cinematographs, kinetoscopes, vitascopes, and biographs are almost clogged with war pictures'. The Clark Street Museum featured a magniscope (an Amet machine) on its bill, showing views of the *Maine* and Havana harbour throughout the summer, while the Hopkins Theater periodically added new war-related films.<sup>24</sup>

In Portland, Oregon, one venue was already screening a 'war in Cuba' programme when, in August 1898, a theatre was opened exclusively devoted to showing Spanish-American War films.<sup>25</sup> In some rural areas of America, war films may have been the first films people ever saw. A child in Amarillo

later recalled seeing a Spanish-American War subject of cavalry fording a stream, shown in a large freight car parked on a siding, around 1900.<sup>26</sup> Many of the films shown in these war programmes were of preparations for the war, showing troops marching and the like in various parts of the United States.

New York city was at the forefront of war film screenings. By May such motion pictures were in at least seven New York theatres – an all-time high – in most cases appearing labelled as the 'wargraph' or 'warscope'.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most ambitious shows were organized at the Eden Musee, where, as Charles Musser has pointed out, the exhibitor became a genuine creator of the cinema experience. The Musee had been known for its large collection of films even before the war, and by the Summer of 1898 had more war-related films than any other venue in the city. It started programming these in small groups, as new attractions, and also in larger numbers as a complete chronology of the war, probably combined with slides and a lecture. Just after the conflict ended the theatre offered 'a panorama of the war' including over twenty films (views).<sup>28</sup>

War-related film screenings did not cease with the end of the brief war, and the issue was kept alive with new events which were filmed, such as the return of America's military forces to the homeland, including several films shot by Edison of the naval parade on 3 September 1898. When Admiral Dewey arrived back to receive the plaudits of the nation the following year, the cameras were on hand to record details of the hero's progress through New York city and then in Washington. Edison had eight crews in New York, while Vitagraph's panoply of films of the homecoming made up a complete show, 'Dewey's Doings'.<sup>29</sup>

### **Programming of films and slides**

As we have seen, the cameramen in Cuba were not notably successful in capturing moving images of war. But at this time, almost any military image attracted the frenzied interest of the public, and alternative war-related films were available, of troops in camp and the like, and hand-drawn lantern slides of personalities and major events could be ordered or made by oneself. As Charles Musser has shown, American exhibitors were highly innovative in putting together extensive shows about the war, consisting of short films and slides, to construct what were in essence exhibitor-created documentary features.<sup>30</sup> Such shows were highly novel in several senses: firstly, in terms of their combination of films with slides; secondly, their mixing together of different film genres; and thirdly, in sheer duration (most other film shows at this time were only a few minutes long).

The practice of interspersing lantern slides with films was widespread. [Fig. 3 and 4] To facilitate this novel blending of media, some dealers offered combined film/slide projectors, and sold both lantern slides and films. Slides were a useful addition for showmen for a number of reasons. They widened the overall choice of images and lowered the exhibitor's costs, and during the show itself they could fill in for gaps between film changes. Some of these benefits of slide/film alternation are illustrated in a report of a war show in New Orleans in early May 1898:

‘...A very pleasing innovation is made while showing the Vitascope pictures. Between each one, instead of the usual tedious wait while the change is being made from one picture to another, views of the United States warships are thrown on the screen by means of a Stereopticon, and an announcement follows of the next picture. Besides the warships, pictures of Fitzhugh Lee, Captain Sigsbee, the United States Flag, and others are also given...’<sup>31</sup>

Here it is explicitly mentioned that the slides alleviate the ‘tedious wait’ between films, which makes it clear that programming slides had a practical benefit in the programming process, not just an aesthetic one. In this case the kind of subjects mentioned, e.g. Captain Sigsbee, are most likely ones for which no moving film equivalent was available. Cost savings would be significant, for slides on war subjects could be purchased for 35 cents each or 90 cents coloured.<sup>32</sup> These prices were much lower than for films, which might cost \$7 for less than a minute duration.<sup>33</sup>

Certainly several exhibitors swiftly adopted this practice for their war shows. Travelling exhibitors were presenting slide/film shows from March (with their machines and companies often being renamed the ‘War-graph’). The leading showman Lyman Howe offered a narrative account of the war using this hybrid screen technique in two series: 1. The Land War, and 2. The War at Sea.<sup>34</sup>

Just as innovative as the mixing of media was the mixing of genres. This is illustrated, for example, in the work of lantern lecturer Dwight D. Elmendorf. In his film/slide war shows, Elmendorf included such varied films as: actualities of troops leaving from Tampa, a film of Spanish light artillery setting out for the front, and a (presumably) arranged film of US troops rushing ashore. The latter two were claimed to have been shot in Cuba, but could actually have been made almost anywhere.<sup>35</sup> Another example of genre mixing comes from a Chicago theatre in May and June, which showed films of military camp life at Camp Tanner in Springfield, Illinois, along with ‘a realistic representation’ (i.e. fake) of General Dewey's victory at Manila.<sup>36</sup>

A major innovation of the war shows was in increased duration. An example comes from the Eden Musee, where, as we’ve seen, feature length shows of films and slides about the war became a major attraction in New York.<sup>37</sup> Probably the slide images in these shows matched the variety in the Riley set given above (see **Box**), which included a rich mixture of different kinds of views: personalities involved in the war, artists’ impressions of battle actions, photographs of military vessels and regiments. Again it seems that film exhibitors may have been influenced in their techniques by the lantern. All in all, by their mixing of genres and media and in extending the duration of their shows, America’s showmen had made real innovations in film exhibition. [Fig. 2: a war show in the mid-West]

### **Audience emotions**

American audiences often reacted to war-related films in a highly emotional manner, according to available accounts, varying from enthusiasm to awed fascination to anger. The latter was reportedly the predominant emotion which greeted a film which represented the enemy, Spain. Biograph had managed to film the Spanish Battleship *Vizcaya* on 28 February while the ship was paying a visit to New York. The *Vizcaya* film was shown in early March with a caption 'No hidden mines here', a comment on the alleged perfidy of the Spanish against the *Maine* as compared with the welcome that New York had given to the *Vizcaya*. This inflammatory caption brought the audience to their feet in indignation. The response to the film of the *Vizcaya* became simply too raucous in Rochester in late March when spectators started throwing potatoes and other items, so the 'obnoxious picture' was removed.<sup>38</sup>

Predictably, a very different response greeted films about the American navy, especially the *Maine*. When Paley's film of the funeral of the *Maine* victims was thrown onto a large screen at Proctor's Theatre, New York by Edison's 'War-Graph' the images were met with grim silence:

'There seemed to be miles of that grim procession of the dead. It was not mere photographic reproduction; the crowd soon saw that. It was the real thing and as the full horror of that cowardly murder swept through the theatre a sigh went up that not even the lighter pictures which followed could change to a smile.'<sup>39</sup> [Interestingly the terms 'reproduction' and 'real thing' are again opposed, and the audience 'saw that' these films were real.]

On the other hand, a different set of emotions swept over this same audience when more active films about the war in Cuba had been screened earlier, these being 'cheered to the echo' by the enthusiastic crowds. This same boisterous reaction came in Chicago when Biograph's view of *Battleships "Maine" and "Iowa"* was screened. It was greeted by fifteen minutes of shouting, climaxing with cheers when an image (slide?) of Uncle Sam under the US flag was projected. A local reporter described the reception:

'A howl of enthusiasm went up at Hopkins' Theater at the initial appearance in this city in the evening of the biograph picture of the battleship Maine which was sunk in the Havana harbor.... Many of the patrons rose to their feet. There was a yell of three cheers for the United States navy. Men whistled and yelled. There was a stampeding of feet, and women waved their handkerchiefs.'<sup>40</sup>

### **Re-titling of films: the non-existent *Maine***

Ironically, however, these audiences were cheering the wrong ship, for Biograph had taken its previous film, *Battleships "Iowa" and "Massachusetts"* – fortuitously filmed a few months earlier – and simply renamed it *Battleships "Maine" and "Iowa"*.<sup>41</sup> For these spectators, therefore, the image of the *Maine* was not really on the screen but in their imaginations. This practice of re-titling films had happened occasionally with regard to Sudan War films, and was to occur surprisingly often in this war and for future wars and news events.

Producers and exhibitors learned that, if the deception could not readily be detected, such re-titling could greatly increase the saleability and audience appeal of a film. It was a kind of 'faking by renaming', and this practice was applied to the *Maine* more than to any other subject in this war.

Various distributors seem to have acquired so-called *Maine* films. One of these, F.M. Prescott, released *The Battleship Maine Leaving U.S. Harbor for Havana*. It depicted a battleship with the crew engaged in their work, and a flag could be seen on the ship, which gave the film even more appeal. As the catalogue notes, 'The American flag, that emblem of freedom, waves proudly as it catches the breeze'.<sup>42</sup> The description matches a film shown at the Royal Aquarium in London in June, which was seen by a critic for the entertainment weekly, *Pick-Me-Up*. The film was, he said, 'stated to be that of the ill-fated *Maine*', and showed a ship 'sailing along with the Stars and Stripes astern'. But he doubted this identification, and added sarcastically:

'I think it is a very lucky thing the proprietor of this show managed to secure a picture of this celebrated warship before the catastrophe. I only wonder how he could have known that it was going to become exceptionally celebrated by being blown up. Really, the foresight and enterprise of the showmen nowadays is positively rich.'<sup>43</sup>

Though I can't actually identify this film, *Pick-Me-Up's* scepticism is probably warranted, and would have been even more warranted for a similar film, also distributed by Prescott: *The U.S. Battleship Maine in the Harbor of Havana*. This view was claimed to depict the *Maine* while she lay at anchor in the harbour of Havana. Filmed from another moving ship, the image showed the *Maine*, 'with her awe-inspiring cannon in full view', as Prescott's catalogue put it. Another source added: 'A superb Panorama view of the beautiful Harbour, Town, Forts and Hills in the background is also shown, and the 'Stars and Stripes' are seen floating on the breeze as one vessel passes the other'.<sup>44</sup> It would also seem to be this film which was exhibited in early May in Denver, and claimed to be 'the ill-fated *Maine*.. taken just before the explosion'. The film included 'glimpses of the shore and frowning guns of cabanas fortress [sic] and the big battleship with her officers and crew passing backward and forward'.<sup>45</sup> What were these films? According to Charles Musser, the harbour film (and perhaps the other) was a sister ship of the *Maine*, photographed by the International Film Company and claimed as being an image of the actual *Maine* in Havana harbour prior to its destruction.<sup>46</sup> As the *Pick-Me-Up* columnist above pointed out, it would indeed have been fortuitous if anyone had thought to film the *Maine* in Havana – before the vessel's destruction had raised the temperature of the crisis so markedly.

Other war-related films were re-titled to increase their appeal. *American Infantry in Action in the Bush at Santiago* was a film of troops in manoeuvres near Tampa, but the addition of the false words 'at Santiago' turned it into a more interesting subject for spectators, implying that the troops were in action in Cuba. Similarly *A U.S. Gunboat in Action* showed a gunboat engaged in target practice – the additional, spurious words, 'in action' gave the film more saleability.<sup>47</sup>

A related practice took place with regard to films which were given new significance with the war. Showman Lyman Howe had been screening a film of a bullfight from October 1897, but after the sinking of the *Maine* and the US declaration of war, the bullfight was now offered as evidence of Spanish barbarity.<sup>48</sup> One might say that this was all part of a wider process of 're-designation' whereby film exhibitors made efforts to reposition themselves to best exploit the war fever. One example of this would be a number of travelling showmen in the USA, and also in Europe, who renamed their machines or companies as 'War-graph' or the like, to make their shows seem more up-to-date and relevant to the theme of war.<sup>49</sup>

## FILM EXHIBITION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Spanish-American War films were not only exhibited in the United States, and turned up in shows all over the world. In some cases there is little to indicate how the audiences reacted to these films, but in certain locations observers did describe an audience response, either pro or anti American. The sympathies of the public tended to be divided along racial lines, so countries and peoples with an Anglo Saxon heritage favoured America while those in continental Europe were against US intervention and sympathetic to Spain, while in yet other countries there was indifference.

### The Americas

The most intriguing location I have found for screenings of films of this war was Cuba itself. The fact that war films were shown in the very country where the war had taken place is not mentioned in any histories of Cuban cinema. My newly-found evidence is a post-war picture of the exterior of a theatre in Havana (possibly the Tacon theatre), with placards advertising the films, giving some details of subjects.<sup>50</sup> The picture was published in mid 1899 (in an American magazine), so probably would have been taken earlier in that year, that is, the year after the war. The show frontage has a sign in English stating, 'War exhibition, showing US Navy, Army at work; produced by electricity', and a near equivalent sign in Spanish, 'Producciones eléctrica des batallas de la Guerra con España y los Americanos'. Some other words on the posters can also be made out: 'Fleet in Santiago'; 'Bull fight'; 'Rough riders(?) cavalry charge'. The fact that the signs are in both Spanish and English suggests that the show was designed to appeal to both locals and to the US Army of occupation, and indeed the people one can see gathered outside seem to be such a mixture. [Fig. 6]

I have found relatively few records of screenings elsewhere in Latin America – surprisingly so, given the close geographical proximity to the war in Cuba. In Brazil the first Lumière Cinématographe show, 15 July 1897 in Rio, included *Departure of a Spanish battalion for Cuba*, in a programme of seven films, but I have found no reports of other war-related films being exhibited.<sup>51</sup> However, in Monterrey, Mexico a very substantial show was given in December 1898, consisting of '37 magnificent scenes representing the most interesting scenes of the late Spanish-American war'.<sup>52</sup> This is a very large number of films,



implying that the show might have rivalled the American war shows in scope and programming innovation.

No audience reactions to these shows were reported, perhaps because spectators were not particularly vociferous in countries where people didn't feel too strongly about the war. For instance, in Sherbrooke, French Canada, some of the public were so little interested in the Cuban issue that when Méliès' film of divers at work on the *Maine* arrived in June 1898, one community rejected it and asked for films of the Passion to be shown again.<sup>53</sup> There seem to have been few screenings in other parts of Canada either. The author of a study of early film in Toronto concludes: 'Few exhibitions of Spanish-American War pictures occurred in Toronto, most likely, because of the lack of direct participation by both British and Canadians'. However, where such films were shown in English-speaking Canada, it is likely that the audience would have been pro-American, as the following example suggests. A screening at the Bijou Theatre in Toronto from May 1898 included a substantial number of Spanish-American War films, including views of Cuba, the *Maine* victims and US battleships, and significantly 'closing with the American and Cuban flags'.<sup>54</sup> Though there is no description of audience reaction, obviously a showman would not conclude with such potent national symbols if he thought his audience would object.

### France

The French were generally well-disposed to the Spanish in their struggles in Cuba (perhaps because both were Latin nations, and both had colonial interests in the Caribbean). Even before Spain's war with America, most of the French press – such as *Le Temps*, *Le Figaro*, *l'Éclair* – were against the *Cuba Libre* movement in its fight with Spain, though the number of articles in favour increased by 1897.<sup>55</sup> In the run-up to the Spanish-American War itself, anti-American cartoons appeared in French magazines and newspapers. There was little sympathy for the Americans among the *grand publique* of Paris, and cries of 'Death to McKinley!' were to be heard at moments of high emotion. A general exodus of Americans from Paris occurred at this time.<sup>56</sup> Those who remained found the theatres especially hostile territory, as one observer recalled:

'At the time of the Spanish-American War, the music-hall audiences went solid for Spain. The Americans who visited the Folies Bergères about that time, I recollect, used to look sheepish and uncomfortable.'<sup>57</sup>

He is referring to halls like Olympia, where Spanish-American War films, 'épisodes de la guerre Hispano-Américaine' were shown in early August, projected by one Leonard Shrapnel (possibly a pseudonym).<sup>58</sup> Sadly, there is no indication of viewers' reactions to these films, though given the sympathies of music-hall audiences that I have outlined, one suspects that there may have been expressions of anti-Americanism.

Spanish-American War films were also shown in French regions, for example in Limoges, where they were advertised as 'pris sur le champ de bataille'.<sup>59</sup> At the Arles regional exposition on 26 June 1898 was shown *The Wreck of the*

*Battleship Maine in the Waters of Havana*. Arles being near to Spain, the audience would probably have been pro-Spanish, and indeed another film in the programme was a *Spanish Bullfight*.<sup>60</sup> In Le Havre war films were screened in September 1898, and even as late as April 1900 such films were the hit of a two week run by the 'Royal Viograph', probably including one of the Amet fakes. A critic noted: 'The pictures are impressively realistic: especially the bombardment of the Santiago forts, and the retreat of the Spanish artillery as they pass a ravine with guns and horses in the background.'<sup>61</sup> The practice of screening 'related events' was to be found in France: Lumière cameraman Promio had filmed the Spanish military in Madrid, and these views became more appealing on the outbreak of war with America in 1898. They were being shown at the Cinématographe Lumière in Lyon at the beginning of May along with some American military views: as a local newspaper pointed out, they were of 'great topical interest'.<sup>62</sup>

### **The British context**

Apart from in the USA, the most frequent and detailed reports of Spanish-American War screenings come from the UK. Some of these reports are interesting in indicating a rather more equivocal view from the audiences than might be expected. In the live theatres there were certainly a few pro-war performances: for instance, at the Tivoli in London a song 'Remember the Maine' could be heard, while at the Royal Albert a sketch 'Cuba's freedom' was performed.<sup>63</sup> But in general, rather than siding with America in her war as such, it seems that for the British people it was the United States itself which appealed at this time, along with her leader and symbol, the President. An American writer in London at the end of April found Britain very pro American, and reported that at the Empire Theatre the casual introduction of a bust of President McKinley during a play 'evoked a burst of cheering from every part of the house' and the band played Yankee Doodle thrice. Later, in the Palace Theatre, a picture of McKinley was shown as the band played the 'Star-spangled banner', and this, he noted, again evoked enthusiasm from the gods to full-dress.<sup>64</sup>

As I have mentioned, one of the 'big ideas' in this era was the coming together of Britain and America, and this was reflected on the stage. At the Shaftesbury Theatre in May, in a play called *The Belle of New York*, a man sang a song with the chorus: 'With our flags unfurled Against all the world, we'll stand and die together', at which point, as one American journalist in the audience reported, 'the American manager caused the flags of the two countries to be projected into the spectacle'. This lantern effect (presumably that's what it was) was hailed on the first night with 'a din of applause' (though the journalist himself found it, as he wrote, a bit of 'clumsy claptrap').<sup>65</sup> Again the point is that the applause was not exactly to support the war against Spain as such, but rather for Britain's friendship with America, and this pattern was evident too in film shows.

In early May, one of the Biograph films which was shown in the Palace Theatre, London, depicted President McKinley receiving a dispatch at his home in Ohio. This, a British journalist noted, was 'received with loud cheering'.<sup>66</sup> Yet the journalist described a somewhat different audience

reaction when films of the situation in Cuba were shown (these were films shot by Bitzer):

‘There is nothing to indicate sympathy with either side in the pictures, and the crowded audience showed little inclination to make a demonstration. The first scene shown was of the Spanish battleship *Vizcaya*, which called forth a few cheers for Spain and some hissing. A good picture of a gathering of reconcentrados at the Los Fosus [sic] Relief Station, Havana, was received in silence. The next photograph depicted the wrecked United States warship *Maine* just after the explosion. The audience seemed too appalled at the sight of the torn and twisted fragments of what a few hours before had been a magnificent ship, and the dead bodies of many of the gallant sailors, to be able to utter a word, and the scene passed away in painful silence.’<sup>67</sup>

But things didn’t always remain calm, and later that month audience reactions to the programme of Biograph films and lantern slides at the Palace Theatre became more heated, indeed became the object of intense dispute as ‘the Americaphiles and Americaphobes waged a nightly war of applause and hisses’. Julian Ralph (whom I mentioned earlier) had heard about the furore as these images were being projected, and went along to observe for himself:

‘The Spanish pictures which were shown there proved to be photographs [probably meaning lantern slides] of a war-ship, of General Blanco, and of certain Spanish troops. These were received with plentiful applause and very little hostility. Then there were shown moving photographs of American troops, and of our modest and dignified President walking across his garden lawn with a visitor. Over these a fierce battle raged between the personified geese who hissed and the men who resented the offence.’<sup>68</sup>

As the storm increased, he noticed that those nearest to him who were hissing seemed to be English. He was furious and was just preparing to hurl some contemptuous words at these antagonists of his country – this ‘hissing, groaning mob’, as he called them – when someone whispered to him, ‘that the offenders were mainly Jews and Germans, French and Spaniards, and that they flocked to that theatre every night to hear their own familiar farm-yard demonstrations’.<sup>69</sup>

But vocal expressions over such war films were probably rare in Britain, and the more general pattern of reception was apparently fairly low key, and by no means approaching the passions aroused in the United States. The Palace was by no means the only venue to be showing films of this war. At the Eastern Empire in Bow, east London, in June the ‘Warograph’ was showing mainly ‘battle subjects’, while at the Royal Music Hall, Holborn, Spanish American war films were still being screened in July.<sup>70</sup> Lantern lectures on the war in Cuba (probably not including film) took place in Britain during the latter months of 1898.<sup>71</sup> The reception would doubtless have been calm and polite, though many in the audience would generally have approved of America’s

victories. Similarly, in the Anglophile Australia, strong support for America against Spain was sometimes expressed during relevant performances and turns in the music halls, though I have found no specific examples there of reception of films about this war.<sup>72</sup>

## **FILM EXHIBITION IN SPAIN**

Of all countries where Spanish-American War films were shown, it is most interesting to find data for Spain, to see how a country's media reflect a war and then a defeat. As yet, the subject of how the Spanish-American War was covered by the visual media in Spain – and especially by cinema – has scarcely been studied by English-language film historians. Fortunately, in recent years it has been tackled by a number of Spanish regional film historians, and thanks to their efforts and some other sources I have managed to build up a picture of how the war was presented in both the film and non-film media in Spain.

### **The historical context in Spain**

By 1898 Spain was no longer a major power in the world. The country had become progressively weaker through the previous century, had already lost most of her overseas empire, and her navy had to make do with outdated ships. While the Spanish army was large and fairly well armed compared to the small, ill-prepared American forces, the US naval superiority and the sheer will to win proved decisive.

Equally, the passion for war in the Spain of '98 was neither so widespread nor deep-seated as in America.<sup>73</sup> [Fig. 5] But there were moments of war frenzy, and in the weeks before the outbreak of hostilities, 'jingoist' demonstrations took place in various locations in Spain. At the declaration of war, American flags were burned, and US consulates attacked, and the patriotic fervour manifested itself in cartoons, speeches, and songs.<sup>74</sup> The latter included such titles as 'Guerra al yanquee o viva España con honra' (War to the Yankee; or, Long Live Spain with Honour).<sup>75</sup> Expressions of anti-American feeling burst out at some public events: a writer who was visiting Madrid during the build-up to war went to a bullfight and heard cries of 'Death to the Yankees!'<sup>76</sup>

### **The Spanish 'yellow press'**

While the American 'yellow press' in this era is notorious and has been recurrently discussed by historians, its Spanish equivalent has been almost ignored by English-speaking historians. Yet it seems that there was an equivalent jingoism for war in the Spanish print media. One historian, Carlos Barron, has analysed 19 representative publications in the period running up to the war and found that, 'the overall posture of Spanish journalism was as inflammatory as that of their counterpart in the United States'.<sup>77</sup> Another pair of Spanish historians agree, adding that the Spanish newspapers at this time were, 'ludicrous, swaggering and uneducated', and their aggressive language toward the US was even more vituperative than that of the yellow press in America toward Spain.<sup>78</sup>

Yet unlike its American counterpart, the Spanish newspaper press was subject to state control and censorship, especially in its war news, and so much of this jingoism was probably political rhetoric from a minority, rather than reflecting much genuine feeling from the general public. Furthermore, uncomfortable truths about the war were distorted or repressed in the press. For example, the sinking of Cervera's fleet in Cuban waters was at first represented as a successful sortie against the Americans.<sup>79</sup> Though the Spanish press apparently had numerous correspondents in Cuba before and during the war, strict censorship made work difficult for them, quite apart from the dangers (one, Miguel Ageyro, was killed by an American bullet as he reported from the front line).<sup>80</sup>

### **War films in Spain**

The situation of cinema in Spain during the war should be seen in the light of this general mood. That is, a mood of significant nationalist fervour, though a fervour that probably did not penetrate very profoundly into the national psyche. The military, however, were very prominent in Spanish society, and even before the war were a dominant subject for in the first films shot in Spain. The Lumière operator, Alexandre Promio, was in Madrid in June, 1896, and filmed a variety of military scenes. Such manoeuvres and exercises were always a common subject of early films, and in this case martial subjects formed the majority of Promio's Spanish films.<sup>81</sup>

The following year, films were starting to be shown in various parts of Spain, and sprinkled in among the titles were some with relevance to the situation in Cuba. However, few of these it seems had been shot of the military in Cuba or Spain itself. In a show in the main theatre in Alicante, among ten films were *Maniobras Militares* and *Muerte de Maceo en Cuba*. The latter, about the death of the rebel leader Antonio Maceo, may have been a Lubin(?) fake.<sup>82</sup>

When war came in 1898, a number of films about the conflict were exhibited in Spain, but compared to the big war programmes in America, the Spanish film shows do not seem to have been particularly ambitious in scope nor nearly so widespread. Of the shows that were recorded by name, one which crops up a few times is the 'Wargraph'. I assume – though without firm evidence – that the 'Wargraph' was one single show, run by the same company in all its appearances throughout Spain.<sup>83</sup> A number of films were presented by this company and its proprietor, a certain professor Thomas, in the Parish Circus, Madrid in July 1898; projected, it is claimed, on an enormous screen of 80 square meters.<sup>84</sup> The films included fourteen views of the Cuban war, and were on the Circus' programme for a month. The public and the press were impressed: 'so amazing is the realism of the pictures of the present war which appear on the cloth, that the spectator feels himself transported to the very theatre of events'. From 16 August a second series of war films was shown by the Wargraph, including views 'taken in the theatre of war', and these, like the first, we are told, 'were enjoyed by the crowd'. Two weeks later the programme was changed, and now views of bullfighting dominated the spectacle.<sup>85</sup> By this time, of course, Spain had lost the war.

In September the Wargraph appeared in Badajoz, and exhibited the following films: military actions on sea and land, panoramas of Cuba and Havana, the American ship *Maine*, views of the battleship *Pelayo*, disembarkation of sailors in hostile territory, and, inevitably, a bullfight film (or films). But although the projections were said to be of good quality, the program was considered repetitive (presumably meaning that it didn't change) and the public preferred an alternative show: a Lumière cinématographe which offered a regular change of film programme. The Wargraph had lasted in the town a mere 5 days.<sup>86</sup>

I would conclude from the record of screenings in these two cities that neither suggests an overwhelming demand nor public enthusiasm for war films. In Madrid such films were supplanted by views of bullfights after a month or so, and in Badajoz the war films had lasted less than a week and the public preferred the varied films of the Lumières. But the Wargraph was not quite finished. Later in the year it appeared in Zaragoza and Cadiz.<sup>87</sup> Then at the end of October it was in Barcelona. But in the latter city, the subjects of the group of films is not specified, and it is entirely possible that they were general interest subjects, bullfighting and the like, rather than, or as well as, war views.<sup>88</sup>

I have found only one description of the exhibition of a war film in Spain where the audience reception rivalled the frenzy seen in American shows. This was in Cadiz on 29 April 1898. On that evening the Coliseo had been decorated with all kinds of national emblems and banners. As the band played the 'March of Cadiz', an immense crowd burst forth in a deafening ovation in honour of Spain. The press account then adds: 'When the Cinematograph showed a picture of Spanish artillery firing in wartime, the applause, the cheers and the enthusiastic cries bordered on delirium'.<sup>89</sup> I have no further details, but clearly this was patriotic fervour of an extreme and – from the evidence I have found – an atypical variety. There are two points which help to explain this enthusiasm. Firstly the show was in Cadiz, one of the homes of the Spanish navy, and secondly it took place *before* Spain started suffering defeat in the war with America. Only two days later, on 1 May, the Spanish fleet was sunk in Manila bay, and thereafter Spain proceeded to lose the war. It is unlikely that such nationalistic enthusiasm would have been seen in Spanish theatres from May onwards.

**Box:**

**The following war-related ‘news films’ were shown in Barcelona and La Coruña between 1898 and 1899**

- *Carga de la caballería española a la norteamericana en Santiago de Cuba* [Embarcation of the Spanish cavalry, North American division, for Santiago de Cuba]
- *Muerte de Maceo por la columna de Cirujeda* [Death of Maceo near to Cirujeda’s column] (Maceo was a Cuban rebel leader)
- *Guerra de Filipinas* [War in the Philippines]
- *Desembarque de las tropas llegadas de Cuba* [Disembarcation of troops returning from Cuba]
- *Llegada de repatriados* [Arrival of the Repatriated]
- *Llegada del Almirante Cervera a Madrid* [Arrival of Admiral Cervera in Madrid]
- *Desembarco de heridos de Cuba en nuestro puerto* [Landing of the Cuban Wounded in our Port]

In addition, *Viaje de Barcelona a Cuba* [Voyage from Barcelona to Cuba] was exhibited in a Barcelona theatre in September 1900.<sup>90</sup>

**Film benefit shows for soldiers**

This show in Cadiz was staged in order to raise money for ‘la suscripción nacional española’ – a fund to promote the Spanish military – and interestingly such benefit shows were to be one of the few areas where cinema in Spain in 1898 maintained a strong connection with the war.

In fact the first ever screening of a film in the city of Barcelona, which was in December 1896 with a Lumière cinématographe, was a benefit show for sick and injured soldiers returning from service in Cuba and the Philippines.<sup>91</sup> Similarly a film show in Aragon in June 1896 was also to raise funds to benefit soldiers from the Cuba war, through the association ‘El Ruido’.<sup>92</sup> These benefit shows continued during the war with America. In April 1898 there was a collection for the ‘suscripción nacional’ for the war in Cuba in a film show in Murcia.<sup>93</sup> And after the war was over there were at least two film shows in which the receipts were to go to soldiers who had become sick and wounded from service in Cuba: one in Badajoz and another in La Constància.<sup>94</sup> It is not apparent from the data whether the films at these benefit shows were war-related, or were simply ‘general interest’ views.

I would add that one final manner in which the nascent Spanish cinema covered the war was that, in a handful of places, films of soldiers returning from Cuba were exhibited (see **Box** above). One such film, showing soldiers disembarking, may have been shot by Antoni P. Tramullas, a photographer who introduced cinema in the Barcelona region.<sup>95</sup> A film entitled *Return from*

*Cuba and Landing of the Cuban Wounded in our Port* were shown in Galicia in September and October.<sup>96</sup>

### **The legacy of the war for cinema in Spain**

The defeat of 1898 is known in Spanish history as 'el desastre', and in political terms it was indeed a moment of disaster or crisis, and a blow to confidence.<sup>97</sup> After a century of shedding colonies, this was the final humiliating failure, consigning Spain to what Lord Salisbury called, in a famous speech of this year, the 'dying powers'.<sup>98</sup> Within the country, loss of empire provoked years of navel-gazing and political uncertainty,<sup>99</sup> and, say some historians, helped foster the development of Catalan nationalism, and later the rise of Franco.<sup>100</sup>

But as far as ordinary Spaniards were concerned, Cuba and the Philippines probably never mattered greatly, and losing these colonies was not a huge concern, indeed in some cases it was perhaps a relief. Most families had a son or relative serving in Cuba, who were fighting and suffering for apparently negligible national benefit. Though riots followed defeat,<sup>101</sup> there was little ensuing resentment against the United States. An American woman travelling through Spain a few months after the war met only 'courteous treatment' and kindness, she said, even though people knew she was from America. She found that the people resented not so much the defeat, but their *own* government's behaviour in sending soldiers to fight in Cuba in the first place. Ordinary people felt that the colonies had only benefited a few rich politicians. So this woman traveller concluded that, 'the Spanish people are not much affected by the disaster of the government'.<sup>102</sup> It is probably this lukewarm attitude within Spain to its colonies which explains the fairly modest exhibition of war-related films in the country.

Equally modest was the rate of development which characterised cinema in Spain in the wake of the war. The era after 1898 saw the film industry advance with painful lethargy against much opposition, and some film historians believe that this was related to the crisis in confidence partly engendered by 'the disaster'. In this period an anti-cinema stance held sway in the influential sectors of Spanish society, part of the generally pessimistic atmosphere in Spain in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>103</sup> For some nations, faring poorly in war means faring poorly in cinema too.

## **CONCLUSION: THE FILM INDUSTRY MARCHES ON**

### **The war revitalises American cinema**

As we have seen, the reception of Spanish-American War films varied from country to country. These varying patterns of reception would become increasingly apparent during future wars, where the same films might gain a very different reception in different regions, countries or eras. In 1898, by far the strongest emotions were expressed in the USA, and indeed the war itself had its most significant cinematic impact in America. Though the war probably had little effect on the early film industry in Spain or in third countries, in the United States the consequences were momentous.



As we have seen in an earlier chapter, filmic reporting of the war changed the public image of cinema, demonstrating that the medium could deal with serious current issues and with news in general. The work of exhibitors of war films in theatres and other venues in the USA was to have equally significant consequences for the industry. Charles Musser maintains that the Spanish-American War played a pivotal role in stimulating the development and popularity of the fledgling American film industry, setting it on the road to rapid growth in the years ahead. After a period in 1897 when 'moving pictures showed signs of fading', the war helped the cinema to bounce back:

'With the onset of the Spanish-American War the motion picture industry discovered a new role and exploited it, gaining in confidence as a result.... It was the ongoing production of a few firms that provided the commercial foundation for the American industry, and it was the war that gave this sector new life.'<sup>104</sup>

This important effect of the war on the development of cinema has been widely accepted by other film historians too.<sup>105</sup> And it has also been seen as pivotal by those who actually participated in the early film industry. William Rock, president of Vitagraph, recalled: 'I remember trade was truly horrible just before the Spanish war; however, it picked up very soon afterwards'.<sup>106</sup> His colleague Albert Smith agreed, noting that the war films of 1898 onwards attracted audiences back to the movies.<sup>107</sup> One observer, writing a generation later, maintained that war film shows of the summer of 1898 gave cinema 'a new lease on life', adding that 'it is not unreasonable to assert that the War of 1898 was directly responsible for resuscitating the art of motion pictures which for a time seemed doomed to oblivion'.<sup>108</sup> Terry Ramsaye put it more colourfully: 'The motion picture caught step with the martial tune of the nation and went marching on'.<sup>109</sup>

### **The American 'yellow cinema'**

Ramsaye's military metaphor is significant, for not only did these films boost the fortunes and popularity of the moving image, they did so by glorifying war and militarism. In David Nasaw's felicitous phrase, these films were 'patriotic cheerleaders'.<sup>110</sup> So as well as discussing the war's stimulating effect on American cinema, we should not omit to append a possibly darker, political dimension. In my historical introduction to the Spanish-American War I stressed that this war was not purely a cynical venture by a new superpower flexing its muscles, but was undertaken at least partially out of motives of idealism, to free the Cubans from Spanish colonial oppression. Yet in the years after 1898, American interventions, particularly in Latin America, sometimes had less altruistic motives, intended to promote imperial ambitions and to support the interests of big business.

With this in mind, viewed today with the benefit of hindsight, the moving images from the Spanish-American War may sometimes be an uncomfortable sight. Scenes such as American soldiers heading off to fight in Cuba, or Uncle Sam in triumph, scarcely have a positive contemporary resonance, just as the 'yellow press' of the 1890s is seen these days as sensational and imperialistic rather than merely patriotic. We may indeed speak of the war films of 1898 as

being a near equivalent of the 'yellow press' – a 'yellow cinema', if you like – which might be historically understandable, but which, over a hundred years on, seems as gross in attitude as the Hearst newspapers. Lauren Rabinovitz puts it nicely, in summarising the legacy of the war films (and other war media) of 1898:

'Their cumulative effects were more than that of simply acting as visual newspapers. In their combination of journalism and patriotism, they extended an ideological force. They spectacularized war and the concept of U.S. imperialism as had never before been accomplished.'<sup>111</sup>

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Gomery states: 'The period commencing in 1897 and running into July 1899 saw films move into the forefront as acts in vaudeville theatres, boosted by the popularity of the Spanish-American War as variety entertainment. This era would prove to be the heyday of motion pictures in vaudeville theatres..... No genre of programming could be developed to match the consistent drawing power of the images of the Spanish-American War.' Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: a History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (London/Madison: BFI/University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Musser, *Emergenc*, p.258-61; Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, p.126-37.

<sup>3</sup> A vaudeville sketch, *A Brave Coward*, is cited in American Memory online. Other dramas included *The White Squadron*, *Under the Dome*, and *Held by the Enemy*. Cited in Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure : Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998), p.108.

<sup>4</sup> A million men wanted to enlist, states George J. A. O'Toole, *The Spanish War, an American Epic - 1898* (New York: Norton, 1984), p.196.

<sup>5</sup> 'Demonstrations of the war spirit', LW 10 Mar 1898, p.155. It added: 'Old-timers say there has been nothing like it since the early "sixties".'

<sup>6</sup> J.B. Atkins, *The War in Cuba : The Experiences of an Englishman with the United States Army* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1899), p.9, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Jill Detemple, 'Singing The Maine: The Popular Image of Cuba in Sheet Music of the Spanish-American War', *Historian*, Summer 2001. Detemple adds: 'In the published words, well-known tunes, and detailed covers of the stylish music, the Maine was fashioned as a symbol of a newly developing national identity that emphasized military might, national sovereignty, and the moral authority of the United States in opposing traditional colonial powers.' An article of the time reports this big boom in war-related songs and music, especially about the *Maine*, and lists seven songs about the sunken ship. See 'Martial spirit in song', *The Phonoscope*, May 1898, p.14. The flurry of patriotic songs in 1898 included 'The Cuban flag' and 'The Havana patrol'. John S. Roberts, *The Latin Tinge : The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Sousa's light-opera, 'The Glass Blowers' was set in the Spanish American war and included the hit tune, 'From Maine to Oregon' (referring to the sunken *Maine* and to the *Oregon*, the mightiest warship in the US fleet). Also see Sidney A. Witherbee, ed. *Spanish-American War Songs: A Complete Collection of Newspaper Verse During the Recent War with Spain* (Detroit: Sidney A. Witherbee, 1898) and James Henry Brownlee, ed. *War-Time Echoes: Patriotic Poems, Heroic and Pathetic, Humorous and Dialectic of the Spanish-American War* (Akron, Ohio etc: The Werner Company, 1898) both held in the NYPL.

<sup>8</sup> *The Graphic* 2 July 1898, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> Geoff Weedon and Richard Ward, *Fairground Art : The Art Forms of Travelling Fairs, Carousels and Carnival Midways* (New York: Abbeville ; London : White Mouse, 1981), p.132-3. See illustration of Coney Island side show, *Graphic* 2 July 1898, p.7.

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<sup>10</sup> NYDM 30 Apr 1898, p.16. (Courtesy of George Pratt). The Madison Square exhibit is illustrated in *Scientific American* 28 May 1898, and is discussed in 'War fair', *Invention and Technology*, Fall 1998, p.64. Perhaps there was some influence on or from Amet's model-based films, discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Roger William Warren, 'History of Motion Picture Exhibition in Denver, 1896-1911', M.A., University of Denver, 1960, p.106. This was later published as microfiche supplement in HJFRT, 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Later the company did a similar re-enactment of the Boxer rebellion. Rob Kroes and Michael P. Malone, eds., *The American West, as Seen by Europeans and Americans [European Contributions to American Studies ; 16]* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1989), p.269.

<sup>13</sup> David Nasaw, *Going Out : the Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.74. For more about re-enactments of American troops trouncing the Spanish, see Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age : Culture & Society under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill [N.C.] ; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), passim.

<sup>14</sup> An amusing recollection of a lantern show about the war, given in about the 1890s in a church, appears in Chet Shafer, 'The magic-lantern show', *Saturday Evening Post*, 24 May 1930, p.16. Courtesy Stephen Herbert. On this occasion the operator bungled and the slides were shown in the wrong order.

<sup>15</sup> Ads in Kleine Collection, Box 26, LoC MSS Division.

<sup>16</sup> L. Manasse Co., *Stereopticons and Slides, Moving Picture Machines, Films and Other Apparatus* (Chicago, 1905), p.68-69. On Musser, Motion Picture Catalogs microfilms, reel 5.

<sup>17</sup> Set no. 1046 'The Cuban war and fight for freedom'. Another set, no. 1045, was about 'Cuba and the Cubans'. These slide readings are held in NYPL.

<sup>18</sup> Sears, Roebuck and Co.'s catalogue no.110, p.213. See also their catalogue, *Motion Picture Machines and Stereopticons: Catalogue of Motion Picture Machines, Magic Lanterns and Stereopticons. Slides, Films and Supplies* [1907], p.76-77. The number of slides seems to read 52 for each of the two sets.

<sup>19</sup> Ads for 'Lantern slides of the war with Spain' with readings by William H. Rau, appeared in LW 8 Sep 1898, p.197, 19 Jan 1899, p.57 and in subsequent issues through 1899. Joseph Boggs Beale made a firing squad execution slide and probably others related to the war.

<sup>20</sup> Tony Pastor was the innovator, according to one former song-slide specialist. See Harry S. Marion, 'Illustrated songs', MPW 26 March 1927, p.331.

<sup>21</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.258. These included a photographic slide of the graves of USS Maine victims in the cemetery at Havana, sold on ebay in 2005 (slide bears the label: S. Lubin, 21 South Eighth Street, Philadelphia).

<sup>22</sup> In the cast of the latter was Anthony Fiala who, it was claimed, 'had been in Spanish War cavalry'. See Alexander Black, *Time and Chance: Adventures with People and Print* (New York; Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937), p.152, 156.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Allen states that such films were shown in vaudeville houses in New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Providence, Toronto, Albany, Detroit, Milwaukee, Jackson (Michigan), and Paterson (New Jersey). Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film, 1895-1915 : a Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), p.139. An abundance of films connected with this war were exhibited in Milwaukee alone, says James Castonguay, 'Recruiting the Early Spectator: Re-presenting the Spanish-American War', paper at SCS conference, Ottawa, May 1997: cited in Gutteridge, *Magic Moments*, p.80.

<sup>24</sup> Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure*, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> James Labosier, 'From the Kinetoscope to the Nickelodeon: Motion Picture Presentation and Production in Portland, Oregon from 1894 to 1906', *Film History* 16, no.3, 2004, p.296-7.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Schroeder, *Lone Star Picture Shows* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), p.8..

<sup>27</sup> These epithets make identification of specific showmen involved very difficult, says Musser, *Emergence*, p.252.

<sup>28</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.259-60; Charles Musser, 'The Eden Musee in 1898: the Exhibitor as Creator', *Film & History* 11, no. 4, Dec 1981, p.73-83, 96.

<sup>29</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.273-4, 277-8.

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<sup>30</sup> Much of my account of film exhibitions of the Spanish American war is informed by Charles Musser's various writings, notably *The Emergence of Cinema : The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Scribner's, 1990) [abbreviated as Musser, *Emergence*].

<sup>31</sup> *Picayune*, 5 May 1898, p.7: shown at the West End theatre, New Orleans. Quoted in Sylvester Quinn Beard, 'A History of the Motion Pictures in New Orleans, 1896-1908', M.A., Louisiana State University, 1951, p.49.

<sup>32</sup> L. Manasse Co., *Stereopticons and Slides, Moving Picture Machines, Films and Other Apparatus* (Chicago, 1905), p.68-69. These lower costs would only of course apply if the showman didn't rush too swiftly from one image to another, thereby requiring very large numbers of slides.

<sup>33</sup> Prescott catalogue, 1899. Selig prices in 1903 were about the same.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures : Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991), p.77, 87, 88-9. Musser/Nelson add that a smaller scale exhibitor called Dibble also put on shows of this kind (and they note that his image of the *Maine* was cheered).

<sup>35</sup> 'The Army in Luzon and Cuba', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 24 March 1900, p.7. Elmendorf also screened Paley's film of pack mules in Cuba. He had already been lecturing on the Cuban war through the 1898-99 season using films and slides. See Musser, *Emergence*, p.222.

<sup>36</sup> Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure*, op. cit. This was at the Schiller Theater.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Musser, 'The Eden Musee in 1898', p.80-82.

<sup>38</sup> Musser, *Emergence* p.241, 244. This was also shown in London in early May – see reference below.

<sup>39</sup> 'Cuban War Pictures', *The Phonoscope* 2, no.4, April 1898, p.7, quoting from the *New York Journal*.

<sup>40</sup> Musser, *Emergence* p.241, and Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure*. Biograph also released film of Captain Sigsbee, captain of the sunken *Maine*, again to the vocal approval of audiences.

<sup>41</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.241-247.

<sup>42</sup> 'War films' in F.M. Prescott, *Catalogue of New Films* (1899). As I explain in the main text, there are two films said to be of the *Maine* listed in this catalogue.

<sup>43</sup> *Pick-Me-Up* 18 June 1898, p.183.

<sup>44</sup> Description in the Warwick Trading Company 1898 catalogue, film no.3436. The film survives in NMPFTV. Prescott enthused about this title: 'The ponderous warship is seen to the greatest advantage and is received with shouts and encores whenever and wherever it is shown. Even women and children become excited and insist on seeing this film over and over again. A most wonderful photographic subject clearly and distinctly displayed on the screen.'

<sup>45</sup> Also shown were films of the wreck of the *Maine* and the funeral for the victims. From the *Denver Post* 9 May 1898, p.5. Quoted in Roger William Warren, *History of Motion Picture Exhibition in Denver, 1896-1911*, op. cit. Charles H. Oxenham on the east coast was screening a programme of Spanish-American War films under the rubric 'The War Graph' through September 1898, including shots of the *Maine* in Havana harbour taken 'at the time' of the explosion and the wreck taken afterwards. Cited in two cuttings in Charles H. Oxenham collection, MoMA Film Study Center.

<sup>46</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.247. *The Phonoscope*, Feb 1898, p.9 ('General news') reported that the International Film Co. succeeded in filming a panoramic view of the *Maine* 'before the disaster', which was now being put on the market at 50 ft. A similar thing happened with shots of sister ships of the *Titanic* after the disaster in 1912. See my book, *The Titanic and Silent Cinema* (Hastings: The Projection Box, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> This according to a commentator in *Photographic Chronicle* 14 Aug 1902, p.517.

<sup>48</sup> Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p.85.

<sup>49</sup> This happened from about March 1898. Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p.87.

<sup>50</sup> Walstein Root, 'Cuba under American Rule', *Munsey's Magazine* 21, no. 4, July 1899, p.565: the caption reads, 'A cinematograph exhibition of war scenes, bull fights, etc, in Havana'. The frontage looks similar to that of the Tacon theatre in Havana, 1870, in Mary Evans picture library.

<sup>51</sup> Joao Luiz Vieira, 'Les influences françaises sur le cinéma brésilien (1896-1930)', in *Le cinéma français muet dans le monde, influences réciproques* (Perpignan: Institut Jean

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Vigo/Cinematheque de Toulouse, 1989), p.167-8; and in Vicente de Paula Araújo, *A Bela Época do Cinema Brasileiro* (Sao Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1976), p.91.

<sup>52</sup> Juan Felipe Leal, et al, *Anales del Cine en México, 1895-1911. vol. 4: 1898: una Guerra Imperial* (México, D.F.: Ediciones y Gráficos Eón : Voyeur, 2002-2003), p.119.

<sup>53</sup> Serge Duigou and Germain Lacasse, *Marie de Kerstrat : L'aristocrate du Cinématographe* (Quimper: Editions Ressac, 1987), p.64. Sherbrooke is in Quebec. There was a similar reception in Ottawa.

<sup>54</sup> The show was presented by the 'Bioscope', at 91 Yonge Street, from 2 May through 5 June 1898 and it was reported: 'A noticeable feature of the show is, of course, the war pictures, and they all come out remarkably well. We are given views of Morro Castle and Havana harbor, burial of the Maine victims, the United States cruiser Nashville, the cruiser Cincinnati, the battleship Indiana, the cruiser Detroit, the flagship New York, the battleship Iowa, the Coptic No. 2 and storm at sea, closing with the American and Cuban flags.' Robert W. Gutteridge, *Magic Moments: First 20 Years of Moving Pictures in Toronto (1894-1914)* (Whitby: Gutteridge-Pratley Publications, 2000), p.79.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Estrade, 'Emigration Cubaine de Paris (1895-1898): Premières Observations à la "Guerre de Marti"', *Cahiers du Monde hispanique et luso-brasilien*, no. 16, 1971, p.41, 45.

<sup>56</sup> George Clarke Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba: A Personal Account of the Cuban Insurrection and Spanish-American War* (London; Cambridge, U.S.A.: Gay & Bird, 1899), p.250.

<sup>57</sup> Edmund Basil Francis d'Auvergne, *The Night Side of Paris* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1909), p.18. French audiences had a particular fondness for Spanish dancers, the author says.

<sup>58</sup> Printed programme for Olympia, 3 August 1898, from David Robinson collection, displayed at Pordenone, 1992 in an exhibition about film publicity. These films were the tenth item in the programme.

<sup>59</sup> Pierre Berneau, and Jeanne Berneau, *Le Spectacle Cinématographique à Limoges, de 1896 à 1945* (Paris: AFRHC, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> René Garagnon, 'Histoire du Cinéma à Arles: Chapitre 1', *Bull. des Amis du Vieil Arles*, no. 101, Dec 1998, p.39.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Legoy, 'Les premiers pas du cinématographe au Havre, 1895-1914', *Recueil de l'association des amis du Vieux Havre* 38, 1981, pp.10, 20. My translation from : 'Les vues sont impressionnantes de réalisme, surtout lors du bombardement par les forts de Santiago et la retraite de l'artillerie espagnole passant au ravin où canons et chevaux restent au fond'. Note that this is indeed 'Viograph and not 'Biograph'.

<sup>62</sup> Jean-Claude Seguin, *Alexandre Promio, ou, les énigmes de la lumière* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), p.47. The Lyon screening was reported in *Lyon républicain*, 1 May 1898.

<sup>63</sup> *Entr'acte* 7 May and 6 Aug 1898. A grand military spectacle entitled 'War!' at the Grand, Clapham, included episodes about the Spanish-American War. *Pick-Me-Up* 27 Aug 1898, p.343.

<sup>64</sup> Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba: A Personal Account of the Cuban Insurrection and Spanish-American War*, p. 251.

<sup>65</sup> Julian Ralph, 'Anglo-Saxon affinities', *Harper's Monthly* 37, no.585, Feb 1899, p.385-91.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Biograph', *BJP Supplement* 6 May 1898, p.40. And quoted in John Barnes 1898 volume. See also 'Cinematography and the War', *BJP* 6 May 1898, p.293.

<sup>67</sup> 'The Biograph', *BJP Supplement* 6 May 1898, p.40. The writer added that 'Fresh photographs will be taken as long as the war lasts, and will be exhibited as soon as they arrive'. Biograph films related to the war were being shown in Britain as early as April. See *The Era* 30 April 1898, p.19. Such films continued at the Palace Theatre into early August. See *Daily Mail* 5 Aug 1898, p.1.

<sup>68</sup> Julian Ralph, 'Anglo-Saxon affinities', op. cit. I assume that the 'Spanish pictures' mentioned were lantern slides, because the text states that the American subjects were 'moving photographs'.

<sup>69</sup> The words Ralph was preparing to hurl at the hissers, until he thought better of it, were: 'For shame! ...Do you know what you are hissing? It is your own blood that you belittle. It is America, the creation of your own fathers that you are scorning. When you hiss at us, you asperse those whose traditions, triumphs, principles, and aspirations are precisely your own. You are like cuckoos who defile your own nest. When you hiss at Mr. McKinley's picture you

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hiss a symbol of the leadership of the Anglo-Saxon race.' The article also offers an analysis of how the Anglo-American friendship was growing.

<sup>70</sup> For Eastern Empire, see *London Entr'acte* 25 June 1898, p.11; for Royal, see *London Entr'acte* 30 July 1898.

<sup>71</sup> George Lynch, who had reported on the war in Cuba for *Black and White*, lectured in various south London venues. See *The Free Sunday Advocate*, Nov 1898, p.86 and Dec 1898, p.94. See also the same source for Oct 1898, p.77 for a notice of a lecture on the war by Horace G. Banks. Thanks to Tony Fletcher for directing me to *The Free Sunday Advocate*.

<sup>72</sup> *Entr'acte* (London) 18 June 1898.

<sup>73</sup> A number of illustrations in the foreign illustrated press, based on information or sketches from their Spain-based correspondents, depict a Spain in which there was certainly some enthusiasm for war, albeit within an authoritarian climate. These images include: a special performance in the Royal Theatre, Madrid in aid of a fund to increase the navy (*Graphic* 16 Apr 1898). A demonstration for war (ILN 7 May 1898). Huge crowds going to a special bullfight in Madrid in aid of the Patriotic War Fund (*Graphic* 28 May 1898). Police seizing a newspaper which has news of the disastrous sinking of Cervera's fleet (*Graphic* 16 July 1898, p.80). Mobbing a peace advocate in Madrid (*Graphic* 23 July 1898, p.119). These last three *Graphic* images were by Sydney Higham. See also issues of the French journal *Petite Illustration*, showing images of troops leaving Spain for the front, etc.

<sup>74</sup> Sebastian Balfour, 'Riot, Regeneration and Reaction: Spain in the Aftermath of the 1898 Disaster', *Historical Journal* 38, no. 2, 1995, p.405-423.

<sup>75</sup> Paso-doble for piano, music by Rafael Rodríguez (Valencia: Antich y Tena Editores, 1898). From Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, Fondos del Servicio de Partituras, Registros Sonoros y Audiovisuales.

<sup>76</sup> Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba: A Personal Account of the Cuban Insurrection and Spanish-American War*, p. 249.

<sup>77</sup> Carlos G. Barron, 'Spanish Press Reaction During the 1898 War', *Mid-America* 61, no. 1, Jan 1979, p.25-33.

<sup>78</sup> Javier Figuero and Carlos G. Santa Cecilia, *La España del Desastre* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1997).

<sup>79</sup> Edmond Kelly, 'An American in Madrid during the War', *Century Magazine* 57, Jan 1899, p.450-57.

<sup>80</sup> Robert John Wilkinson-Latham, *From Our Special Correspondent: Victorian War Correspondents and Their Campaigns* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p.219-20.

<sup>81</sup> Jean-Claude Seguin, *Alexandre Promio, ou, Les Énigmes de la Lumière* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), p.47. The ongoing foreign war in Cuba (against the rebels) might have been the inspiration for Promio to take so many military films, suggests Jean-Claude Seguin. Seguin finds the resulting films particularly well composed and shot, some being 'true little masterpieces'. The Madrid films included: *Lanciers de la Reine*, *Cyclistes Militaires*, *Danse au Bivouac*, *Distribution des Vivres aux Soldats*. The Lyon screening was reported in *Lyon républicain*, 1 May 1898. According to CNC, 9 of the 13 of Promio's surviving Spanish films are of the military.

<sup>82</sup> Daniel C. Narváez Torregrosa, *Los Inicios del Cinematógrafo en Alicante, 1896-1931* (Alicante: Filmoteca Generalitat Valenciana etc, 2000), p.170. The screening was 15 May 1897 in the Teatro Principal. The Lubin film was *Death of Maceo and His Followers* (mentioned in my previous chapter).

<sup>83</sup> There were shows with similar names in several other countries at about this time.

<sup>84</sup> The screen could be seen from a distance of 30 meters, it was said, though it's not clear what this means. Josefina Martínez, *Los Primeros Veinticinco Años de Cine en Madrid: 1896-1920* (Madrid: Filmoteca Nacional Española, 1993), p.46, 48. Films were not being shown in Madrid theatres at this time, and weren't until August 1898, so in July were only to be seen in the Circus Parish and at a venue called the Columbus. For more on the 'Wargraph' in Madrid, see Julio Montero, María Antonia Paz, 'Kinematographen in Madrid (1896-1900)', *Kintop*, no. 13, Dec 2004, p.141-2.

<sup>85</sup> The Wargraph showed the films in two sessions, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and at 10 o'clock at night, says Martínez, op. cit. Other companies in Madrid also showed films of the war, according to Agustín Sánchez Vidal, *Los Jimeno y los Orígenes del Cine en Zaragoza* (Zaragoza: Filmoteca de Zaragoza etc, 1994), p.193.

- <sup>86</sup> José Ramón Saiz Viadero, ed. *La Llegada del Cinematógrafo a España* (Santander: Gobierno de Cantabria, 1998), p.119. The show was said to be run by William Parish, presumably of the Parish Circus. All the films listed were said to be long ones. See also Catalina Pulido Corrales, *Inicios del Cine en Badajoz, 1896-1900* (Mérida: Editora Regional de Extremadura, 1997), p.103, 117. Only this latter source states that the *Maine* film was shown, but it doesn't mention views of the battleship *Pelayo* and disembarkation of sailors in hostile territory. It gives the show dates as 29 September to 3 October 1898.
- <sup>87</sup> Sánchez Vidal, *Los Jimeno y los Orígenes del Cine en Zaragoza*.
- <sup>88</sup> Jordi Torras i Comamala, 'Implantación del Fet Cinematogràfic a Barcelona... [1895-1910]', *Cinematògraf* 2, no. 1, 1992, p.47. At this stage, and possibly earlier in its Spanish appearances, the show was being run by a certain Henry Leonard.
- <sup>89</sup> José Ramón Saiz Viadero, ed. *La Llegada Del Cinematógrafo a España* (Santander: Gobierno de Cantabria, 1998), p.115.
- <sup>90</sup> Thanks to Joan M. Minguet Batllori for this list. It is worth adding that, also shown in Barcelona presumably from 1898, was a programme of films at the Cafè Colón, including titles about the wars in Cuba and the Philippines. See Miquel Porter i Moix and Maria Teresa Ros Vilella, *Història del Cinema Català (1895-1968)* (Barcelona: Editorial Tàber, 1969), p.36.
- <sup>91</sup> Palmira González i López, 'En el 90 Aniversari de L'Arribada del Cinema. Més Sobre els Inicis del Cinema a Barcelona (1896-1900)', *Cinematògraf* 3, 1985-1986, p.240. This author states that the show was on the 14 December, and an entrance fee of 1 Peseta was charged per person. Saiz Viadero, *La Llegada del Cinematógrafo a España*, p.100, also says it was 14 Dec, while a date of 10 Dec is claimed by Miquel Porter-Moix, 'Les débuts du cinéma en Catalogne', in Jean Claude Seguin, et al, eds., *L'aventure du Cinématographe : Actes du Congrès Mondial Lumière* (Lyon: ALEAS, 1999), p.163. On page 165 Porter-Moix adds that a Red Cross screening of March 1897 (also in Barcelona?) was for similar beneficiaries.
- <sup>92</sup> Saiz Viadero, *La Llegada del Cinematógrafo a España*, p.31.
- <sup>93</sup> Saiz Viadero, *ibid.*, p.157.
- <sup>94</sup> Proposed in Badajoz for 4 October 1898: see Catalina Pulido Corrales, *Inicios Del Cine en Badajoz, 1896-1900*, p.103, 117. In La Constància by a 'Mr. Huguein' on 8 Nov 1898: see Cristófol-Miquel Sbert i Barceló, *El Cinema a les Balears des de 1896* (Palma de Mallorca: Documenta Balear, 2001), p.15-16.
- <sup>95</sup> This undated filming was probably undertaken in Barcelona, though the facts are sketchy. It is referred to by Fernández Cuenca, and I am grateful to Miquel Porter i Moix both personally and in his book for the information. Miquel Porter i Moix and Maria Teresa Ros Vilella, *Història del Cinema Català (1895-1968)* (Barcelona: Editorial Tàber, 1969), p.52.
- <sup>96</sup> *Landing of the Cuban Wounded in our Port* was shown in Galicia 21 October: this might be the same film as *Return from Cuba*, shown in the region the previous month. The Spanish titles of these films were *Desembarco de heridos de Cuba en nuestro puerto* and *Regreso de Cuba*. See José M. Folgar de la Calle, *Aproximación a la Historia del Espectáculo Cinematográfico en Galicia (1896-1920)* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago, 1987), p.214.
- <sup>97</sup> Léopold de Saussure (brother of the linguist, Ferdinand) argued that Spain's defeat proved the inadequacy of continental European powers to manage empires and the superiority of Anglo-Saxons in doing so, because, as thoroughgoing racists, the Anglo-Saxons failed to educate their subjects, therefore not giving them aspirations to be the same as Europeans. He was wrong on this point about education, as both the British in some colonies and, most notably, the Americans in the Philippines, introduced mass education. Léopold de Saussure, *Psychologie de la Colonisation Française : Dans Ses Rapports Avec les Sociétés Indigènes* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1899).
- <sup>98</sup> Lord Salisbury in 1898 said the world was divided into the 'living' and 'dying' powers, citing the recent defeats of Spain and China as indications of the latter. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers : Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), p.195.
- <sup>99</sup> Mercedes Cabrera and Luzón Javier Moreno, *Regeneración Y Reforma : Espana a Comienzos del Siglo XX* ([Madrid, Spain]: Fundacion BBVA : Ministerio de Educacion, Cultura y Deporte, Secretaria de Estado de Cultura, 2002).
- <sup>100</sup> Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
- <sup>101</sup> Balfour, 'Riot, Regeneration and Reaction: Spain in the Aftermath of the 1898 Disaster'.

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<sup>102</sup> 'An American woman in Spain', LW 15 Dec 1898, p.467: she went to Cadiz among other places.

<sup>103</sup> José Luis Bernal Muñoz, 'Dal "Kinetoscopio" al Sonoro : El Cine Visto por la Generación del 98', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, no. 541-42, Jul-Aug 1995, p.146-8, etc. Joan M. Minguet Batllori, 'Early Spanish Cinema and the Problem of Modernity', *Film History* 16, no. 1, 2004, p.92-107.

<sup>104</sup> See chapter 'Commercial Warfare and the Spanish-American War, 1897-1898', in Musser, *Emergence*, p.225-6. See also pp.70, 241 and 261 on how the war revived cinema. This and some other sources for the subject are conveniently summarised by Castonguay at website <http://chnm.gmu.edu/aq/war>.

<sup>105</sup> Robert C. Allen maintains that the Spanish-American War was, 'probably the most propitious event in the early history of the American cinema'. Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film*, op. cit., p.139. Lauren Rabinovitz agrees, arguing that a glut on the motion picture market at the time, 'might have led to movies' dismissal as only a passing fancy or fad had it not been for the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898'. *For the Love of Pleasure*, p.107.

<sup>106</sup> 'Interview with the President of the Vitagraph Co.', *Bioscope* 1 Aug 1912, p.335.

<sup>107</sup> He added, though: 'but after a short time the public got tired of seeing pictures of soldiers, and then, if nothing else had occurred, the business would probably have fallen out of sight'. It was Méliès' longer (story) films, Smith argued, which got people interested in seeing films again and kept the film industry growing. From a 1917 court case in which Albert Smith gave evidence, quoted in: Richard Alan Nelson, *Florida and the American Motion Picture Industry, 1898-1980* (New York; London: Garland, 1983), p.99-100.

<sup>108</sup> Lee Royal, *The Romance of Motion Picture Production* (Los Angeles: Royal Publishing Company, 1920), p.9, 11. Royal says that by 1898 people had begun to tire of films of 'commonplace events' such as train views etc.

<sup>109</sup> Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights...* (London: Frank Cass, 1964), p.389.

<sup>110</sup> Nasaw, *Going Out*, p.149-150.

<sup>111</sup> Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure*, p.108. She is referring to the situation in Chicago, but her point may be taken to apply in general to much of the rest of America.



**Chapter 8**  
**THE PHILIPPINE WAR (1899-1902):**  
**Moving pictures for the American military**

**INTRODUCTION**

America's military interventions at the turn of the nineteenth century both began and ended in the Philippines. This was where the Spanish-American war had started, with the US naval victory over Spain at Manila Bay in May 1898, and conflict on the islands continued for several years as America took over Spain's colonial rule, and fought Filipino nationalists and insurgents for control of the country. Though this conflict is almost forgotten today, and in historical accounts it is sometimes presented as little more than a footnote to the Spanish-American war, the war was militarily important, for it was a larger conflict than is sometimes realised – thousands of men fought and were killed – and it marked an important chapter in the evolution of 'irregular' or guerrilla warfare.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years the war has been reassessed by historians, and is emerging as a far more interesting conflict than the epitome of colonial brutality which has so often been its reputation hitherto. Historian Brian Linn has produced the most complete account of the war to date and has shown that the US military, despite blunders, pursued a relatively subtle and intelligent policy, making this 'the most successful counterinsurgency campaign in U.S. history' (albeit, one must add, with thoroughly imperialist aims).<sup>2</sup> The war as a filmed event was also more complex and interesting than media historians have yet appreciated, notably for being a 'test bed' for visual propaganda of surprising sophistication. The major development filmically was the technique of 'arranging' scenes with troops in the war zone – these set-up shots being far more effective than off-the-cuff shooting. Such 'arranged' scenes, along with various fakes shot in the USA, constituted a disturbingly persuasive visual case for America's first, much criticized, imperialist adventure.

**Historical introduction**

After the swift defeat of Spain in Manila, and the fighting with Spain coming to an end in August 1898, the question arose: what should become of the Philippines? Among the Filipinos there was a strong nationalist faction which had launched a revolution against the country's Spanish rulers in 1896, and now effectively controlled much of the archipelago. The Filipino revolutionaries initially welcomed the US forces and expected or hoped that the Americans would agree to their dream of self-rule.<sup>3</sup> This hope was encouraged by the fact that shortly after his naval victory, Admiral Dewey brought the nationalist leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, back from exile to his Philippine homeland. For a time the two armies cooperated in the defeat of the Spaniards, but the friendship was not to last long.<sup>4</sup>

In the United States there was widespread discussion and disagreement in 1898 and 1899 about whether America should take on the Pacific nation as a colony. Many of the newspapers were against it (though the proportion in favour increased to a majority by the end of 1898),<sup>5</sup> and politicians were only narrowly in favour. President McKinley made the final decision, and later described the options that he thought he had faced in deciding the fate of the Philippines:

'(1) That we could not give them back to Spain – that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient – that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves – they were unfit for self-government – and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best [we could] by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.'<sup>6</sup>

Passing over the fact that the Philippines was already Christian (McKinley really wanted to *Protestantise* the predominantly Catholic islanders)<sup>7</sup>, there were other factors that McKinley didn't mention which encouraged the drive in America for assimilation. One of these was that the Philippines would effectively give the United States a western Pacific base, extending the global reach and influence of the burgeoning superpower, and promising access to the markets of China and the East. Secondly the Philippines was rich in natural resources, including timber.<sup>8</sup> In January 1900 US Senator Beveridge who knew the islands, stressed these economic factors in a speech to the Senate, calling the Philippines 'a revelation of vegetable and mineral riches' and adding that these products, such as copra and timber, 'supply what we need and cannot ourselves produce'.<sup>9</sup> He believed that the God given 'mission of our nation' was to achieve 'the civilization of the world', which certainly would include bringing backward nations into the world market economy. (Incidentally, as we shall see, the Senator was making his remarks at the very time that cameraman Carl Ackerman was filming the American army during the war with Filipino insurgents.)

However, as well as economic factors, there were also more altruistic motives among some of the pro-assimilationist Americans. There was little doubt among the US public that, as with Cuba, the Philippines had been misruled by Spain for generations: Filipinos and half-castes were discriminated against, with Spaniards getting all government jobs, and huge areas of land being owned by Catholic friars who were often autocratic and corrupt. The growing belief in the United States was that Spanish colonialism was an unacceptable anachronism. Indeed one American writer saw the demise of Spanish rule as part of the passing of the 'Dark Ages' – along with the victory of the British at Omdurman – and that American victory in the islands would be a triumph for progress and civilization.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, many Americans might have agreed with McKinley that self-rule for the Philippines would be little better than Spanish rule, and that a dose of Yankee administration was the only way to sort the country out. In any case, this view prevailed, and by the Treaty of Paris, signed on 10 December 1898, the islands were ceded by Spain to the United States for \$20 million. This was a reversal of previous indications to the Filipinos that they would be allowed self government, and the policy was highly contentious. Many Americans were concerned that their idealistic country was taking on a colonial role, and the Anti-Imperialist League (and writers including Mark Twain) helped focus opposition.<sup>11</sup> The controversial nature of annexation is underlined by the fact that ratification of the treaty in the Senate only just passed, squeezing through by just one vote more than the required two thirds majority.<sup>12</sup>

On 21 December 1898 President McKinley issued his so-called 'Benevolent Assimilation' proclamation, which outlined the aims of his policies in the Philippines as being to help the people and to develop the country, through American rule. In response, the Philippine Republic was declared in January 1899, with Emilio Aguinaldo as its president.<sup>13</sup> The United States refused to recognize this as the legitimate government, and tensions grew between the two sides.

Even before the actual decision on annexation was taken, from as early as the summer of 1898 indications were appearing that this was America's aim.<sup>14</sup> American troops were arriving in the islands, and they soon controlled Manila (though Filipino forces surrounded the city and controlled most of the country beyond). On 4 February 1899, after three Filipino soldiers were killed by U.S. troops, full-scale fighting broke out and the Philippine Republic declared war on the United States forces. In Kiernan's characteristically pithy phrase: 'Revolt against Spain went on as revolt against America'.<sup>15</sup> A bitter war ensued, lasting from 1899 to 1902 and beyond, known at the time as the Philippine insurrection, and these days dubbed the Philippine-American War, or simply the Philippine War.<sup>16</sup>

The war initially involved a number of set-piece battles, but the Filipino nationalist side fared poorly at conventional war and by 1900 had changed their tactics to guerrilla-style warfare. Yet the Americans had themselves developed an approach which proved unbeatable, the so-called 'attraction and chastisement' strategy. The 'attraction' part of this was based on the Army offering generous surrender terms, and then helping to provide schools, health care, sanitation programs etc to cooperative communities. Chastisement meant aggressively pursuing resistance and punishing uncooperative individuals and communities, with the penalty supposedly being proportionate to the offence.<sup>17</sup> Though this did not have immediate results, and the fighting continued for many months, the Americans gradually gained control by making peace and establishing local government in one region after another.

The Filipinos pressed the Americans hard on many occasions, and the conflict revealed weaknesses in American weaponry.<sup>18</sup> But there was little real doubt as to which side would ultimately win. A decisive moment came on 23 March

1901 when the elusive Aguinaldo was captured from his remote hideout in a bold operation led by Colonel Frederick Funston.<sup>19</sup> Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed hostilities in the Philippines over on 4 July 1902, and, although guerrilla resistance continued for some years, America was the new colonial master.<sup>20</sup> The war had been costly in lives: over 4,000 Americans died, and at least 16,000 Filipinos were killed in combat with untold numbers dying of privation and disease.<sup>21</sup>

### **News reporting and censorship**

As I have mentioned, the main thrust of historical writing in recent decades has presented the war as a brutal colonial struggle, close to genocide. But this is not how it was generally perceived at the time in America (though opinions were modified as the war proceeded). At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the public was proud of the achievements of their armed forces in toppling the Spanish tyranny in Cuba, and to a lesser extent in the Philippines. Thousands of American men had volunteered to serve in the forces, and these soldiers, as well as the US public, mainly wanted to see their work and actions portrayed in a positive way. And, with notable exceptions, this is generally what they got (almost entirely so in the case of motion pictures about the war) partly due to control of the news by the military.

As we have seen in the previous chapters on the Spanish-American war, the American expedition to Cuba had been overburdened with a vast number of journalists and war artists/photographers accompanying the troops, but it seems that there were far fewer journalists who covered the war in the Philippines. My impression is that probably less than a score of correspondents were in the islands at any one time reporting on the war, though many of those who did go were talented and industrious, including some good writers as well as artists and photographers, and their work was supplemented by reports from the troops themselves. Among their number was famed correspondent Frederick Palmer, as well as lesser known names such as James McCutcheon and Albert G. Robinson.<sup>22</sup>

One possible reason for this modest number of correspondents was a relative lack of interest in the war from editors and the wider public. After all, the Philippines was further away from America's shores than Cuba, and correspondingly less familiar to the American public and media. What is more, the war against the 'insurgents' was often conceived of as a mere mopping up operation after the Spaniards had been defeated, not a proper war in its own right.

Another significant factor in keeping correspondent numbers well below the vast figures of the Cuban campaign were those official controls I've mentioned. When the first troop ships set off in May 1898 the War Department set a maximum limit of only half a dozen correspondents allowed to accompany the troops, and only then if 'their presence will not impede or endanger the success of military operations'.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that restrictions on numbers were maintained as the war progressed, though I have found no further official edicts on the subject. Correspondents were not always welcome among the troops, for many soldiers were suspicious of them,

especially when anti war articles started appearing in the US press, though actually the pressmen covering the war tended to be pro annexation.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the curbs on reporting originated from General Elwell S. Otis, the American commander during the first part of the war. Otis was notorious for wanting to control all aspects of the American war effort personally, including news reporting. He had his work cut out with the pack of reporters, who were surprisingly assertive and persistent, and some of the newsmen in Manila harassed Otis for information daily.<sup>25</sup> The General was having none of it, and signally failed to cultivate the press corps in the Philippines and refused to give them reliable information. The General acquired a reputation among journalists for exaggerating the strength of his own forces and underestimating that of his Filipino opponents. The correspondents thought that the official despatches issued by Otis, 'misrepresent the facts of the situation', and the reason for this was that Otis thought that the true facts 'would alarm the people at home' in the USA.<sup>26</sup>

However, the journalists could not easily report their own versions of the military situation back to their newspapers. Telegraph traffic was controlled by Otis' office, which could censor dispatches, removing negative comments on such matters as the perceived mishandling of the conflict. Some correspondents covering the war became very frustrated by the draconian controls, and in July of 1899 eleven of these journalists signed a letter of protest, which caused some upset but little lasting effect.<sup>27</sup> The press soon had little regard for Otis, and in their reports stressed conflict among the military top brass.<sup>28</sup>

Otis and his colleagues could not control what people said or published after they left the islands, and in the following couple of years a number of critical accounts were published in US newspapers, regarding such matters as the brutal treatment of Filipinos by American troops and the slow progress of the war. By and large, though, media coverage in the US tended to be positive, due in part to the fear of seeming to be disloyal.

### **The war and other media**

Before 1898 the Philippines had been almost unknown to most Americans, but following the military intervention, a new interest in the islands emerged in the United States. Descriptive articles about the far Pacific nation started appearing in popular magazines such as *National Geographic* and *Munsey's*. Filipinos were often referred to in a patronising fashion in these sources, were compared to children, and the nation was considered incapable of self rule.<sup>29</sup> As mentioned, there was, of course, detailed coverage of the war in all the newspapers, and there were also fictional treatments: from the 1900s, a number of novels and stories were published about the American intervention, with titles such as *Under Otis in the Philippines*.<sup>30</sup>

The theme of the heroic American also appeared in visual form. One famous painter, Vasili Vereschagin, visited the Philippines during the war and painted action images of battles, as well as a series of five narrative pictures of the war. These told a sentimental story of a sergeant who is wounded, then is

seen in hospital as he dictates a letter to his mother back home, and finally dies.<sup>31</sup> This series has obvious parallels with Biograph's film, *The American Soldier in Love and War* (1903), which depicted the experience of a soldier who leaves home to serve in the Philippine War where he is wounded.

Many photographs were taken during the campaign, both by professional lensmen and by soldier photographers. The most comprehensive project to photograph the war was by one Karl Irving Faust, who co-ordinated the efforts of soldier-photographers in most of the US regiments in the field, and then published a book which documented the campaign with great thoroughness.<sup>32</sup> Several photographers seem to have arranged action for their photographs – in a direct parallel to what film cameramen, as we shall see, were doing in the war.

There were also live shows which dramatised America's new colonial wars, perhaps the most extraordinary in relation to the Philippines being Buffalo Bill's re-enactment. A group of Filipinos joined the troupe, playing their own role as freedom fighters during the Spanish-American War, and at first were cheered as such, but as soon as the Philippine insurrection began, they were booed as enemies. They ended up playing American Indians in a different act of the show.<sup>33</sup> Such were the ironies posed by shifting power alliances in the Philippines.

The war was depicted in various other art and entertainment forms from 1899 onwards, including in plays, posters, firework shows, songs and lantern slides, mainly in the USA (with one earlier instance in Spain).<sup>34</sup> Del Mundo has documented some of these examples, showing that they were often patronising towards the Philippines and its inhabitants.<sup>35</sup> In some cases the belittlement was quite shocking, most notably when tribal Filipinos were put on display at expositions.<sup>36</sup> At the Philippine Exposition in St. Louis, 1,200 Filipinos were housed in native villages as exhibits to be stared at by visitors; to make it worse, they were divided into degrees of civilisation, between the lighter-skinned Igorots, whom the experts claimed could be civilized, and the dark-skinned Negritos who could not.<sup>37</sup>

During the Philippine intervention, as is the case in many wars, there was a love-hate relationship between the media and the forces. In the early part of the war some print journalists had criticised particular military decisions, but the censors managed to restrict the scribes from telegraphing the information from Manila. This continuing censorship, though, itself antagonised the press, and criticism in American newspapers continued, shifting to more general issues about the justification for the colonial intervention itself, and the apparently brutal way in which the war was being conducted. However, the voices of criticism were always in a minority, and generally the American media had a patriotic and pro-war attitude, so the US military effectively had their publicity job done for them by these sympathetic writers and artists – this was 'propaganda by proxy', so to speak.

One notable characteristic of the media coverage of the war was the practice of recruiting reporters within the forces. Karl Faust's ambitious project entailed

several soldier-reporters and photographers being 'embedded' in American regiments in the Philippines. And a version of this embedding would take place in motion picture reporting of the war, through the work of Carl Ackerman, who lived and filmed among the troops for several months.

### **FILMING THE WAR: HOLMES, ROSENTHAL, et al**

While the Philippine War was not such a major news event as the Spanish-American conflict, it did have the advantage so far as film companies were concerned that it lasted longer and so they had more time to prepare to film it. Ironically, however, most efforts to record the war in moving pictures came rather late, after it had become a guerrilla conflict, and so all chance of capturing aspects of the early, larger battles was lost.

At least three cameramen/crews went to film the Philippine War. Burton Holmes was there from May to July 1899; another American, Carl Ackerman, filmed for Biograph from about November 1899 to around April 1900; and finally Joseph ('Joe') Rosenthal, working for the Warwick Trading Company, was there rather briefly in early 1901. All the filming by Holmes, Ackerman and Rosenthal was in the central part of Luzon, between Laguna de Bay to the south and Pangasinan province to the north, taking in the Manila region and Pampanga province. [See map: Fig. 1] The efforts of these cameramen were very limited therefore, both in terms of the amount of time that they remained in the country, and the range of places they visited, and were also limited by their pro-American attitudes. They photographed or filmed American forces almost exclusively (never Filipino rebels), and presented these invading forces in a sympathetic light.

The work was also circumscribed by limited technical resources. With cumbersome camera equipment, the three cameramen generally were unable to film actual military operations in this fast-moving guerrilla war, so like some of their photographer colleagues, they enhanced the impact of their images by setting-up or 'arranging' certain shots. These 'posed actualities' were in a sense the on-location versions of the war fakes which were being shot in the USA at this time by the Edison company and others. Like the fakes, these location-shot films of the conflict took a generally one-sided, pro-American position, and the development of this near-propaganda stance may be seen as one enduring legacy of the filming of this war. In this section I cover Holmes and Rosenthal, while I will treat Carl Ackerman's more significant work in the islands in a section to itself (even though he came before Rosenthal).

#### **Initial and miscellaneous efforts**

The first films pertaining to the war were shot in May 1898 by Edison cameramen, White and Blechynden, who photographed troop transports departing San Francisco for the Philippines, released as *Troop Ships for the Philippines*, and *Troops Embarking at San Francisco*.<sup>38</sup> Then as troops returned to the US some months later, they were sometimes recorded on film, in such views as *Astor Battery on Parade* (Edison, 1899). Incidentally, this

unit, the Astor artillery battery, was coming back to the US relatively early in the war, and they were greeted enthusiastically by crowds, though further into the war as the public became bored with the conflict, the crowds failed to come out for returnees and the filmmakers seem to have stayed at home too.<sup>39</sup>

The first filming in the Philippines itself was apparently by a Spanish army officer, Antonio Ramos, who shot scenes of Manila in 1898 and then screened them.<sup>40</sup> Frustratingly there is little more information about this work, though it was possibly related to the war in some way, because it happened in the first year of America's involvement in the Philippines, and also because Ramos was an army man.<sup>41</sup>

I have found a couple of other brief reports of war filming. An intriguing story in a US newspaper in September of 1899 mentions the screening of films of the battle of Manila taken by a certain Charles E. Butler of the *New York World*. The report adds that Butler was killed during the filming. However, I can find no further information on this man or his activities.<sup>42</sup> F.M. Prescott, a film distributor in New York, released four films in his November 1899 catalogue which showed US troops in Manila, presumably filmed earlier that year, and one film of a *Philippine War Dance*.<sup>43</sup> The Lubin company released a few films of troops in the Philippines, including *Scaling a Fort at Manila*, and *10th Pennsylvania Drilling at Manila*. It is not clear who shot these films from Prescott and Lubin, or if they really were filmed in the Philippines.

At the end of April 1899 the first films from the Philippines about the war were on show in the USA. At the West End entertainment venue in New Orleans, among a programme of a dozen films (mainly comedies and other fiction), several war films were offered, under the heading: 'On the Firing Lines at Manila. Incidents during the recent battles between the U. S. troops and the Filipinos'. These comprised the following four views, as described in a press ad: 'General Otis reviewing troops; Skirmishing in woods at San Tolan; the charge; the Red Cross on the field'. A week later these four films were singled out for praise from the other films in the programme as, '...the best that have been seen here, especially those of battles pictured from the movements of troops engaged in the present war'. The newspaper report noted that they '...were received with great applause....'<sup>44</sup> The films were said to have been 'taken by the American Vitagraph Company', though this is not certain, and they may have been made by other companies and simply distributed by Vitagraph. To judge from the titles, the latter three could well have been fakes (see staged films section). The Otis title could be Lubin's *Gen. Otis and His Troops in the Philippines*.<sup>45</sup>

### **Burton Holmes**

The first person who we are sure filmed in the war zone was Burton Holmes (1870-1958). Holmes started roving the world from the 1890s, visiting and photographing remote or picturesque places, and was to become a famed traveller and lecturer. He teamed up with a lantern projectionist, Oscar Depue, who became Holmes' long-term cameraman and technician.<sup>46</sup> Initially the pair took still photographs, but in 1897 Depue bought a 60-mm Gaumont film



camera, and he and Holmes started shooting moving picture views in addition to their stills, starting in Europe and the USA.<sup>47</sup>

Two years later, as war raged in the Philippines, Holmes set off to immortalise the conflict in stills and moving pictures.<sup>48</sup> Departing from the west coast of Canada on 1 May 1899, he travelled to the Philippines and stayed briefly in Hong Kong. He apparently set off alone, for he doesn't mention Depue in his account, but he did work with a Chinese assistant, Ah Kee from Hong Kong, who may have taken Depue's place for this assignment. In Hong Kong Holmes found that Admiral Dewey's flagship *Olympia* was in the harbour, and he didn't miss this chance for filming. He managed to take a circling shot of the ship as well as to film the Admiral himself. For recording these and other scenes in Hong Kong and Canton, Holmes tells us he was using what he called his 'chronomatograph', which is a similar enough word to 'Chronophotographe' or 'Chrono' to suggest that this was the Gaumont instrument which Depue had bought.<sup>49</sup>

From Hong Kong Holmes sailed to the Philippines, and he took Ah Kee along, for, as he explained to the suspicious US authorities on arrival, the Chinese assistant had by now become invaluable in his 'pictorial work'.<sup>50</sup> In Manila they shot a few scenics: a view on the Pasig river, a boat in the process of docking, the local fire brigade, and also set up an illegal cock-fight 'for motion-picture purposes'. The latter was a lively scene on film: 'The animated record shows the contending birds surrounded by a crowd of excited owners and backers, offering bets'.<sup>51</sup> They filmed the American military too: a gun crew on the US navy ship *Baltimore*, and the Ninth Infantry on the Bridge of Spain.<sup>52</sup>

Such views of scenery and military forces were all very well, but Holmes had really come here to document the war, and his first chance came when he, and presumably Ah Kee, found themselves in Baliuag, north of Manila. This town, formerly a base of Aguinaldo, and on an extension of the railway from Manila to Dagupan, had been won by the Americans from the Filipinos some months previously, and was at this time occupied.<sup>53</sup> It was a fairly isolated outpost, with hostile forces in the vicinity. Here in this town Holmes made a couple of films of the US army, and interestingly, in both cases the films were set-up or arranged, rather than showing events as they happened. Holmes discusses making these films in his printed lecture about the Manila visit, and this account constitutes a fascinating illustration of the issue of filmic 'arranging'. It constitutes too one of the first ever examples of co-operation in the field between a cameraman and the military.

It seems that the Colonel in charge of the American unit in Baliuag, a unit of about eight hundred men, was keen to demonstrate for the movie camera that his men were ready for any attack by Filipino forces.<sup>54</sup> He therefore, Holmes tells us, 'placed two companies at our disposal, to take part in a carefully planned defence of an entrenchment'. Holmes then gives us a remarkably frank description of what was a totally set-up scene:

'The day was dark and wet, conditions all unfavorable, but the motion picture successfully reproduces the dramatic sequence of incidents as

they occur. First, four men are seen retiring from the outpost, giving the alarm, one company promptly mans the trench, and begins a vigorous fire, using smokeless powder; an orderly brings a dispatch to the commanding officer, then re-enforcements dash forward from the town, then comes the best friend of the soldiers, the unerring Gatling, and finally the enemy having been seen to waver, the command to charge is given, and the entire force breaks over the earthwork, and with a wild yell dashes across the fields in hot pursuit of the imaginary enemy. Meanwhile the dead and wounded who have fallen in the foreground are cared for by the surgeon and his Chinese stewards. So realistic is the feigned death of one soldier that spectators will not believe that the picture represents only a sham battle.<sup>55</sup>

The latter comment suggests that Holmes might have been aiming at making a film which would pass for genuine. From the description, it seems possible that the film consisted of more than one shot, which would be a significant development at this date, though apparently it does not survive, so we may never know (some frames from what may be this film are in Holmes' published lectures: Fig. 2). The other film that Holmes describes making in his account was also a set-up or arranged scene, and was on a particularly interesting theme. As we have seen, the US army's strategy for winning the war involved a two-pronged approach, which has been dubbed 'attraction and chastisement', in both rewarding Filipinos who knuckled under to American rule and punished those who resisted.

An instance of chastisement was to be the subject of another film by Burton Holmes. While Holmes was in Baliuag, a telegraph wire outside the town was cut by Filipino rebels. This was serious. The American war effort relied utterly on telegraph communication, and therefore anyone who damaged lines was severely dealt with, sometimes shot.<sup>56</sup> If no culprit were located, the community as a whole might be punished. In this case the guilty party could not be found, so, Holmes tells us, the colonel ordered that a native house be burned, 'as a warning that tampering with the telegraph line will invariably bring chastisement upon the village'. (House burning was a common punishment for communities, used by the American forces and guerrillas alike). Evidently Holmes had arranged with the Army that he could film this somewhat spectacular reprisal scene, and he himself was given an opportunity by the captain in command of the squad to, as Holmes reports, 'pick out the house that will make the most effective motion picture as it goes up in smoke!' Holmes continues:

Fortunately the one lending itself best to artistic necessities was an abandoned nipa dwelling — a pretty little affair with a neat little garden around about it. But the green hedge hides part of the house — and the drooping branches of a splendid tree will cut off the view of the rolling smoke, which should form an important feature of the dramatic picture that we are about to make. I mention these objections to the captain. Gruffly he orders half a dozen Filipinos to fetch their bolos and chop down that pretty hedge; two other obedient natives are sent up the tree to lop off the interfering branches. Then when all is ready, several

soldiers enter the house, pour kerosene on the walls and floors of thatch and bamboo, and set fire to the flimsy structure. When we rode on nothing but ashes marked the cite.' [sic]<sup>57</sup>

This suggests that Holmes had his qualms about this policy of hut burning, for he uses the word 'fortunately' in mentioning that the house chosen for burning was an abandoned one. But it is surprising that the American Army allowed, even suggested, the filming of a native hut being burned (even an abandoned one), as this would surely be seen by film audiences as cruel and inhumane. Clearly the US Army still had something to learn about visual propaganda.<sup>58</sup> In any case, this description by Holmes of what he filmed, as well as the previous example (the battle scene), show that the Army was keen to have its activities recorded in motion pictures.

At this time of the year the rainy season arrived and, Holmes tells us that at this point all hostilities were postponed (which was not quite true), and that any further travel and filming were also impossible. Therefore he returned to Manila, and late in July 1899 departed the country.

Holmes had been in the islands for about two months, but it had been a frustrating time for his photographic and motion picture work, and he expressed himself, 'far from satisfied with the results of our war-time visit to the Philippines'. The trip had been disappointing principally, he notes, because he and Ah Kee had seen and filmed so little of the country: 'we have seen only the city of Manila and the narrow strip of Luzon territory held by our forces'.<sup>59</sup> This comment suggests that Holmes had been more interested in recording the scenic places in the Philippines than in filming the war – scarcely surprising, perhaps, as he was a travelogue lecturer. This impression is reinforced by a description of a lecture he delivered in the US later that year about his trip to the islands. (These lectures about the Philippines were some of the first in which he integrated film with lantern slides.) The description gives us an idea of the content of the lecture, and it seems that, surprisingly, neither his slides and films nor the lecture itself covered the war to any great extent.

Holmes kept his lecture on a light-hearted note, in the tradition of a travelogue, and much of it was about his personal experiences during the trip – of the shabby insect-infested accommodation in Manila, for example. The only aspect of the actual war that he covered, it seems, was a description of the lifestyle of the officers and soldiers – for example he screened images of the houses of US officers based in the Philippines – with very little about military events and actions.<sup>60</sup> It is not even clear from this lecture report if he showed the two war-related films – the battle and the burning – which I have described above. If not, this would be somewhat surprising, given that the war was still an important news story in America, and that Holmes had apparently put considerable effort into filming these war scenes. But it seems that he simply didn't have much concern for the war as such, for clearly it was scenic views which really excited him, and when next he visited the Philippines, in 1913, it was to secure travelogue views.<sup>61</sup>

But just because Holmes was somewhat dismissive of his work in filming the war, does not mean we should be. In fact, the two scenes which he staged for his camera are, based on his descriptions, of considerable filmic interest, for they required much setting up and indeed actual *direction* from Holmes. Like some other fledgling producers and cameramen at the time, he had realised that films – especially films in a war zone – could be made significantly more dramatic and interesting with a modicum of planning and special arranging. Later in the year, as we shall see, Ackerman would take a similar approach.

### **Joseph Rosenthal**

The second most significant filmmaking venture of the Philippine War was by the Warwick Trading Company, through their cameraman Joseph Rosenthal. Rosenthal was one of the most celebrated roving cameramen in the early years of the cinema, notable especially for his work in South Africa during the Boer War from 1899 to 1900 (see chapter 9). After his Boer assignment, Rosenthal travelled to the Boxer Rebellion in mid 1900, and then by early the following year, came on to the Philippines where the war with the Americans was still in progress. This itinerary was the converse of Ackerman's, who went first to the Philippines (a year before Rosenthal) and then to China.<sup>62</sup> The difference was probably due to the dissimilar interests of the two companies: Ackerman worked for Biograph, an American company, which would have set a priority on the Philippines as an American war zone, while for the UK-based Warwick Trading Company, the conflict in China in which British troops were involved was of more news value, meriting an earlier visit from their cameraman.

Almost all of what we know about Rosenthal's venture in the Philippines comes from a Warwick catalogue supplement of approximately August 1901, which lists and describes – under the heading *Uncle Sam's troops in the Philippines* – a number of films which Rosenthal made in the islands.<sup>63</sup> We do not know when exactly Rosenthal arrived in the Philippines, though it is claimed that he stayed there three or four months.<sup>64</sup> We know that he was certainly there in February 1901, for he filmed a dated event in that month as we shall see. (Incidentally, this was shortly before the triumphant Americans captured Aguinaldo in March 1901.) Equally, we know all too little about his experiences while filming, and none of the resulting films survive. But the Warwick list does give a fair amount of detail about the films.

Some sixteen films are listed in all, a small number indeed, though even that overstates Rosenthal's output, because some of the films are little more than different angles of the same location, or sections cut from a longer take (in the case of his Pasig River panoramas). This implies that Rosenthal might not have stayed long in the Philippines, which is also suggested by the fact that none of the given filming locations are very remote: ten of the sixteen films were shot in or around Manila; one or two were shot in Macabebe, Pampanga (only a half a day's travel away); and while five films were shot in unnamed locations, there is no reason to suppose that these were far from Manila.<sup>65</sup>

**Box:**

**Uncle Sam's troops in the Philippines**

Series shot by Joseph Rosenthal for the Warwick Trading Co., 1901.

- Along The Pasig River. Passing The Pirate's Lair (75)
- Approaching Manila by the Pasig River (150)
- Panorama of the Pasig River, showing Gen. McArthur's Headquarters, Manila (50)
- Native Traffic Over The Bridge Of Spain, Manila (50)
- Palacio Plaza, Manila, including the American Headquarters (50)
- Circular panorama of the Plaza de Calderon, Manila (50)
- The Columbia Market Place, Philippines Isles (50)
- Cock Fighting in the Philippines (100)
- The Seventh Artillery, U.S.A., Charging (50)
- The Seventh Artillery, U.S.A., in action (100)
- The Twentieth Infantry , U.S.A. (Otis' Pets), marching through a banana grove; a splendid subject (100)
- The Twenty-Seventh Infantry , U.S.A., entering Manila (125)
- The Macabebe Scouts passing through a native village (125)
- The [Fourth] Cavalry U.S.A. repelling flank attack (100)
- The Ilocano Scouts charging the enemy's entrenchment[s] (125)
- The charge of the Macabebe Scouts (125)

NB. The series also included *Uncle Sam's Latest Battleship The Kentucky* and *H.M.S. Goliath in Chinese Waters*, which on the face of it seem irrelevant, but perhaps these ships were somehow connected with the Philippine campaign. The *Battle of Baliuag* is given by de Pedro as a Rosenthal title, but not listed in any other source.

Several of the films are non-military scenic views, such as *Native Traffic over the Bridge of Spain, Manila*, though even some of these have military content, as in *Panorama of the Pasig River Showing General MacArthur's Headquarters at Manila*. Several of the films are simply views of American army units, such as *The 20th Infantry U.S.A. ("Otis's Pets") Marching Through a Banana Grove*, or *The 27th Infantry U.S.A. Entering Manila*.

One of the more intriguing military forces which Rosenthal filmed were the so-called Philippine 'scout units', created by the US Army as a way of using the military skills of Filipinos themselves against the rebels. These scouts sided with the Americans for personal, tribal or financial reasons, and they were to prove a vital help in the American war effort against the nationalists (who regarded them as traitors).<sup>66</sup> Rosenthal took three films of the scout units, comprising one film of the Ilocano Scouts (of which more below), and two of the Macabebe Scouts, the best known of the native units: *The Charge of the Macabebe Scouts* and *The Macabebe Scouts Passing through a Native Village*. The latter was filmed, the catalogue tells us, two weeks after the

Macabebe unit was equipped on 25 January 1901, which would mean in the second week of February (the only one of Rosenthal's films that we can date).<sup>67</sup> The Macabebes were the first ethnic group to be enlisted on the US side, and were made up of men from the town of Macabebe in Pampanga province. Ruthless warriors, they loathed the Tagalogs, the main ethnic group in the central plain of Luzon, and were enthusiastic recruits to the American cause.<sup>68</sup>

One can imagine that Rosenthal's US minders would have been delighted to have him photograph the Philippine scout units, for these units proved that not all Filipinos were opposed to American rule. This indicates that the British cameraman was basically shooting the war from a viewpoint sympathetic to the US: primarily Rosenthal filmed American or pro-American forces. Though Rosenthal was not so closely tied to the American military as Ackerman, there was clearly some dependency, and the Warwick catalogue states that their Philippine films were made 'by kind permission of General MacArthur' (who was by that time commander of US forces in the Philippines).<sup>69</sup>

The catalogue titles/descriptions assigned to the resulting views by the Warwick Trading Company, Rosenthal's employers, show a strong bias to the American side, and one should recall that the Warwick company was formed and run by Americans.<sup>70</sup> Warwick titled Rosenthal's film of the banks of the Pasig River (taken from a moving boat) *Along the Pasig River, Philippine Island: Passing the Pirate's Lair*. The 'pirate's lair' is a disdainful reference to the Philippine fighters or insurgents whose stronghold this was, and the Warwick catalogue adds an editorializing comment that this area was subject to 'the depredations of the river pirates who infest this section and have proved so troublesome to the Americans since the war with Spain'.

### **Rosenthal's film technique and 'arranging'**

Apart from their ideological content, Rosenthal's films have some other points of interest. Rosenthal was an enterprising cameraman, and was willing to experiment with film technique. Two of his films are panning shots, so he must have had a panning head on his tripod. There is panoramic movement in another sense in these films, for three of the views were filmed from the deck of a moving steamer. Furthermore, Rosenthal was not afraid of filming longer takes, and several of his group of films from the Philippines were 100 feet long and more.<sup>71</sup>

Like Holmes and Ackerman, Rosenthal would sometimes arrange scenes for his camera. Some five of his Philippine films were clearly set up or reconstructed (and others might have been), depicting the troops of various military units, American or their Filipino allies, in the process of firing at or charging the enemy. That there were as many staged films as this – almost a third of Rosenthal's total production in the Philippines – is somewhat surprising, given his reputation as a straight-shooting news cameraman, but he had made 'set-up' films before. For example, as we shall see, one of his Boer War films, *A Skirmish With the Boers Near Kimberley* includes a scene in which a group of British cavalymen gallop towards us, stop dramatically,

and set up two Maxim guns pointing directly over the hedge toward the camera.

His Philippine films which are plainly set-up include: *The 7th Artillery U.S.A. in Action*; *The 7th Artillery U.S.A. Charging*; and *The 4th Cavalry U.S.A. Repelling Flank Attack*. The catalogue description of the latter gives a flavour of these subjects:

'A detachment of the 4th Cavalry are seen dashing past the camera, dismounting, then lying on the ground and firing repeated volleys at the enemy. They then remount and gallop off while another squad takes their place, going through a like action. A splendid subject.'

Two of Rosenthal's set-up films portray the scout units. *The Charge of the Macabebe Scouts* is described in the catalogue as follows:

'This subject depicts the mode of these scouts charging the enemy who are firing at them from the woods in the background. These new troops of Uncle Sam seem to thoroughly enjoy the fight.'<sup>72</sup>

It is unlikely that this firing from the woods was genuine enemy fire, and might presumably have been arranged by posting men in the woods who were firing blanks. The description of action in Rosenthal's other scout film, *The Ilocano Scouts Charging the Enemy's Entrenchments*, shows even more evidence of arranging. The catalogue notes that this film:

'...shows the enemy entrenched, awaiting the charge of the Ilocano Scouts, who finally come into view, and after dislodging their opponents, chase them into the jungle, keeping up a running fire. They then emerge from the dense undergrowth and charge another lot of Insurgents discovered in an opposite direction. Full of action and picturesque surroundings.'

This film must have been set up, for the chances of a cameraman managing to film not just one but two attacks within a couple of minutes of cranking (this film was 125 ft. long) are remote. The catalogue adds one other comment of interest, claiming that, 'This subject was procured with a long focus lens'. It is possible that Rosenthal had a longer focal length lens with him for this assignment (though not of a length that we today would describe as 'telephoto'), though the alternative explanation is that this claim was part of the catalogue's strategy to make potential purchasers believe the film was genuine. In this era there were other claims of the use of telephoto lenses for filming war views (see Appendix).

Even at this early date war cameramen were sometimes given extra 'billing' in publicity (more than was accorded to cameramen shooting general views and news). In the section about the Philippines in the Warwick catalogue Rosenthal was credited by name, and a photograph of him on location in the islands was included, showing him standing awkwardly with three local

Philippine people.<sup>73</sup> [Fig. 3] After this assignment Rosenthal went on to Hong Kong.

### **Conclusion**

Neither Rosenthal nor Holmes ended up producing a large amount of footage during their relatively brief Philippine assignments, for differing reasons. I suggest that these were, in the case of Holmes that as a travelogue writer concerned with scenic views, he had little interest in the war; and as for Rosenthal, while he was more of a professional cameraman than Holmes, he didn't have enough time in the Philippines to make a more complete job. Nevertheless, both of them recorded interesting aspects of the war, though seen from a very American point of view. In this respect they resembled most journalists covering the war, the majority of whom were fairly uncritically pro-American. All of the films of this war, or representations of it, made during this period were pro-US, and this came spontaneously, as far as one can judge, with no direct pressure put on the companies or cameramen to 'toe the line'. One can only assume that among both the film companies and camera operators the nationalist point of view was seen as marginal, and the 'default' position was to believe that the Americans were basically doing the right thing in the Philippines.<sup>74</sup>

The cameramen seem to have shared not just a view of the war, but also a sense of how to record it on film, and both Holmes and Rosenthal set up scenes in order to represent the conflict in a more effective manner. Their colleague Carl Ackerman took this arranging technique further, by working in even closer collaboration with his hosts, the American Army.

### **THE FIRST 'EMBEDDED' CAMERAMAN: C. FRED ACKERMAN**

#### **Box:**

'To the thousands of people who cannot see the land where their soldier boys are fighting in the Philippines the marvelous [sic] biograph has come as a friend in need. The difficulties which have been met and overcome by the agents of the moving picture machine are very great, but perseverance conquered, and miles upon miles of film are being reeled off every week in the far-away islands, the sensitized gelatine catching and keeping, with absolute accuracy, the innumerable interesting sights.'

'The Biograph in the Philippines', *Boston Journal* 25 March 1900.

The quotation above exaggerates greatly, but it does capture a flavour of the ambitions of the firm, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company ('AM&B' or 'Biograph'), which undertook the most focused and sustained effort of all the companies to film the Philippine War through their cameraman, C. Fred Ackerman. Until recently little has been known about Ackerman. Indeed, so little was known that most historical sources wrongly give his first name as



'Raymond'.<sup>75</sup> But through my researches in various American archives I have managed to find out much more about him, and to piece together his career as Biograph's war cameraman in the Philippines and China.<sup>76</sup>

The most surprising points about Ackerman are his lack of camera experience before Biograph sent him to film hostilities in the Philippines, and secondly, how briefly his filming career lasted. He had shot only a score or so of films when he went to the Philippines in 1899, and on this assignment and in China he shot a little over a hundred scenes – and that was virtually the end of his filming career, all within the space of less than two years. But though of short duration, Ackerman's work is highly significant for the history of war filming. Firstly because he exemplifies the multi-faceted and interlinked nature of the various different media in this era, for he was not only a cameraman, but was also writing articles and taking photographs for the press. More significantly he was tied closely to the US military in the Philippines, and in a sense his film work was little more than propaganda.

### **The Biograph company and war**

Ackerman's employers, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company (AM&B) had an abiding interest in war and things military. It is striking how frequently the company filmed the American military in the 1890s, a period when America made its first imperialistic forays. Even as early as their first year of production, 1896, Biograph recorded two scenes of cadets at West Point, performing on horses and at drill. Over the following two years they again sent cameras to US military bases, and made a film of artillery being fired at Sandy Hook, and a series of films showing the Thirteenth Infantry in exercises and parades at Governor's Island.<sup>77</sup>

This kind of filming was sometimes as much *for* the military as of them, and Biograph went to another American military base, Camp Wickoff, to record a scene of some leading military officers (General Wheeler, Major Hopkins and Secretary of War R.A. Alger and his military aide). Afterwards Wheeler and Alger wrote to Biograph to thank them for their services, and Alger wrote to the Biograph executive, Frank J. Marion in person, asking for an enlarged still of the scene.<sup>78</sup> All these above mentioned films were effectively collaborations between Biograph and the military: propaganda in all but name. And Biograph not only worked for the army, but made a variety of films for the American Navy in 1898 and again around December 1903, some of which were used for recruiting.<sup>79</sup> Most relevant in terms of military experience, the company also became known for its diverse war reportage, despatching cameramen to the Spanish-American war, as well as sending Dickson to film the Boer War and Ackerman to film in the Far East (as I show in other chapters).

### **Ackerman's background**

Carl Frederick Ackerman (1873-1938), usually shortened to C. Fred Ackerman, was born in Syracuse, New York, and he became a well known athlete and then a sports journalist in his home town from the mid 1890s. It was probably this journalistic work and the fact that he came from this city which got him a job with AM&B, because Biograph executive Frank J. Marion was also a former newspaper man from Syracuse, and H.N. Marvin, co-

founder and vice president of the company, was a graduate of Syracuse university.<sup>80</sup>

According to Marion, Ackerman was brought into the company by Marvin. Marion himself didn't think much of Ackerman, later recalling that, 'Ackerman was a parasite...[who] talked Marvin into sending him to the Philippines'. [sic]<sup>81</sup> This term 'parasite' seems somewhat harsh, as Ackerman ended up doing quite well on his Philippine assignment, but it might have been more a comment on Ackerman's conceited personality. It seems likely that he was indeed taken on (as Marion's recollection suggests) with the specific aim that he would go to film for the company in the Philippines. Clearly he was not taken on as a general duty cameraman as such, for he had no experience in this field, but Ackerman did have experience which was relevant for the role of war cameraman/reporter: his work as a journalist for about five years (albeit in sports), and the fact that he had served in the Spanish-American War. Furthermore, he had been an award winning athlete in sports such as vaulting only a few years earlier, so he was probably still in good physical shape for the rigours of the Philippine War zone. He was also unlikely to be critical of the war, for he seems to have been a Republican, and indeed his reports and films from the Philippines suggest that he was in favour of the American intervention there.

Nevertheless, Ackerman was undoubtedly lacking in expertise compared to other people who filmed wars in the early days: one thinks of Villiers, Rosenthal, Dickson, or even Paley, who all had relevant experience either in war reportage or as photographers/cameramen. In the circumstances it seems odd that Biograph should send Ackerman alone, when a 2-man unit of a trained cameraman/photographer and a journalist/producer was seemingly a more natural arrangement, and one which was already emerging in this period.<sup>82</sup> Perhaps this was a decision based on cost – one man was cheaper than two – or on restrictions from the War Department on numbers of correspondents who could go.

In any case, Ackerman obtained some experience as a cameraman in the few months leading up to his departure for Manila, shooting around 20 films for Biograph, a mixture of comic and actuality subjects (released from June 1899).<sup>83</sup> While we don't know for sure, it seems on the face of it that this was an attempt by Biograph to familiarise him with camerawork before he set off across the Pacific to cover the war. By the time he departed Ackerman was being described by one source as 'one of the best known experts in the employ of the company',<sup>84</sup> though his novice work as cameraman before the war does not suggest expertise. But whatever his limitations in experience, Ackerman managed to make several dozen films in the war-torn country, many of which were quite satisfactory photographically. As many filmmakers have shown over the years, determination is sometimes as important as previous experience.

### **The plan**

As we have seen, quite a few journalists and photographers covered the Philippine campaign, though there were some restrictions on numbers. The

Biograph company managed to place Ackerman in the war zone with relative ease, probably due to their existing good relations with the US military (as we have seen) and with the Government.<sup>85</sup> Thus, when Biograph applied to film the war in the Philippines, the company would have been known to several officials in both the executive and military branches of the government. I have discovered documentation in the US National Archives which demonstrates what occurred (and which has never previously been used in accounts of the company's activities in the war).

Though there might have been informal contacts earlier, the first official move seems to have been a letter from H.N. Marvin, Vice-President of AM&B, to the Assistant Secretary of War, George D. Meiklejohn, on 23 August 1899. [Fig. 4] Marvin requested permission to send their cameraman Ackerman (mentioning him by name) to Manila, 'for the purpose of taking moving pictures of military scenes in the Philippine Campaign', and adding:

'All we want of the Department is transportation from San Francisco to Manilla [sic] and return for our representative and his biograph camera outfit, and would like the officers in charge to extend such reasonable facilities for taking pictures as they can consistently do. In return for this, our Company will furnish a Mutoscope and sample sets of the scenes taken to the War department, so that officials of the Department may see for themselves the actual moving steps of important scenes in the Phillipines [sic], which will make a very interesting addition to the archives of your Department.'<sup>86</sup>

Marvin noted, as an additional persuasion, that his company had previously shown 'a large number of war and navy pictures' throughout the USA, 'and our experience is that these pictures are very valuable in educating the public, and they certainly elicit the greatest enthusiasm wherever they are shown'. Over the next couple of weeks, as annotations in the official file show, the application was referred for endorsement to other officials and departments of the US Government, most crucially receiving the support of Adjutant General H.C. Corbin, who noted on the file, 'A mutoscope with sets of pictures taken would be very valuable to the War Department and could be used to good purpose at the service schools'.<sup>87</sup>

Two weeks after Marvin's request, the Secretary of War himself, Elihu Root, replied [Fig. 5] to agree to the proposal, noting that Ackerman would be offered transport free of charge to the islands (but the Army would not cover his subsistence). He made it clear that the War Department was to receive a copy of *all* scenes filmed, and that a copy of his letter was to be returned to the Department after signature by Marvin, and would in this way constitute a contract with the government.<sup>88</sup> Marvin duly signed and returned the letter the next day with a covering letter, reiterating to Root that 'these Mutoscope scenes will prove of great interest and value to the War Department'. On 13 September Root wrote a note to the commanding officer in San Francisco (who happened to be none other than Major-General Shafter of Cuba fame) requesting that AM&B's representative be offered accommodation on the first available transport to Manila, and similarly for his return.<sup>89</sup>

It was reported that Ackerman started his journey on 16 September via New York and San Francisco, and he tells us that he embarked for the Philippines on an Army transport ship, the *Sheridan*. This ship left San Francisco, carrying the Thirty-Third Infantry (and Ackerman) on 30 September.<sup>90</sup> The journey to Manila took five weeks, he says, a duration which is probably about correct for a Pacific sailing.<sup>91</sup> So Ackerman would have arrived in early November, and the American forces' winter campaign commenced on 6 November.<sup>92</sup> Incidentally, Ackerman started his filming work during the journey: in San Francisco he filmed American troops who had just returned from duty in the Philippines, and when his ship paused in Hawaii he filmed the Thirty-Third parading in Honolulu.

In addition to his responsibility to film for AM&B, Ackerman was also working for the weekly illustrated periodical, *Leslie's Weekly*, as one of their two correspondents covering the war.<sup>93</sup> *Leslie's* had a history of collaboration with AM&B, and had been publishing photographs credited to Biograph – often taken from film frames – from well before Ackerman left for the Philippines.<sup>94</sup> In the months after his departure several photographs by Ackerman and frames from his non-war films appeared as illustrations in the magazine, and later the cameraman/journalist wrote several pieces for the magazine about the war. This linkup with the periodical press was typical of the Biograph company's cross-media operation by this date, and is a crucial, and much overlooked, aspect of early filmmaking. (Biograph's cameraman in South Africa, W.K.-L. Dickson also acted as an occasional print correspondent.)

Apart from his responsibilities to AM&B and *Leslie's*, Ackerman was also working closely with the US Army. Marvin had asked that officers in Manila be requested to assist Ackerman, and it seems that they complied, helping him in practical ways and (as we shall see) manoeuvring troops to make suitable scenes for his moving picture camera.<sup>95</sup> Ackerman left nothing to chance and came with the highest credentials. We are told that he:

'...carried with him letters of authority from the Secretary of War and from the Adjutant-General to Gen. Otis and others in command. These letters gave Mr. Ackerman unusual facilities, and Gen. Otis placed him in the charge of the quartermaster's department in the Philippines, and he was transported with every facility, and had unusual opportunities of securing valuable pictures.'<sup>96</sup>

This close liaison with the quartermaster's department underlines the key point about Ackerman: that he was in many ways in thrall to his US military hosts. His expedition to film the Philippine War was, as we have seen, arranged by contract and so was virtually an official US military venture. During his time in the Philippines Ackerman wore the US military uniform, travelled and mixed with American forces, and made no secret of his siding with his compatriots. He was in no sense an independent journalist.

### **Ackerman's work in the Philippines**

Ackerman started filming in the Philippines in November 1899.<sup>97</sup> Thereafter

we have several shooting dates for his films, up to his last dated film of 12 March 1900, and near the end of April he filed a written report for *Leslie's* (from Sual, as we shall see). This means he was in the islands some six months, and possibly a while longer.<sup>98</sup> He was certainly back in the USA by June 1900, for, as we shall see, he exhibited his films in Washington on about the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Some reports suggest that Ackerman took about fifty films during his time in the Philippines, though I can count at most 45 such films that were actually sent to Biograph for processing.<sup>99</sup> Only nine of these survive (all derived from paper prints) though frames from all of them are in Biograph's frame-clipping collection.

Ackerman was initially attached by General Otis (the supreme commander in the islands) to Colonel Bell's Thirty-Sixth Infantry.<sup>100</sup> Thereafter he was at various times with the Twenty-Fifth, Thirty-Third, and Thirty-Seventh Infantries (all volunteers), and Battery K of the Third Artillery. It seems that Ackerman was well looked after by his army confreres, and certainly ate well, for he wrote to friends that he had gained 15 pounds in weight in the first couple of months in the field.<sup>101</sup> [Fig. 9: news report]

While being officially recognised as a cameraman must have helped his work, Ackerman nevertheless had other problems to contend with. The Biograph company used an unusually wide film gauge, which meant that all associated equipment including the camera and film stock was also larger and heavier than standard 35mm filming equipment. Including film stock, therefore, Ackerman had a lot of heavy gear to transport around the country, as one article noted in June 1900:

'The job undertaken by Mr. Ackerman was a stupendous one, for he had to carry with him a camera and apparatus weighing 750 pounds. Each film on which the pictures were taken was 360 feet long and two and a half inches wide.'<sup>102</sup>

The figures mentioned are probably about right. Ackerman would seem to have been using Biograph's second model of camera introduced in the late 1890s, which was much lighter than their original huge 'Model A' camera, but still very heavy. It was electrically operated, and batteries and motor accounted for most of the weight, amounting to a quarter of a ton total.<sup>103</sup> The 360 feet of film stock mentioned in the June article roughly tallies with the lengths of films which Ackerman actually shot, for Biograph's production register shows that his Philippines films mostly fall into two lengths: either a little more than 300 feet or a little more than 150 feet.<sup>104</sup> (see Appendix on Ackerman). Allowing for spare stock for winding on and separating, these lengths would approximately tally with a full or a half camera load.<sup>105</sup> Because of the large size of the film and its high rate of frames per second, these lengths of film correspond to about a minute and half a minute of screen time respectively. Ackerman's total output from his half year in the Philippines, therefore, was a meagre 30 minutes of footage (approximately), a rather short amount of screen time for such a large amount of equipment and such a long stay.

The size of this equipment presented practical problems, especially because Ackerman was often forced to use local – often very basic – transport methods to convey the large Biograph apparatus around the country and into remote war zones. This is apparent from a couple of still photographs which were published at the time. One depicted, in the words of the caption, how ‘Oxen are used to drag the cart which carries the delicate photographic apparatus’.<sup>106</sup> In another photograph Ackerman is pictured standing by a ‘banco’ boat with two large crates next to him.<sup>107</sup> [Fig. 6] The crates are presumably full of Biograph equipment and film stock, and their large size indicates the major logistical task presented in moving this gear around the Philippines.

In addition to these practical issues were the problems facing a cameraman trying to film a modern, fast-moving war, for Ackerman arrived just as the war was changing in nature: after initial victories for the Americans, the summer of 1899 had been a stalemate, as the insurgents turned increasingly to guerrilla-style tactics.<sup>108</sup> These kind of fast-moving operations were even more difficult to capture on film than the earlier set-piece battles would have been, and indeed Ackerman in his period of filming in the Philippines didn’t even try to film ‘combat’ in any sense. His films mainly fall into three categories: scenic view of the country, American units on the move, and arranged scenes of these units attacking or repelling an off-camera enemy.

### **Filming the war: chronology**

During the course of his months in the Philippines, Ackerman filmed in various regions of the country, but always in Luzon, the main north island of the archipelago. Based on the places and events mentioned in the titles and descriptions of his films, and on newspaper reports of his activities, I have worked out that the chronological order of his work was something like this:<sup>109</sup>

- 1) **Manila region** October to November 1899
- 2) **Pangasinan province** November
- 3) **Manila** December
- 4) **Pampanga province** early January 1900
- 5) **Pangasinan province** 11 January to early February
- 6) **Manila region** 18 February to 12 March.

#### *1) Manila and sorties north*

It seems that Ackerman’s first few weeks were spent in and around Manila, with some sorties north into Pampanga, and he probably shot at least fifteen films during this time. Some of these featured the Thirty-Third Infantry volunteers, who had also appeared before his camera in Hawaii, and would feature again when the unit went out of the city into action.<sup>110</sup> Ackerman also filmed several scenic views in Manila, such as *Panoramic View of Manila Harbor* and *Blanco Bridge*.

As so often in warfare, transport and geographic factors played a dominant role. The main theatre of operations was on the plain of Pampanga along which the Manila to Dagupan railway ran, being the only railway in the

Philippines and subject to attack by insurgents.<sup>111</sup> Suitably, then, one of Ackerman's films recorded the railway: *Train with Red Cross Supplies, Manila*.

Ackerman went 50 miles north along the railway in the second week in November to the important town of Angeles, and on 11 November he filmed the Third Artillery near there. He was for a time quartered with the 2nd Battalion of Gen. A.S. Burt's Twenty-Fifth Infantry, a black regiment, and in an article he described the unit's daring assault on the town of O'Donnell on the night of 17 November during which the Americans took many 'insurrecto' prisoners and the largest capture of arms to date.<sup>112</sup> Manila was the starting point to commence the next stage of his filming venture, to Pangasinan province.<sup>113</sup>

## 2) Pangasinan province – the capture of Aguinaldo's family

Ackerman had arrived in the Philippines near the start of the so-called 'Northern Campaign' of the winter of 1899-1900. This campaign was an attempt to stifle the remaining resistance and, crucially, to capture Aguinaldo. The classic military operation involved three separate columns which were to surround and subdue enemy forces on the central Luzon plain.<sup>114</sup> As the northern-most of the three American strategic advances, in early November General Wheaton began a sea-borne invasion at San Fabian, Pangasinan province. Ackerman followed north later that month with his camera, hoping to film aspects of this historic assault.<sup>115</sup>

San Fabian is over a hundred miles north of Manila, on Lingayen Gulf near the terminus of the railway at Dagupan. At that time, parts of the plain between there and Manila were still controlled by insurgents, and another of the columns of US troops were fighting their way up the line of the railway as Wheaton's men were landing at Lingayen Gulf. To reach San Fabian in November therefore, Ackerman could not travel on the railway and had to use the same means of transport as Wheaton's men had done: boat.<sup>116</sup> He left the capital on the *Castellano*, a small coasting vessel, together with elements of the Thirty-Third Infantry. It proved to be a difficult trip, as he explained later, in one of the few extended descriptions we have from Ackerman about his filming work:

'The boat was very small, and in the China Sea we struck the tail-end of a typhoon. I was with Capt. Ellis and two Lieutenants of the Thirty-third, and we had a close call. San Fabian is 200 miles from Manila by water and 120 by land. For 24 hours our tub made no progress whatever, every time she stuck her nose into a wave she would be buried, and water came into the cabins in great volumes. I had a guard stationed around the biograph apparatus, but it broke its latching twice, and we were often in water to our knees trying to save it from going overboard. It took us two days to reach San Fabian, and during that time I had no opportunity to inspect the camera, so do not know whether the machine was damaged during the trip or not. We had to unload it into a small boat in a heavy surf at San Fabian, and in letting it out the camera was dropped. As soon as we got ashore I set it up, and tried to get a picture of the detachment coming ashore and firing on

some intrenchments [sic] in the distance, but it refused to work. I labored for several hours, but could not get at the seat of difficulty.'

Ackerman had no backup Biograph camera, and this breakdown must have been exceptionally frustrating, for he was right there at the very time when the American military operation was coming to its climax of triple converging columns. But the camera could not be fixed on location, so Ackerman had to give up his plans for filming:

'There was no alternative but for me to return to Manila as quickly as possible for repairs. No boat would return for 10 days, and I could not waste the time, so I consulted Gen. Wheaton, who gave me a guard and wagon to Dagupan, 10 miles across country, where the insurgents were thick as flies. We were only fired on once, however, and then from a considerable distance. It took a day to reach Dagupan, and in order to get to Calisian I had to hire a banco, a sort of native raft, and pole down the river for five miles. My trip down that river was the experience of my life. We made it safely, but how I do not know. This feat consumed seven hours, and we were constantly in danger of being captured by the insurgents.'<sup>117</sup>

The place Ackerman was aiming for, Calisian (called Calasian these days) was on the railway line from Dagupan to Manila. Though General MacArthur had entered Dagupan on the 20<sup>th</sup> November, presumably the railway line in the immediate vicinity was still dangerous for Americans, hence the need to make for this station a little way down the line. A photograph (mentioned earlier) was published in *Leslie's* of the 'banco' part of Ackerman's journey to Calisian, showing the cameraman with his bulky crates containing the biograph equipment on the boat, 'leaving Dagupan for the dangerous journey to Calesiao' [sic].<sup>118</sup> He is depicted with a pistol at his belt, testimony to the dangers of his journey, and is dressed in army uniform, again reinforcing the fact that his mission was *for* the US forces, not merely to report on them as an independent journalist. [Fig. 6]

However, before leaving San Fabian, though unable to use his Biograph camera, Ackerman had been on hand to hear of an important piece of news. Some days earlier the Thirty-Third Infantry had received a tip-off, and raiding a small town, Carbarnan, had captured Aguinaldo's son and mother.<sup>119</sup> Aguinaldo himself escaped, but the fact that the Filipino leader had abandoned his close family was seen as an indication of his increasing desperation, so the family was an important capture for the Americans.<sup>120</sup> Ackerman was apparently present quite soon after the famous captives were brought in, and had himself photographed with the son and mother. [Fig. 8] This photograph was published in *Leslie's* alongside the one of him on the 'banco'. The fact that Ackerman produced only a *still photograph* of the captives, and didn't record them on film, is further corroboration that his Biograph camera was indeed out of action, for a film of Aguinaldo's family would have been a real scoop. In fact no films of Pangasinan in November appear in the Biograph register, which is a real disappointment and a sad lost opportunity, for this was a crucial time in the American military campaign.



### 3) *South to Manila: the funeral of General Lawton*

But if Ackerman couldn't film, at least he could report in writing (this being one advantage of his multi-media affiliation) and this also gives us a chance to date his movements. Ackerman's report of the capture of Aguinaldo's family was by-lined San Fabian, 30 November 1899. A couple of days after this he must have completed the journey to Calisian and taken the train south, for on 2 December he filed a story for *Leslie's* from the town of Bamban, near Angeles.<sup>121</sup> Ackerman then proceeded to Manila and must have got the camera fixed some time in December, because he filmed a number of scenic views of the city from the middle of the month.

Some of these films can be dated precisely (from data in Biograph's production log). For example, he shot *The Market Place, Manila* [1385] on the 15 December and *Bridge of Spain, Manila* [1380] the following day. On the 21<sup>st</sup> he filmed *Unloading Lighters at the Government Dock* [1354] and also shot a view of the city's busiest street, *The Escolta, Manila* [1351]. He may have filmed other scenics of the city at this time, including *Making Manila Rope* [1384], showing one of the native industries, and *Water Buffalo, Manila* [1388]. The war was never far away and even the latter, an apparently innocuous view, had military connotations which gave it much more edge, for as the Biograph catalogue tells us, the view showed, 'A train of Water buffalo, captured from the insurgents by the United States troops at Angeles, Philippine Islands'. Another film or films taken at the docks which depicted Chinese coolies and Chinese drivers of Buffalo carts, also had military connotations, for the Chinese were proving particularly useful to US forces as auxiliaries.<sup>122</sup> A couple of 'arranged' military films may have been shot at this time, but we'll discuss more about 'arranging' below.

The major news story of the month was that General Lawton, one of the top US commanders, and a respected if wayward soldier, was killed in mid December during the battle of San Mateo.<sup>123</sup> Ackerman filmed Lawton's body being brought back to Manila, and then filmed the General's funeral itself in the city on 30 December. This was Ackerman's longest film of the war, a tribute perhaps to the importance that he and others attached to the fallen General.

### 4) *Pampanga province: rescuing American soldiers*

Early in the new year Ackerman retraced his steps northward to Pampanga province, to join a campaign commanded by Brigadier-General Frederick D. Grant (son of the famous Civil War General, Ulysses S. Grant). Grant commanded the aforementioned Twenty-Fifth Infantry, a 'colored', i.e. African American regiment (black soldiers played an important role in both the Spanish-American and Philippine wars).<sup>124</sup>

Ackerman shot half a dozen films during his sojourn with the Twenty-Fifth in Pampanga, several of which were made in and around the town of Angeles, some 70 kilometres north of Manila. A couple of films are datable precisely to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> January, and all were probably filmed within the week immediately before. One which survives is entitled *Twenty-Fifth Infantry*

*Returning from Mt. Ariat*, and shows troops marching past camera, led by Generals Grant and A.S. Burt. Ackerman probably filmed the troops after they had taken part in an operation at Mount Ariat (now spelled Arayat) which became quite a celebrated incident in the war, and which Ackerman witnessed.<sup>125</sup>

The Ariat campaign was intended to counter a substantial insurgency in the region, and Ackerman accompanied the Twenty-Fifth as they went on an expedition to reconnoitre Mount Ariat, an area controlled by Filipino forces under their General Akino. An immediate cause for this action was that the US forces had heard of the mistreatment of five American prisoners held by Akino's men. On 6<sup>th</sup> January three companies of the Twenty-Fifth attacked the Filipino camp, and after overrunning this site the unfortunate American captives were discovered in a pitiful condition.<sup>126</sup> *Leslie's Weekly* published a dramatic account of these events, written by Ackerman, who was as he stated, 'the only newspaper man on the scene'.<sup>127</sup> Though rescued by the American forces, three of the five captives later died, having been, as Ackerman observed with disgust, 'starved and ill-treated since their capture two months before'. They had also been, he added, '...shot without mercy and butchered with bolos' (machetes).

Ackerman talked to the survivors himself, and was clearly shocked and angered by the cruelty and torture that they had endured. He concluded a second article with a personal observation: 'As I look over the events of that day I cannot but feel that the most severe measures must be dealt out to Akino and his men. It is common rumor in the Twenty-Fifth that they will take no more prisoners'.<sup>128</sup> Ackerman neither filmed nor photographed the prisoners – perhaps he couldn't, or perhaps he felt that words were the only means tastefully to report such grim matters. It should be added that there was cruelty on both sides during the war, as several historians, Filipino and otherwise, have noted.<sup>129</sup>

#### 5) Pangasinan province – with Generals MacArthur and Bell

After filming in Pampanga, Ackerman must have headed directly and swiftly north again, for three days later he was back in Pangasinan province (and this time the camera was in full working order).<sup>130</sup> On the 11 January he filmed the Seventeenth Infantry, under Colonel Jacob H. Smith 'returning from a fight with the Tagalogs, near Dagupan'. He also made a film entitled *Major-General Arthur MacArthur and Staff*. In all, Ackerman shot some dozen films during this period, and was to stay in the province for a month in the area around Lingayen Gulf and Dagupan, with various American units who were fighting the insurgency.<sup>131</sup>

Seven of his dozen films depicted General J.F. Bell's Thirty-Sixth Infantry.<sup>132</sup> One of these, *The Fighting Thirty-Sixth*, showed the troops on parade, and another depicted *General Bell and His Staff* at Dagupan. Bell was one of the most successful and enterprising officers in the US army in the Philippines, who would later enjoy a meteoric rise. His regiment was notably successful, and was described as one of the most energetic American units.<sup>133</sup> Ackerman's remaining five films with Bell all depicted one of the unit's boldest

exploits. However, I will delay describing this filming until below, for it more properly forms part of our discussion of the theme of arranging, while another of his films from this period, *Aguinaldo's Navy* is more relevant to our discussion of propaganda, also below.

#### 6) *Manila and final days in the Philippines*

By mid February Ackerman was back in the Manila region, and filmed a scene with the Sixth Artillery on the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month.<sup>134</sup> From the end of February he shot some scenics of the city. In the first week of March he linked up with General Wheaton's forces, and made three films, one of which, entitled *Major-General Lloyd Wheaton*, showed the General with his staff as they started on a reconnoitring tour from Calamba (south of Manila on Laguna de Bay – a place which the Biograph catalogue called the 'Hell Hole of the Philippines').<sup>135</sup> This work with Wheaton in Calamba included a couple of films which show simulated attacks on insurgents – I'll come back to these below.

A week later Ackerman was back on the outskirts of Manila, and on 12 March shot two scenes of the Fourth Cavalry in Pasay, these being the last films that he would shoot in the Philippines. One of the scenes was entitled *Fourth Cavalry on the March*, and showed this cavalry regiment under command of Lieut.-Col. E.M. Hayes heading out 'on a search for Filipino insurgents'. The film had an alternative title, *After Aguinaldo*, underscoring the fact that the Army's foremost military goal was still to hunt down the leader of the Filipino forces. But they would have a long wait, for Aguinaldo was not captured until over a year later.

Though Ackerman stayed in the Philippines for a few weeks after this, there was to be no more filming by him in the islands. It is not clear why not, though it could have been due to a number of reasons: further camera problems, or running out of film, or that the Biograph head office had not rated his last few scenes as being very good (see below), or simply that he had produced enough films to satisfy the predicted public demand.

Ackerman continued working a little longer in the Philippines, but only as a journalist and photographer for *Leslie's Weekly*, most notably in Pangasinan. Here, probably sometime during late April he photographed a highly significant ceremony in Sual. An important element of the American pacification programme was that, after gaining control over a district, they would assemble the chiefs of the various communities, and induce them to accept an oath of office, in a public ceremony. This basically involved swearing allegiance to the new US-led administration. Two photographs by Ackerman of such a ceremony in Sual are reproduced in *Leslie's*, with Sual's Presidente reading the oath to assembled heads of the community and they accepting it, as an American officer from the Thirty-Sixth regiment supervises proceedings.<sup>136</sup> It is a real shame that Ackerman did not film this event, for it would have been a unique record of the early stages of American political interference in the Philippines. (But as we have seen, this was not the only important episode where he had been present but had failed to film). It was probably soon after this event in Sual that the journalist/cameraman left the Philippines, though his exact date of departure is unknown.<sup>137</sup>

### *Back in America*

Ackerman probably returned to the USA in May, and on or around the 22<sup>nd</sup> June he and Biograph executive Frank J. Marion paid a visit to the War Department in Washington.<sup>138</sup> They took with them some ten of Ackerman's fifty-odd Philippine scenes, and one or more mutoscope viewers on which to show them. Gathered to see the films were the top-brass of America's military: Secretary of War Elihu Root, Adjutant-General Corbin, General Miles, as well as a number of other officers. Some of these men, as we have seen, had approved the plan to send Ackerman to the Philippines, so they were no doubt keen to have their decision vindicated. The films – or rather flip-card mutoscope reels – were displayed in Corbin's office.<sup>139</sup> A press report described the reaction:

‘Mr. Ackerman gave the exhibitions and all who witnessed them declared that the reproductions were remarkable for their clearness and accuracy, and that as a war record they would prove most valuable. Secretary Root, after looking at all the views declared that the pictures were not only interesting but very valuable. Gen. Miles thought them wonderful, while Gen. Corbin, who first realized of what value the pictures would be to his record of photographs of the war, declared that the pictures were remarkably fine, and that he was delighted with the success of the experiment.’<sup>140</sup>

The moving images were thereby ‘accepted by the United States government as official records’ and deposited in the War Department.<sup>141</sup> Corbin later wrote ‘a most flattering letter’ to the Biograph company about the films.<sup>142</sup> After the images had been presented in this way to the nation's top military officials, Ackerman returned to his home town of Syracuse and lectured about his Philippines experiences at the Lakeside Theater in July 1900, while screening some of his films.<sup>143</sup> This was not the end of Ackerman's filming for the US military, and that same summer the Government authorised him to proceed to China to film the military action taking place as part of the international expedition against the Boxer Uprising.<sup>144</sup> (See chapter 12).

### **Ackerman's films**

#### *Technique*

In some respects Ackerman's war films were quite an achievement, especially given his relative youth at the time (he was only 26 years old) and his lack of experience of camerawork. Non-fiction of the early era, unlike fiction, is rarely analysed from the stylistic point of view, but Ackerman's roughly 44 films from the Philippines are of some interest from this standpoint.

Let us look at the question of technique first. The Biograph camera register is a unique and invaluable source of information on various aspects of films shot by the company's cameramen (and remains to be fully analysed or exploited by film historians). It gives details for all films about footage, dates of filming and of release, along with other information, including a rating of quality. The latter is most often given as a single word comment: ‘good’, ‘fair’, or ‘poor’.

Of Ackerman's films shot in the Philippines which received such a mark, 17 are listed as 'good', 13 'fair', and 11 'poor'. It is not entirely clear what qualities these ratings are meant to indicate, though photographic quality was one component. For example, *Bringing General Lawton's Body Back to Manila* [1389] is classed as 'poor', and a viewing of a print today shows that the film looks very overexposed (probably Ackerman's negative was so overexposed that it was not correctable in the printing).

But it seems that as well as photographic quality, other less definable factors of aesthetic quality were involved in the ratings. My viewing of *The Escolta, Manila* [1351], reveals a well-exposed view, shot from a well chosen high angle, as horses and carts pass in the busy street. Sure enough, the Biograph register calls this film 'good'. Also described as 'good' is *Bridge of Spain; Manila* [1380] and the 'Picture Catalogue' confirms this judgement in calling the film, 'Well arranged and interesting'.<sup>145</sup> The films rated 'good' decrease toward the end of Ackerman's period in the Philippines, and the 'poors' increase, for reasons unknown.

Given that Ackerman was such a neophyte in camerawork, he could be surprisingly technically proficient. *Attack on Mt. Ariat* [1399] depicts a scene as General Grant issues orders, and then the American troops race across a field, the camera panning to follow. The pan is smooth and well done, certainly by comparison with the jerky, badly-paced pans often seen in other films from the early era.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, Ackerman had a good understanding of the need for films to contain plenty of movement, especially movement in depth. Several of his Philippine films involve groups of soldiers marching or charging toward and past camera: 'up and pasts' as modern documentary cameramen call them. Such shots not only introduce movement, they also – within the limited scope of a one-shot film (and most films of this era were a single shot) – display the 'actors' on screen for a useful amount of time, as they approach and come past camera.

#### *Films of commanders*

And this brings me to wider questions of who and what Ackerman filmed. The US forces are the subject of most of his Philippine films, and one interesting aspect of these army films is that many of them feature not just the ordinary soldiers, but also the commanders leading their men. Of course one would expect some films of an army in the field to include commanders, but the numbers here are striking: of the approximately 30 of Ackerman's Philippine films which depict the US Army, about half of them, to judge from the descriptions, feature commanders in a prominent role. Sometimes this is clear from the film's title, such as *Gen. Floyd Wheaton and Staff*, and sometimes from the synopsis. Ackerman managed to film an impressive number of the top brass, including the following: Major-Generals Arthur MacArthur, Loyd Wheaton and Henry W. Lawton (his funeral anyway); Brigadier-Generals Franklin Bell, A.S. Burt and Frederick D. Grant; and Lieut.-Col. E.M. Hayes, Colonel Jacob H. Smith and Major Charles Morton. These commanding officers are depicted in various roles: with their staffs; making inspections; and leading their men into battle.

Why did Ackerman film so many of these commanding officers? While it is possible that he was encouraged to do so by the army or by the commanders themselves, it is equally likely that it was his own choice, possibly encouraged by his colleagues at Biograph. The Biograph company made something of a specialisation of filming celebrities (one thinks of their films of Commander Dewey, the Pope, and various monarchs).<sup>147</sup> The benefit in featuring these commanders was twofold: films 'starring' well known or prominent individuals were more likely to attract the interest of the public and media back home.

Secondly, there were perhaps advantages for Ackerman in proposing to these important individuals that they go before his camera. Probably these commanders would appreciate the chance to be immortalised in the theatre of war, for by appearing in a film, a commander's profile would be raised among the general public back home. To this end, perhaps these commanders in the Philippines cooperated more enthusiastically with Ackerman in having the troops 'perform' as the filmmaker wished? Such cooperation is important, because a non-fiction filmmaker cannot rely on events just happening conveniently for his camera. It is often the case that a cameraman manages to get subjects in front of his camera only as a result of an arrangement made, and negotiation with, either the subjects themselves or the person who controls those subjects. In the case of filming the Philippine War, the controlling authority for each army unit was very obvious, being the commanding officer, and it would have been this authority who agreed to make his troops available for filming. Even though Ackerman had the general permission of the War Department to film in the war zone, it was the officers in any locality who had to agree to it and to allocate the specific manpower, i.e. troops to parade past the camera. In any case, this filmic glorification or 'celebration' of the US commanders in the theatre of war represents an interesting further step in the relations between cinema and warfare.

#### *Ackerman's arranged films*

If we are using terms like 'negotiation', 'allocating manpower' etc, does this mean that Ackerman's Philippine War films were set up or arranged? Certainly many of them must have been. Indeed, I would suggest that between half and two thirds of the titles were arranged for filming, as opposed to being records of existing action, filmed as it happened.<sup>148</sup> Even apparently 'off the cuff' films, such as columns of troops passing camera, would need to be set up and cued, but Ackerman's arranging went a lot further than this.

The most ambitious endeavour in Ackerman's entire Philippine assignment was in filming a march of the Thirty-Sixth infantry led by General Bell through the mountains of Pangasinan province. In late November 1899 Bell had been given an important mission: to assist the Thirty-Third infantry under Captain Fowler, whose forces were outnumbered in a place called Mangatarem, in Pangasinan.<sup>149</sup> For Bell to get there in time with sufficient weaponry and supplies necessitated a hard march over mountains near Sual and across the Agno River, leading a force of picked men, native scouts and a pack train of mules. Ackerman's group of films depicting this event showed the troops and pack mules laden with ammunition coming across the mountainous

landscape, through undergrowth, and traversing a river. The films have evocative phrases in their titles and descriptions: *Gen. Bell's Expedition Near Sual; Breaking Through Jungle; Bell's Pack Train Swimming Agno River; and Into the Wilderness!*

The surviving films and frame stills show the expedition marching through a dramatic landscape, [Fig. 7] and there is nothing in the titles or descriptions to suggest that these films are anything but records of the actual events. But the dates of filming prove that this was not the event itself, but a later rerun for the camera. The five films were all shot (according to the filming dates entered in the Biograph register) on the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> February 1900, whereas the event itself had been the previous November. And let us recall that though Ackerman had come to Pangasinan at that time, his camera had broken, so he could not have filmed anything during that visit. So these films must have been post-event reconstructions, filmed over two months later.

There are some giveaways even within the films themselves, as the position of the camera for some shots is implausible if these really were records of the actual events. For example, one of the key moments of the operation was when the expedition had to get over the Agno River. Bell sent one man across on horseback with a rope and then the pack train of about sixty mules were guided or pulled across to follow.<sup>150</sup> Ackerman's film of the event, *Bell's Pack Train Swimming Agno River (aka An Historic Feat)* is filmed from the far bank of the river looking past this leading man as he pulls the mules on the rope. The animals swim toward us in a line, come out of the water and past the camera position. If the film were genuine, the obvious question would be, how could Ackerman have got across the river to be there ahead of the mule train? It is inconceivable in a genuine military operation that General Bell would have allowed a cameraman to cross the river ahead of his own men. Indeed, it is doubtful that he'd have wanted Ackerman on the real expedition at all. No commander leading a fast-moving unit on an important mission through rugged and hostile territory would want a cameraman along, especially one toting an oversize movie camera and equipment.<sup>151</sup>

Presumably the reconstruction of this exploit took place as a result of a deal between Ackerman and Bell. By the time the films were shot, as I have related above, Ackerman had been in Pangasinan since the second week in January (over three weeks). He had already filmed Bell and his staff at least once, on 31 January, so the cameraman and the General clearly knew one another. The mountain march was one of Bell's more picturesque exploits, so a good choice for a re-enactment. With the regiment still in the region it might have been fairly straightforward to set up again, though it was still quite an event to set up, and Bell had to commit many men to the mountains again to participate in this filmic recreation.

There were good reasons to want to re-enact the march, though, for the events back in November in Pangasinan had been part of a decisive military advance by the US Army, a turning point of the war, and at that crucial time the Biograph camera had malfunctioned. So this arranged filming with Bell might be seen as Ackerman's way of recording for posterity the historic

military events which he had missed earlier in the war. Biograph eventually released five film reconstructions of the expedition.<sup>152</sup>

However, it seems that Ackerman was not altogether straightforward in his statements about what the films recorded. For example, he exaggerated the limited military importance of Bell's march, later saying to a reporter that this was an important event militarily which 'would live eternally', for if General Bell hadn't got this pack train across the river, he would never have been able to reach Mangatarem in time to relieve General Fowler.<sup>153</sup> But in fact it seems that Bell's Thirty-Sixth played a peripheral role in the Mangatarem operation, and that Fowler's was the more important achievement.<sup>154</sup> So, in immortalising the undoubtedly impressive march across the Sual mountains by Bell and his men Ackerman also inflated its significance.<sup>155</sup>

More seriously, when he showed the films back in the US, Ackerman failed to make clear to people that these were re-enactments, not the original events. For one thing, in his descriptions of the march to a reporter he gave the impression that he (Ackerman) had been present during the original crossing:

'It was a terrible and desperate struggle, the swift current carrying the mules down the river and many times several of them sank from sight. Gen. Bell stood on the bank and said that during all of his experience he had never seen a more remarkable spectacle.'<sup>156</sup>

He might not even have been frank with his Biograph employers, and both they and he suggested in public that the films were genuine. Many viewers were apparently given the impression that they were seeing films of the real events, not reconstructions. When one of the films (probably *Into the Wilderness*) was screened in Philadelphia in June, a newspaper stated that this film, 'is one of the series now on file in the office of Secretary of War Root, and vouched for by the Government as absolutely authentic'.<sup>157</sup> Partly, no doubt, because they were presented as 'absolutely authentic' the films were well received by American audiences. 'The picture has made a decided sensation wherever it has been shown', the Biograph catalogue noted of the Agno river crossing film.<sup>158</sup> As is so often the case, what one states or claims about a film, or the specific title it is given, is as important as – or more important than – the actual content of the film itself. This kind of 'creative titling' is found in a high proportion of Ackerman's Philippine War films.

#### *False titling: attacking the off-screen enemy*

A prime example is a film he shot of a river in Dagupan in February 1900, showing small paddle or sail boats passing through shot.<sup>159</sup> It is a pleasantly-shot scenic view – quite innocuous – with no apparent hint of things military, yet is entitled *Aguinaldo's Navy [1454]*. This title is, as historian del Mundo puts it, 'not quite a subtle way of belittling the enemy', for with such a title the feeble Filipino military resources are implicitly being compared with the powerful US ones – specifically with the American navy which had recently destroyed two Spanish fleets.<sup>160</sup> In this sense the film is the most blatant example in Ackerman's work of propaganda against the Filipinos. (It is not known who supplied the editorialising title: whether AM&B or Ackerman.)



In this case a surplus value was given to the film by the indicative title, and the same could be achieved by additional words of description. *Fourth Cavalry on the March* [1463] for example, depicts (as shown in the Biograph frame-clippings) a troop of US cavalry in Pasay marching toward and past camera. Yet the description in the Biograph catalogue tells us that these troops were going out, 'on a search for Filipino insurgents'. Furthermore, an alternate title for the film is *After Aguinaldo*. But who knows if the troops were really going out looking for insurgents, let alone for Aguinaldo? A well-chosen title or description could be as important as the film itself in attracting and intriguing an audience.

So far the titling we have mentioned was merely 'indicative' or 'suggestive' rather than downright false. But several of Ackerman's films go further than this, and imply that the film shows an actual encounter with the Filipino enemy, especially by having the word 'charge' or 'attack' in the title or description. This is the case, for example, in *Attack on Mt. Ariat* [1399] and *A Charge on the Insurgents* [1457], with the same action-related words appearing in the films' descriptions. In *A Filipino Town Surprised* [1461], part of the Thirteenth Infantry is described as being seen 'in a charge upon an insurgent stronghold in Northern Luzon', while another film shows the Thirty-Seventh regiment at Guadalupe bridge near Manila, 'starting to repel an attack by insurgents' and then 'charging the Filipinos'.<sup>161</sup> In *On the Advance with Gen. Wheaton* [1448] the US forces are said to be pictured in the process of '...attacking an insurgent force at Calamba, Northern Luzon. The American troops come at full tilt down a narrow path at the foot of a mountain, deploy into the open, and start the engagement.' Other titles which imply action include *Repelling the Enemy* [1383], and *Responding to an Alarm* [1400]. But despite the titles or descriptions, none of these films show any fighting and only feature US forces, not the Filipino enemy. All of them were evidently set-up, arranged, with the American troops told to charge as if the enemy were nearby.<sup>162</sup> For example, both *Attack on Mt. Ariat* and *Responding to an Alarm* show commanders issuing orders and then the US troops running or riding off out of shot in pursuit of an supposed off-screen enemy.

Because these films were shot in genuine Philippine locations with genuine American troops, though the enemy was not seen, the images still had a certain authenticity about them. It goes without saying that a film claiming to depict an actual military action would be more of a scoop and therefore more of an attraction than a view simply showing the background action to the war, e.g. troops marching en route to battle. Going back to the concept of 'conceptual distance' which I described in Chapter 2, the 'attack' aspect of these films would make them closer to the 'ideal' war film depicting actual battle.

Appeal to the audience was surely one reason why Ackerman arranged these scenes with the troops in action. Another reason why he did it, and why the commanders cooperated was surely for propaganda value. The effect of presenting the US forces in action, with commanders leading their men, was surely greater than simply showing the troops idly trotting by. The effect on

screen of such attack films was to depict the forces as active, competent and getting results. And if the enemy were nowhere in sight, the title could 'put' them there. But being arranged in this way the films were certainly not accurate records of the war, and the claim made in the opening quotation of this section, that Ackerman's films were, as the writer stated, 'catching and keeping, with absolute accuracy' the events of the war, was erroneous.

### **A perspective on Ackerman's work in the Philippines**

As we have seen, the Biograph company made a contractual arrangement with the War Department to film the conflict. Ackerman was based within American units throughout his half-year of reporting on the Philippine War; he was assisted by the Army quartermaster's department, was wearing US Army uniform, and was utterly dependent on the American military for his livelihood and safety. Ackerman, an ex-soldier, was effectively working *for* the American army in the Philippines, and even if he'd been so inclined, would have been ill-advised, to say the least, to bite the hand that fed him. In terms of his filmic and journalistic output from the war zone, he entirely toed the American line, and made no films which showed the Army in a negative light.

In the 2003 Gulf War, various television stations 'embedded' their correspondents with the invading forces, and this was presented by news organisations as if it was somehow a 'new' development. Of course it was not. War correspondents have always been attached, to a looser or tighter extent, to fighting forces. But in 1899 Ackerman set something of a precedent by the almost umbilical closeness with which he was bound to the American military, who were effectively his sponsors. In subsequent wars cameramen would rarely be attached so firmly to an army, nor be so uncritical in their attitude to it.

All in all, as a filmmaker actively working for the US military, Ackerman succeeded well in his job. He managed to film various different regiments and units of the US Army, often featuring their commanders prominently, and he depicted several of these units apparently taking part in military engagements. Though some of his films were arranged, they nevertheless showed real American troops in real locations, and only the off-screen enemy was imaginary. These were certainly more believable than the outright fakes which Edison made (as we shall see in the following section), of flag-waving American troops storming the trenches of the Filipino enemy, but they promulgated a similar message of American triumph. Ackerman's films were therefore propaganda rather than news, and propaganda of a more subtle and, some might say, more insidious kind than the cinema had yet seen.

## ‘ROUTING THE FILIPINOS’: STAGING AND EXHIBITION

### Fake films of the war

Many of the films about the Philippine War were dramatised reconstructions, fakes, rather than actualities, and were produced from fairly early on in the conflict. Before the main filmmakers of this war – Ackerman and Rosenthal – had even set foot in the Philippines, the fakers were at work, the main producer being the Edison Manufacturing Company. From May to September 1899, James White, Kinetograph Department Manager, supervised seven re-enactments or ‘dramatised scenes’ of this war.<sup>163</sup> These films were very pro American and patronizing toward the Filipino enemy, this attitude being clear from some of the titles: *Rout of the Filipinos*, *Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan*, *Capture of the Trenches at Candabar*, and *Filipinos Retreat from the Trenches*.

One of this group of films, *Colonel Funston Swimming the Bagbag River*, is particularly interesting historically in that it depicts one of the most famous American personalities of the war, Colonel Funston, accompanying his troops as they cross the river on a raft under enemy fire. This was based on a real incident, for which Funston was awarded a commendation for gallantry, though the film version unsurprisingly has several points of inaccuracy, including Funston triumphant on a white horse at the further river bank.<sup>164</sup> The other six films all show staged battles between groups of American and Filipino troops, acted in melodramatic style as the Americans, often waving the Stars and Stripes, force their adversaries to retreat.

These Edison fake films as a group have been the subject of analyses by various authors including Nick Deocampo and Clodualdo del Mundo.<sup>165</sup> Del Mundo’s account is marred by some historical misunderstanding. For example, he describes the action in *Filipinos Retreat from the Trenches*, and notes that each Filipino soldier, ‘quite fantastically’, is armed with a rifle. Actually there is nothing ‘fantastic’ about this, for at times the Filipino revolutionaries were well armed with good rifles, sometimes better armed than the Americans.<sup>166</sup> On the other hand Del Mundo’s aesthetic analysis of the films is interesting. For example, he argues that, while the documentary films of Ackerman are somewhat ‘ineffectual’, these ‘dramatised representations’ offer more of a clear-cut winner in the colonial struggle, and ‘are aimed to rouse the patriotic enthusiasm of the American viewers’. Several of the films show the Americans attacking, and the Filipinos in ignominious retreat:

‘The natives are literally driven out of the screen and the contested space is claimed by the coloniser. Each victorious battle ends with the constant waving of hats, a rousing celebration of adventure and heroism. The flag is pitched at every piece of land that the soldiers subdue and there is always someone to raise it proudly. Moreover, Red Cross nurses take care of the wounded, while the enemy run for their lives, leaving their fallen comrades. Americans wage an orderly war against the disorganised rebels.’<sup>167</sup>

Another author, Kristen Whissel, also stresses that the position of the camera

has the effect of 'aligning the audience with the agents of US imperialism', notably in *Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan*, as the US Army responds to a Filipino attack.<sup>168</sup> Deocampo extends this analysis, by seeing these films in the wider context of a colonial point of view or 'look' which he suggests that they embody. He writes:

'... the almighty camera expresses power. As Filipinos line up before the camera, they appear vulnerable, as though facing easy slaughter ... Filipinos start withering away from the hail of bullets that dart from the direction of the murderous look cast by the camera.'

When each of the films comes to an end, Deocampo notes, the Filipinos have effectively disappeared, lying inconspicuously as dead bodies, and in their place, 'American soldiers colonize the screen'. For a Filipino viewer, Deocampo remarks, watching these images can be an uncomfortable experience, in that one is effectively seeing one's own side as sorry victims. But another Filipino writer offers a different take on these fake reels. Jose Capino in his thesis offers what he calls a 'strong re-reading' of the films, attempting to reclaim them 'as objects of entertainment rather than of grief and anger', seeing them not so much as humiliating propaganda but as ridiculous productions of a colonising power.<sup>169</sup>

The assumption by all these writers seems to be that the Filipino fighters on screen represent 'Filipinos in general', whereas, as we have seen, the American public was being told that these rebels were but a small portion of the Filipino population, and that most of their countrymen welcomed the American presence. While the latter in particular is debatable, the point is that in the context of the time the films might not be as racist and anti-Filipino as they seem: many American viewers might have seen them rather as depicting their country wiping out a minority of rebels who stood in the way of social progress for the majority.

These films were mainly shown in the USA, though it is not clear how they were received there. It might seem unlikely that such glorifications of American military power were ever screened in the Philippines, and yet an example of exactly this has been unearthed by Nick Deocampo. He has found ads from Philippine newspapers in 1905 for a film show at the Gran Cinematògrafo del Oriente in Manila, which included the film, *Avance de los Voluntarios de Kansas en Caloocan*. This would seem to be the 1899 Edison fake, *Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan*.<sup>170</sup> The film appeared in the programme of films in January and again in March.<sup>171</sup> What is surprising is firstly that this scene was being screened some six years after production (and long after the war had finished), and secondly, and even more surprising, that such a film portraying the defeat of Filipinos was shown to a predominantly Filipino audience. Deocampo draws what seems to be a reasonable conclusion, that the film was not taken seriously by the audience, and indeed to modern eyes it is a very crude fake.<sup>172</sup> Perhaps the audiences were doing what Capino suggests, and treating the film as a joke rather than as a serious piece of American triumphalism. On the other hand, by 1905 the war was some years past and the Americans were by this time seen to be

acting as agents of progress in many ways, bringing health and education, and some democracy, so perhaps some Filipinos in the audience would have supported the advance of the Kansas volunteers against the rebels? In any case, this remains one of the few examples of a screening of an early war film in the country where the war took place.

Edison was not the only company to make fakes of this war. A film by an unknown maker, the *Battle in the Philippines*, was screened in Kentucky in July 1899, and 'was so full of action and so realistic that it aroused the audience last evening to wild enthusiasm'.<sup>173</sup> In 1899 the Lubin company released a film which recalled the 'flag films' made during the Sudan and Spanish-American wars: *Battle Flag of the 10th Pennsylvania Volunteers, Carried in the Philippines*. It is not clear what this film actually depicted, but the patriotic message of its title would have been very clear to US audiences. Another film, *Philippino War Dance*, possibly made by Lubin too, is much more chauvinistic, and indeed racist. It showed, in the gloating words of the catalogue, the 'half-civilized' and 'unruly inhabitants' of the Philippines who, the catalogue added, were being subdued by 'brave American soldier boys'. This film was being distributed by Lubin in early 1903, but may have been made and available as early as 1899.<sup>174</sup>

In 1900 Lubin released an unusually long fake film, the 400 ft. title, *Fighting in the Philippines, Near Manila* (copyrighted 10 March 1900), which again took a demeaning view of the Filipino adversary, the catalogue describing the action as follows:

'... a life motion picture of the American soldiers and the half-wild Philippinos in active battle. The high bridge and stone wall behind which so many were killed and wounded, is seen in the distance, and after a stubborn resistance, "our boys" vanquished their foes, and climbing down from the top of the wall, proceed to deal a deadly fire on the semi-dressed savages, who scatter in all directions.'<sup>175</sup>

The reference to 'semi-dressed savages' and earlier to 'half-civilized' foes indicates just how far these portrayals of Filipinos strayed from reality. Actually many Filipinos at this time were quite westernised (which is roughly what was meant by 'civilised' in this era): several commentators remarked on their refinement and courtesy, and their neatness and stylishness of attire.<sup>176</sup> The remoter mountain dwellers were presumably what these catalogue writers had in mind when referring to semi-dressed savages, though these tribal peoples played little part in the war. Similar patronising views of Filipinos are found in other media at this time. [Fig. 12] No doubt the film, *Fighting in the Philippines*, helped to promote negative stereotypes of Filipinos, for it was distributed in the US, and also in Germany (where German-born Lubin had strong connections).<sup>177</sup> Lubin's catalogue claimed that the film's action was so emotive 'that audiences have been moved to shout aloud and some stand in dread of a stray bullet that might come their way'. It recommended that sound effects be employed by the exhibitor to simulate the screen gunfire.

A further fake (judging from the description) was being distributed by the Selig company in 1903, which might have been a re-issue of one of the Edison or other fakes, though was more likely a new production. Entitled *Infantry Charge*, it was a mere 40 feet in length, and depicted what the catalogue correctly claimed had become 'a familiar scene' in the guerrilla warfare of the latter stages of the conflict, in which 'constant and harassing attacks and ambushes' were met with a firm response by the Americans:

'A bugler is seen to rush from the tents sounding the call to arms, the boys rush out, pick up their arms and dash out of sight. This show of force daunts the enemy, for our force return in a short time, stack their arms and go back to their tents.'<sup>178</sup>

### **Propaganda in film and lantern shows**

It is likely that these fake films and the actualities by Ackerman and Rosenthal were mainly shown in general entertainment venues, and while most of these scenes offered a pro-American view – and some presented a demeaning view of Filipinos – they were not really designed for overt propaganda or pedagogy. More overtly educational or propagandistic shows did take place, however, often employing lantern slides rather than films, or a combination of the two media. Various stereopticon companies in the USA distributed slide sets about the Philippines and America's war in the islands. Images included, for example, a picture of pro-American natives and an artist's impression of Funston's heroic crossing of the Bagbag river.<sup>179</sup> A poster from 1899-1900 advertised a combined film and lantern (stereopticon) show, in which the lantern section was entitled 'Our New Possessions', and consisted of 52 slides about the war. [Fig. 10 and 11] (The film part of the show may have comprised entertainment rather than war-related scenes). The lecture was apparently given in various parts of the USA, possibly with some government backing.<sup>180</sup> The publicity material announced:

'A most interesting and instructive lecture will be given describing our new possessions, beautiful Hawaii, the Philippines, the theater of the war, Porto Rico, ...and new scenes of the island of Cuba...Fruitful and beautiful countries which have been acquired by the United States.'

I have been unable to find out any more about venues for this lecture or much further information about it. However, more is known about aspects of lantern propaganda from the opposing camp on the Philippine question. This campaign was organised by a body called the Anti-Imperialist League, which was formed at the end of the Spanish-American war in 1898 to oppose American annexation of Spain's colonies.<sup>181</sup> The League's aims were crystallised through Kipling's, 'The White Man's Burden', a poem about America's new responsibility as an imperial power in the Philippines, with all the potential pitfalls which attended that thankless task. The League circulated information about the Philippines, offering a positive view of this nation and explaining why it should be granted self-rule (and opposing the display of Filipinos as primitive peoples at expositions, for example).

The League made use of lantern shows to further its aims, and in 1899 and 1900 sent two ex-volunteer soldiers on a tour to present lectures illustrated by lantern slides, in Chicago and major east coast cities. Sergeant Andreae and Private Reeves had served with the Signal Corps in the Philippine War, and their lantern show countered the official view of the war. They asserted that the Philippines was capable of self government and desired it; that Americans and not Filipinos had started the war; and that most US volunteer soldiers in the Philippines didn't support the war and wanted to return home.

They were attacked as liars by an Army General, though the League countered by saying that the General 'should know that his real quarrel is less with the young men than with their camera'.<sup>182</sup> The implication was that their projected images made a strong case for America's withdrawal from the Philippines. Unfortunately I have not yet managed to establish what kind of images these were, nor if any survive. The League was countered at every turn by the US military, which thought that it was encouraging the Philippine rebels, and therefore prolonging the war.<sup>183</sup> There was some truth in that, for, by 1900 one of the few remaining hopes of the Filipino nationalists, and a strong motivation for continuing the armed struggle, was that the anti-annexation candidate, Bryan, might win the US presidential election. When he lost and McKinley won, many of the nationalist fighters lost heart.

### **Film propaganda after the war**

By 1902 the Americans were in control in the Philippines and in effect the war had been won. But the need to keep control of information and to make the pro-imperialist case continued, both in the islands themselves and for an audience back home in the USA, and for this reason propaganda continued to play an important role for years after the war was won, including film propaganda. A 1914 lecture tour by Dean C. Worcester, former Secretary of the Interior for the Philippines (1901-1913), used 'motion picture films and lantern slides' to show conditions in the country. His lectures were sponsored by the 'American-Philippine Company', a corporation formed in 1912 to facilitate U.S. investments in the Philippines, which therefore aimed to portray the Filipinos as a primitive people who still needed American guidance and rule. Worcester used a kind of 'before and after' approach in his lectures, contrasting 'savage' Filipinos with others influenced by the 'civilizing' role of a U.S. administration. A press notice stated that:

'The contrast between these different peoples was emphasized by slides showing Speaker Osmena of the Philippine Assembly, General Aguinaldo and a highly educated Filipino woman on the one hand and a negrito warrior, a head-hunter, and women of the hills clad in banana leaves on the other.'<sup>184</sup>

The demeaning attitudes in this presentation were, it seems, much the same as in those Edison and Lubin faked films about the Philippine War, but at least Aguinaldo, who, during the war had been described in very uncomplimentary terms, was now presented as a positive role model. All colonial regimes use propaganda, and indeed more forceful methods of persuasion, and 'benevolent' as the Americans were in some respects, they were ruthless in

others, and were certainly prepared to use stereotyping as one of the tools of control.<sup>185</sup> And there was more to this campaign to control information and debate, for in addition to promoting its own viewpoint, the US regime also tried to suppress nationalist propaganda. The restrictions which General Otis had imposed on American journalists during the war continued afterwards in the form of censorship of 'seditious' writings and of plays which advocated an anti-American position – though this point of view still managed to be heard and seen, through the subtle efforts of Filipino writers and artists.<sup>186</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the Philippine conflict, though there were voices of criticism in some newspapers, generally the American media were in favour of the intervention. Either through luck or design, the US military hosted a press corps in the Philippine theatre of operations which was mainly pro-forces, as was much of the media and public back home in the USA (though there was significant and cogent opposition).

The moving picture industry was as pro-intervention as any of them. The Biograph company's cameraman, Ackerman, was more or less working for, or embedded in, the American army, and the other two cameramen in the Philippines who were ostensibly independent also 'toed the line'. All three of them, apparently quite separately, employed a technique for shooting actualities during the war, which had the effect of boosting the image of the US military. What I call 'arranging' involved setting up scenes with troops in the war zone, often depicting them pursuing, supposedly, an off-screen Filipino enemy. This technique allowed much finer control of the action and framing, and therefore resulted in better films, while still looking quite authentic. When exhibited later such films were sometimes re-titled to imply that the shots were genuine battle scenes.

The aim of these 'arranged' films was to show the American military effort in as dramatic, vigorous and heroic way as possible. Most of the other available films, non-fiction and staged, also put over a pro-American message – and with little prompting from the authorities. This steady diet of uncritical visuals acted as a powerful 'argument' for the triumphs of the new American imperialism, and therefore this war marks an important step in the development of film propaganda.

### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> Max Boot, in a review of Linn's book (see below) states, '...the Spanish-American War, which begot the conflict in the Philippines, is much better remembered, in spite of the fact that it involved fewer combatants, fewer casualties and considerably less time. No doubt this is because the Spanish-American War is widely thought to have heralded America's rise to world power, whereas, in the view of most historians, the Philippine War was a blind alley – a short-lived U.S. foray into colonialism.' *The National Interest*, Summer, 2000.



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<sup>2</sup> Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), p.328. See also the work of John M. Gates. The simplistic view of the war is epitomised in the aptly titled Kenneth C. Davis, *Don't Know Much About History : Everything You Need to Know About American History but Never Learned* (New York: Avon Books, 1990), p.223. In this work the event is called (incorrectly) the 'Philippine incursion', and, we are told, was noted for 'massive strikes against civilians, war atrocities, and a brutality that had been missing from American wars with Europeans. Fighting against the "brown" Filipinos removed all excuses for civility.' Later editions repeat the same statement. The online Wikipedia encyclopaedia entry is similarly unreliable. Brian Linn's aforementioned book is the best researched account of the war to date. Similarly nuanced accounts are available of particular aspects of the war: to name just one, see Rosario Mendoza Cortes, *Pangasinan, 1801-1900 : The Beginnings of Modernization* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1990), p.113-115, whose discussion of why the Americans eventually won in Pangasinan province is admirably balanced.

<sup>3</sup> When the Americans first arrived there were even cries of 'Viva Americanos'. Pandia Ralli, 'Campaigning in the Philippines', *Overland Monthly* 33, March 1899, p.231.

<sup>4</sup> As Kiernan puts it: 'the Americans brought Aguinaldo back, to make use of him against the Spaniards, but then shouldered him aside and annexed the islands'. V. G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse : 1815-1960* (London: Leicester University Press in association with Fontana Paperbacks, 1982), p.117. Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy was his full name.

<sup>5</sup> In August a sampling of newspaper opinion found 43% of the press in favour of permanent retention of the Philippines, but this had risen to over 61% by December. Brad K. Berner, *The Spanish-American War : A Historical Dictionary* (Lanham, Md. ; London: Scarecrow Press, 1998), article on 'Press – United States'.

<sup>6</sup> This is from a church lecture of 21 November, 1899. Quoted in James Ford Rhodes, *The McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations, 1897-1909* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p.106-7; and in Clodualdo Del Mundo, *Native Resistance : Philippine Cinema and Colonialism, 1898-1941* (Malate: De La Salle University Press, 1998), p.9-10. McKinley didn't mention that one other possibility had been seriously considered in 1898: to offer the islands to Great Britain. See Charles E. Howe, 'The Disposition of the Philippines', *National Geographic*, June 1898. which is taken from an article in *The Financial Review*, 27 May, and see Oscar M. Alfonso, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Philippines, 1897-1909* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1970), p.74-5. One contributor to *The Atlantic* magazine in 1898 wrote: 'we want no "colonies"... ...The nature of our institutions forbids that we should set up any form of government except one that at the earliest possible moment shall become self-government... We cannot leave the people of these islands either to their own fate, or to the mercy of the now defeated and disorganized Spanish rule, or yet to the mercy of any predatory nation that might seize them. We are become responsible for their development.' Walter Hines Page, 'The End of the War, and After', in *119 Years of the Atlantic*, edited by Louise Desaulniers: Little, Brown and Co., 1977 [1898]), p.187-8.

<sup>7</sup> Protestant missionaries started arriving even as the war was still being fought, and soon began setting up missions; interestingly, as early as the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these organisations were using film as a means to proselytise. I will cover this theme in a future article.

<sup>8</sup> One expert noted the 'thousands of miles of virgin forests' in the islands, with varieties of timber 'eagerly sought for by merchants from China'. Ramon Reyes Lala, *The Philippine Islands* (New York: Continental Publishing Company, 1899), p.251-2. See also the same author's article in *Success*, 11 Nov 1899, p.827. Lala, though a Filipino, opposed Aguinaldo, and supported the US takeover up to a point, as did a number of his countrymen (in Negros for example), though the pro-Americans were probably a minority across the entire island group.

<sup>9</sup> Albert Jeremiah Beveridge, Senator for Indiana, in a speech to the Senate, 9 Jan 1900. *Congressional Record*, vol.33, p.705. See also *History Today* Aug 1992, p.46. O.P. Austin, 'Our New Possessions and the Interest They Are Exciting', *National Geographic*, Jan 1900: this stressed that the islands' economy complemented that of the US, by providing tropical products which America didn't itself produce, and which were then costing \$250 million annually to import. Some more recent historians also stress the business interests which may have encouraged intervention. See Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis Francia, eds., *Vestiges of*

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*War : The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Meyers Shoemaker, *Quaint Corners of Ancient Empires : Southern India, Burma and Manila* (New York ; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), p.109, 156-7, 183.

<sup>11</sup> See Jim Zwick, *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War* (Syracuse University Press, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Article on the Philippines in the *Encyclopaedia Americana*.

<sup>13</sup> The Filipino government proclaimed its constitution on 27 January 1899. Information from Library of Congress website, etc.

<sup>14</sup> For example see the cover of LW 9 June 1898, which depicts Uncle Sam taking a close look at the apparently insignificant Philippine islands, saying 'Guess I'll keep 'em! '.

<sup>15</sup> Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse : 1815-1960*, p.117. Moorfield Storey and Marcial P. Lichauco, *The Conquest of the Philippines by the United States, 1898-1925* (New York ; London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1926), p.94-7. This calls the decision to attack the Filipinos on 5 Feb 'an act of usurpation', as war had not been declared by the US Congress. On the other hand the Americans would have argued that, by the treaty of Paris, Spain had sold the country to the USA, and the latter therefore had a right to exercise control.

<sup>16</sup> Many Filipinos these days believe that the Americans never had a right to rule their country, therefore the conflict was really a war proper, between two nations, and not a mere insurrection. Brian Linn, for a variety of reasons which he explains, calls it simply the Philippine War.

<sup>17</sup> The policy was renamed 'hearts and minds' in Vietnam, though was not implemented nearly as effectively as during the Philippine War.

<sup>18</sup> As in the Cuban war, American soldiers in the Philippines were sometimes, ironically, met by better armed adversaries: in some battles half the Filipinos had Mauser rifles with smokeless powder, while the Americans had the inaccurate 1873 Springfield rifles, using old-fashioned smoky powder. See Ralli, 'Campaigning in the Philippines', p.232. Interestingly some American troops were still using volley firing in this campaign, whereas the Filipinos and even the Spanish practiced free firing. (Ralli, p.166.)

<sup>19</sup> A Spanish officer Salcedo played a crucial role in this operation. See David Haward Bain, *Sitting in Darkness : Americans in the Philippines* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986). For a brief and readable account of Funston's role in the events, see Mark C. Carnes, 'Little Colonel Funston', *American Heritage* 49, no. 5, Sep 1998.; and for a good account of his considerable abilities as a soldier and commander, see chapter 6 of Thomas W. Crouch, *A Leader of Volunteers: Frederick Funston and the 20th Kansas in the Philippines, 1898-1899* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> By that time the US had also acquired Puerto Rico and Guam from Spain, was effectively in charge in Cuba, and had annexed Hawaii.

<sup>21</sup> My main figures are taken from Micheal Clodfelter, *Warfare and Armed Conflicts : A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1618-1991* (Jefferson, N.C. ; McFarland, 1992), p.420. The 4,000 American deaths compares with only 385 killed in action during the preceding war with Spain, and this is a relatively low figure given the major task of pacification. Though over 126,000 US troops were to serve in the Philippines altogether, only a fraction of this number were committed to the field at any one time. Some people estimate that as a result of privation and disease partly brought on by the conflict, including a devastating cholera outbreak, as many as 200,000 Filipinos died, though this figure has been disputed in recent historical studies. See the discussion of Filipino deaths during the war in Bruce Gordon, 'Mass Deaths in the Phil-Am War', *Bulletin of the American Historical Collection* 32/2, no. 127, Apr-June 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.132-36. Another journalist present was Arthur J. Pierce who went through the northern campaign with Generals Lawton and Young: see HW 28 Apr 1900, p.398, including illustration. Berner states that 'fewer than 30 correspondents made it to the Philippines', most from 1899, though it's not clear what period this covers. Brad K. Berner, *The Spanish-American War : A Historical Dictionary* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998), p.90.

<sup>23</sup> As the first troops left for the Philippines, the Assnt. Secretary of War sent a telegram to the commander of the expedition, Gen. Merritt, stating that Merritt was authorised by the Secretary of War to allow 'not exceeding six correspondents of the press to accompany your expedition to Manila at their expense if the accomodations will permit and their presence will

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not impede or endanger the success of military operations'. Telegram 24 May 1898, G.D. Meiklejohn, Assistant Secy. of War to Maj-Gen. Wesley Merritt, San Francisco. National Archives, Washington: RG 107/E.80/3741.

<sup>24</sup> Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.133-34.

<sup>25</sup> LW 18 May 1899, p.394-5. The same report relates that an unnamed young lady journalist who specialised in stepping out with officers from Dewey's fleet, possibly as a means of gaining information.

<sup>26</sup> 'War Correspondents', *The Spectator*, 22 July 1899, p.114-115. See also: Ora Williams, *Oriental America : Official and Authentic Records of the Dealings of the United States with the Natives of Luzon and Their Former Rulers* (Oriental America, 1899), p.126-135. Storey and Lichauco, *The Conquest of the Philippines by the United States, 1898-1925*, p.98- . William Thaddeus Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines: A History of the Insurrection* (Washington: Infantry Journal, 1944), p.132.

<sup>27</sup> Robert John Wilkinson-Latham, *From Our Special Correspondent : Victorian War Correspondents and Their Campaigns* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p.219. The signatories included Charles E. Fripp for the *Graphic*.

<sup>28</sup> Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.132-36. For more on censorship, see Leon Wolff, *Little Brown Brother : How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippines* (Singapore ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.241, 262-5, 275.

<sup>29</sup> Christopher A. Vaughan, 'The "Discovery" of the Philippines by the U.S. Press, 1898-1902', *The Historian* 57, Winter 1994. This interesting, but in parts inaccurate, article examines coverage of the war in publications such as *Munsey's Magazine*, the *Literary Digest* and the newspaper press.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Stratemeyer was the author of both *Under MacArthur in Luzon, or Last Battles in the Philippines* and *Under Otis in the Philippines, or A Young Officer in the Tropics*. At least one of these was in print through to the 1930s.

<sup>31</sup> 'Philippine War pictures exhibited by the famous Vereschagin', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 5 Jan 1902, p.6.

<sup>32</sup> Karl Irving Faust, *Campaigning in the Philippines* (San Francisco: Hicks-Judd Co., 1899). Several versions of this were published. In the future I hope to publish an article about photography during this campaign.

<sup>33</sup> Rob Kroes and Michael P. Malone, eds., *The American West, as Seen by Europeans and Americans* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1989), p.269.

<sup>34</sup> In December 1894 a 'ciclorama' illustrated 'the wars of Melilla and Mindanao'. See José Caballero Rodríguez, *Historia Gráfica del Cine en Mérida, 1898-1998* (Mérida (Badajoz): Editora Regional de Extremadura, 1999), p.35.

<sup>35</sup> Clodualdo Del Mundo, 'The "Philopene" through Gringo Eyes: the Colonisation of the Philippines in Early American Cinema and Other Entertainment Forms, 1898-1904', in *Celebrating 1895: the Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.212-222. Del Mundo makes valid points and some less convincing ones. Among the latter are his discussion of the songs of this period about the Philippines, where he observes that the majority are about Philippine women and that they demean the Filipinos as 'an inferior Other'. Yet the trend in sentimental titles such as 'Ma Filipina Babe' could be interpreted as *admiration* of the beauty of the country's women, and such an admiring tone has been a regular theme in descriptive literature about the Philippines. For example, a 1925 book about the islands has a chapter entitled 'The Fair Filipina', and is a peon of praise to Filipinas for their beauty, grace and talents; though Del Mundo might argue that such praise is itself somewhat patronising, given the colonial situation. Frank G. Carpenter, *Through the Philippines and Hawaii* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1925).

<sup>36</sup> The theme of these human displays has been covered in several works of cultural studies, including Benito M. Vergara, *Displaying Filipinos : Photography and Colonialism in Early 20th Century Philippines* ([Quezon City]: University of the Philippines Press, 1995), though this book has been criticised for its excessive use of the concept of 'the Other', which in the opinion of one critic, perpetuates a patronising attitude to Filipinos. See Lisa Cariño Ito, 'Book Reviews', *Philippine Collegian*, 23 November, 1998: at [www.librarylink.org.ph](http://www.librarylink.org.ph). These displayed Filipinos are dealt with in a documentary from the 1990s, *Savage Acts: Wars, Fairs and Empire*.

<sup>37</sup> David Nasaw, *Going Out : The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.75.

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<sup>38</sup> The former was shot 25 May 1898. The latter was copyrighted in June 1898, and survives. It shows the troops going up the gangplank, shot over the heads of onlookers, with jump cuts to cover different stages of the embarkation. White and Blechynden shot four films in the city of US troops for the Philippines. See Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*, #574-7. One of the pioneers of the film business in San Francisco, George Breck, later recalled that the departure of the First California Volunteers from the city – heading for Manila – was filmed by a mechanic called Wright, using a camera of his own construction. See 'George Breck reminiscent', *MPW* 10 July 1915, p.241. This either refers to one of the Edison films or might be an additional title.

<sup>39</sup> A returning soldier noted that hardly anyone was in San Francisco to welcome their troop ship back from the war in August 1900, in marked contrast to the crowds there for their departure from the city almost two years earlier. Needom N. Freeman, *A Soldier in the Philippines* (New York: Tennyson Neely, c1901), p.103-4. Though del Mundo mentions a couple of films of returning troops, it is unclear when they were made and by whom.

<sup>40</sup> John A. Lent, *The Asian Film Industry* (Bromley: Christopher Helm, 1990), p.150. Ramos had also given the first film shows in the Philippines.

<sup>41</sup> The filming may have been related to the nationalist struggle, rather than the Philippine War. More information about Ramos' career in the Spanish military has recently come to light, due to the researches of Nick Deocampo. Another interesting figure in the early days was a certain 'Colonel' Johnson, 'an ex-hotel keeper of Shanghai, who was running a cinematograph show' and became involved in the war on the Philippine side. So states Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippines Past and Present* (London: Mills and Boon, Limited, 1914).

<sup>42</sup> *Delmarvia Star* (Wilmington) 24 Sep 1899, p.8. Cited in Elbert Chance, 'The Motion Picture Comes to Wilmington', *Delaware History* 24, no. 4 (Fall/Winter 1991-2), p.232. I cannot trace Butler in any newspaper index, nor in the New York *World* from 22 to 24 September. There were two battles of Manila: the first occurred 13 Aug 1898 and the second from 6 to 8 Feb 1899.

<sup>43</sup> F.M. Prescott, 'New Films', catalogue supplement, 20 Nov 1899. On Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*. The titles were: *Troops from Several States Marching in Manila*, *Regiments of Several States Drilling in Manila*, *Marines and Sailors Entering Manila*, *Artillery Training in Manila*, *Philippine War Dance* (the latter was also released by Lubin, and Holmes' *Bamboo Dancers* could be the same film).

<sup>44</sup> The films were shown by Prof. William A. Reed, with his Edison Vitagraph machine ('Edison's Latest Moving Picture Machine') and included one scene from Cuba. See Sylvester Quinn Breard, 'A History of the Motion Pictures in New Orleans, 1896-1908,' M.A., Louisiana State University, 1951, p.72-73. Reported in the *Picayune*, 30 April 1899, p.9 and 8 May, 1899, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> The theatrical trade paper *New York Clipper* includes Lubin Manufacturing Company advertisements for some Philippine War films; however, these films do not survive in the Paper Print Collection. These Lubin films and similar films produced or distributed by other companies might have been staged scenes, shot in the United States. They could have been imitative of the existing Edison films since during this period it was commonplace to pirate, imitate and copy each other's work; and Lubin especially was notorious for this practice.

<sup>46</sup> Oscar B. Depue had been a skilled lantern projectionist, which is how Holmes had met him, probably in 1893. Burton Holmes, *The World Is Mine* (Murray & Gee, 1953), p.141. This is a rather disappointing volume as far as the late 1890s to 1914 is concerned, as Holmes skates over this period of his work in a single short chapter (p.199-201), presumably because he had related these incidents in his published travelogues. Holmes' biographer, Caldwell (see below) gives only a little more on this period.

<sup>47</sup> See [www.burtonholmes.org](http://www.burtonholmes.org)

<sup>48</sup> In his published lecture about the Philippine experiences he states that he set off on the anniversary of Dewey's victory, which was 1 May. See 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Little Preston Co., 1901), p.119. Holmes travelled via Japan as well as Hong Kong.

<sup>49</sup> 'Chronophotographe Demenÿ' was the French term and 'Chrono' the British. The shots he took of the Admiral are mentioned in a report of Holmes' lecture, 'Manila and the Philippines', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 30 Dec 1899, p.14, col.2. Citation courtesy Charles Musser. For China filming details (including problems of filming in the streets) see: 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.140, 142, 155, 172-86. Holmes had two other cameras, he

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tells us, for this assignment, probably meaning stills cameras, one of which was operated by his assistant, Ah Kee.

<sup>50</sup> 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.242-6.

<sup>51</sup> 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.260, 284, 287, in which some frames of the cock-fight are reproduced. It was later released as *Filipino Cockfight*, with a couple of other scenics, *Bamboo Dancers* and *Woman Washing Clothes by the River*. See Nick Deocampo, *Cine : Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines* (Quezon City; Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003). Both Rosenthal and Bonine made films of cockfights while in the country: *Cock Fighting in the Phillipines* [sic] (1901) and *A Filipino Cockfight* (1902), respectively.

<sup>52</sup> Volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.268.

<sup>53</sup> Baliuag is about 50 kilometres north-north-west of Manila. As well as taking moving images during this stay in Baliuag, Holmes also took still photographs. One of these stills shows a church in the town turned into a barracks for US troops. See Genoa Caldwell, *The Man Who Photographed the World: Burton Holmes Travelogues 1886-1938* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977), p.70.

<sup>54</sup> Holmes states that this was the Third Infantry. I can find no such regiment serving in the PI. I suggest he means the Thirty-Fifth Infantry, which was indeed quartered Baliuag, headed by Colonel E.H. Plummer. See Charles F. Baker and James J. Erwin, *A History of the Thirtieth Infantry, U.S. Volunteers in the Philippine Insurrection, 1899-1901* ([Clarkston, Wash.]: [Press of the Clarkston Herald], 1934), p.99. This detail comes from a useful list of the US regiments who fought in the Philippines, given on p.98-102.

<sup>55</sup> 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.315-316. The shot of reinforcements dashing forward from the town is possibly illustrated on p.320 as 'Fourth Cavalry'.

<sup>56</sup> Without the telegraph, claimed General MacArthur, the Army could not have pacified the Philippines with so few soldiers. Given this importance, commanders were 'ruthless with guerrillas who damaged the lines', and such people might be shot on sight in some areas. Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.203, 237-38.

<sup>57</sup> 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.320-321. He meant 'site' rather than 'cite'. The burning or threatened burning of houses while brutal, was effective in gaining cooperation, and was a tactic used by both sides in the war. Linn, *Ibid*, p.220-24.

<sup>58</sup> While reprisals against civilians have always played a part in warfare, armies and authorities try to downplay them; such scenes are a rarity in early war films.

<sup>59</sup> 'Manila' section in volume 5 of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, p.336.

<sup>60</sup> To be fair, the full content of his lecture is not quite clear from the article's description, and he did discuss to some extent 'the front' where US troops were facing the insurgents. 'Manila and the Philippines', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> Photographs from the 1913 trip survive and are viewable at [www.burtonholmes.org](http://www.burtonholmes.org). See also 'How Burton Holmes shot Aguinaldo', *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Editorial and Dramatic section, 28 June 1914, p.3. Cited in Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p.346.

<sup>62</sup> As mentioned earlier, the American photographer James Ricalton, like Ackerman, also went first to the Philippines and then China. According to Will Day, Rosenthal went from Hong Kong to the Philippines after filming the post Boxer campaign. Will Day MSS, 'Joe Rosenthal' (8<sup>th</sup> page), in Cinémathèque française.

<sup>63</sup> Warwick Trading Co. 1901 catalogue supplement, c. Aug 1901, p.237-241. The films are also listed in the 1902 WTC catalogue, p.80 etc. Another film, *Gen. Otis and His Troops in the Philippines* of 75 ft. appears in *Lubin's Films* catalogue of January 1903, which may be a re-titled Rosenthal film, *The 20th Infantry U.S.A. ("Otis's Pets") Marching Through a Banana Grove*.

<sup>64</sup> Four months is claimed in 'Round the World with a Camera', *Bioscope* 17 Dec 1908, p.22. Three months is stated in Will Day MSS, 'Joe Rosenthal' (8<sup>th</sup> page), in Cinémathèque française, which adds that from the Philippines he went to Hong Kong and from there to Australia for the Commonwealth celebrations, May 1901.

<sup>65</sup> The latter five films were: *The 7th Artillery U.S.A. Charging*, *The 7th Artillery U.S.A. In Action*, *The 4th Cavalry U.S.A. Repelling Flank Attack*, *The Ilocano Scouts Charging the Enemy's Entrenchments*, *The Charge of the Macabebe Scouts*.

<sup>66</sup> Linn notes: 'By the war's end, over 15,000 Filipinos served in officially recognized Scout or constabulary units and did quite well under American officers...' Brian McAllister Linn, 'The

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Philippines: Nationbuilding and Pacification', *Military Review*, March-April 2005. See also John Bancroft Devins, *An Observer in the Philippines; or Life in Our New Possessions* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1905), chapter 35, 'Exhibit at St. Louis'. He notes that four of the by-then 50 companies of 'Philippine Scouts' were represented at the exhibit: the Macabebes, Ilocanos, Tagalogs and Visayans. Some scouts were filmed in June 1904 when they were in America: *Filipino Scouts, Musical Drill, St. Louis Exposition* (AM&B).

<sup>67</sup> Wilcox includes an article on the Macabebe scouts, which notes that they were organised in September 1899, and at the time of writing there were five companies, numbering about 600 men in all. Marrion Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines* (New York & London: Harper, 1900), p.333. From this it would seem that the unit which Rosenthal filmed was a late starter.

<sup>68</sup> The town Macabebe is on the Pampanga Grande river, about 25 miles north-west of Manila, says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1911 edition, vol. 17. Sexton says the Macabebes lived in an area east of Calumpit. See William T. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines: A History of the Insurrection* (Washington: Infantry Journal, 1944), p.131-2. The Macabebes were somewhat outside the run of Philippine society, for their ancestors had supposedly been brought by the Spaniards from Mexico, and later generations served in the Spanish army. Several contemporary writers were full of praise for the Macabebes. See Freeman, *A Soldier in the Philippines*, p.58. More recent reassessments paint them as a nasty lot. See Glenn Anthony May, *A Past Recovered* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987), p.135, 146-7. Nasty but effective in serving the Americans. It was a Macabebe unit which was instrumental in Colonel Funston's audacious and successful raid to capture Aguinaldo in March 1901, an event which finally tipped the war in America's favour. The Warwick catalogue reminds potential purchasers of their film, *The Charge of the Macabebe Scouts*, of the important role of the Macabebe scouts in this capture. For more on the Macabebes, see Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.128, 216, 260.

<sup>69</sup> Will Day stated, 'Much courtesy and kindness was shown during this campaign to this camera operator...' (i.e. Rosenthal). Will Day MSS, 'Joe Rosenthal' (8<sup>th</sup> page), in Cinémathèque française.

<sup>70</sup> The founders were Maguire and Baucus, and the London-based company was run by Charles Urban – all were Americans.

<sup>71</sup> Their lengths vary from 50 ft. to 150 ft., with the staged films tending to the longer lengths.

<sup>72</sup> A still which may be from this film is reproduced on p.241 of the Warwick catalogue.

<sup>73</sup> A copy of this photograph, and others taken in the Philippines, is included in the Rosenthal collection in the BFI. These photographs seem to have been largely Rosenthal's own private collection, rather than having been taken specifically for the Company.

<sup>74</sup> Most print journalists assigned to the Philippines were also in favour of assimilation, and if they voiced any criticism it was directed at *how* the war was run, not whether. Downright anti-war opinion was generally confined to the anti-Imperialists based in America.

<sup>75</sup> Kemp Niver and the AFI catalogue call him 'Raymond'. I have been unable to discover the reason or source for this misinformation.

<sup>76</sup> Archival sources which I have consulted include military records at the National Archives, Washington; Biograph materials located in the Museum of Modern Art, New York and at the Seaver Center, Los Angeles. I was kindly sent material from local collections in Syracuse, NY: by Onondaga County Public Library (OCPL) and the Onondaga Historical Association (OHA). The most crucial Biograph materials are located at MoMA: the company's 'Picture Catalogue', the sample frame-clipping collection, and the company's production register (the former two are on Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*, Reel 2. A xerox of the Biograph register is held in LoC-MBRS.

<sup>77</sup> Frames from this 10-inch gun being fired are reproduced in Albert A. Hopkins, *Magic, Stage Illusions...* (NY: Scientific American, 1898) p.505. Frames from one of the 11 films of the Thirteenth Infantry – a blanket tossing scene – are reproduced in *Scientific American*, 17 April 1897, p.249.

<sup>78</sup> Correspondence from Alger dated 8 Oct 1897 and Wheeler 22 Oct 1898. These letters were seen at Frank J. Marion's home by Gordon Hendricks who transcribed them on 19 Dec 1957. As it is probable that Wheeler's letter immediately followed Alger's, the year of 1898 may be a mis-transcription by Hendricks for 1897. See Gordon Hendricks collection, Series 2, box 4, folder 3, 'Biography' (NMAH). Wheeler was with the 4<sup>th</sup> Army Corps.

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<sup>79</sup> See 'Naval warfare pictures exhibited', *Denver Republican*, 10 May 1898; and Biograph frame-clipping collection: nos.2686-92 of US Navy Dept., and 2710-13 and 2720-35 of recruiting for the Navy.

<sup>80</sup> *Post Standard* (Syracuse) 18 Dec 1899.

<sup>81</sup> Hendricks Collection, series 2, box 4, folder 3, 'Biography', (NMAH).

<sup>82</sup> Charles Musser uses the term 'cameraman system' to describe the arrangement in which a cameraman was the prime member of a filming unit, with a producer to provide editorial input. The latter role was sometimes played by a journalist. Musser, *Emergence*, p.265. In the case of Ackerman, Biograph might have thought that his journalistic background provided the necessary editorial input, and that actuality camerawork was a relatively simple additional skill to acquire.

<sup>83</sup> Niver suggests that Ackerman was actually working for the company from June. See Kemp Niver, *Biograph Bulletins, 1896-1908* (Los Angeles: Locare Research Group, 1971) cited in McKernan/Herbert, *Who's Who*.

<sup>84</sup> 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express* (NY) 25 June 1900. I found this and some of the other newspaper articles about Ackerman's filming work, which I cite below, in a scrapbook of Biograph cuttings held in the Seaver Center, Los Angeles.

<sup>85</sup> The company had close contacts with the higher reaches of the Republican Party and, during the 1896 presidential campaign had made films of McKinley which presented the candidate in a positive light. Cordial relations continued with the administration in succeeding years. On 15 April 1898 H.N. Marvin sent some newspaper clippings to the White House, the contents of which McKinley's secretary acknowledged as 'very gratifying to the President'. It is not known what the clippings comprised, but probably they were comments on films of the President. The letter of acknowledgement (of 18 April, addressed to Marvin at 841 Broadway, NY) is in *William McKinley Papers*, series 2, reel 28, vol.115.

<sup>86</sup> National Archives, Washington: RG 107/E.80/#3635. Part of this passage was underlined by a War Department official. That the Biograph company suggested the filming project to the US War Department is confirmed in an article about Ackerman's Philippines work: '...Some months ago the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company suggested to the Secretary of War and to Adjutant-Gen. Corbin that a series of moving pictures be taken in the Philippines, so that the exact movements and actions of the armies could be reproduced with lifelike faithfulness in the future for the use of the department.' 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express* 25 June 1900. The War Department worked closely with the Adjutant General's office, which is why this letter and other correspondence that I cite was filed in the records of the latter department, at RG 107.

<sup>87</sup> Corbin and Secretary of War, Elihu Root, were relatively new appointments. They were highly efficient men, especially Root, who during his career at the War Department revolutionised the American military, turning it into an efficient force after the fiasco of the Cuban campaign. Corbin and Root apparently had no trouble with appropriating new media including film, for the US Army at this time was very much a modern and forward-looking organisation, progressive and deft at public relations. Peter Karsten, 'Armed Progressives: The Military Reorganizes for the American Century', in *Building the Organizational Society*, edited by Jerry Israel (New York: Free Press, 1972): cited by John M. Gates.

<sup>88</sup> Under section 3744 of the 'Revised Statutes' such signature for Government contracts was ruled mandatory by the Supreme Court. This point was made in relation to the AM&B proposal by the Judge-Advocate General in an endorsement written in the file. Root's letter was dated 7 September. National Archives, Washington: RG 107/E.80/#3635.

<sup>89</sup> Root sent a copy of the note for Ackerman to present to Shafter upon his arrival in San Francisco.

<sup>90</sup> Charles F. Baker and James J. Erwin, *A History of the Thirtieth Infantry*, op. cit., p.99.

<sup>91</sup> He started his journey on the night of 16 September to New York (presumably travelling from Syracuse), according to one article: 'Bound around the world', *Post Standard* (Syracuse) 17 Sep 1899. Courtesy OHA. Re the *Sheridan* journey, see C. Fred Ackerman, 'How brave young Logan died', *LW* 13 Jan 1900, p.30. Commercial liners in the early 1920s (the only period for which I have data) were taking about a month from Manila to San Francisco, via China. One source states that he landed in Manila on 30 September. 'Pictures that will be historic', *LW* 13 Jan 1900, p.18. Actually this was the date he left San Francisco.

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<sup>92</sup> This was a three pronged advance through Luzon, as I describe below, and began 6 November. Edwin Wildman, 'Crushing Aguinaldo', LW 25 November 1899, p.419. Perhaps the source giving his arrival date of 30 September meant 30 October?

<sup>93</sup> The two main correspondents for *Leslie's Weekly* (LW) in the Philippines were artist Sydney Adamson, who drew pictures and also wrote reports for the magazine, and Ackerman himself, who was described as, 'a photographic artist and correspondent of recognized standing'. LW 10 Feb 1900, p.102. Adamson was of British nationality says LW 3 Nov 1900, p.332 (see p.318 for more on Adamson). Like Ackerman, the following year Adamson reported on the Boxer conflict in China, sent by *Leslie's* from the Philippines with a Mr R. van Bergen. LW 7 July 1900, p.2.

<sup>94</sup> Photographs credited to Biograph appear in *Leslie's* from as early as 9 March 1899. Incidentally, Ackerman's stills and their captions in *Leslie's* are sometimes a valuable additional guide to what and where he filmed.

<sup>95</sup> As I mentioned above, Marvin had asked the War Department for 'the officers in charge to extend such reasonable facilities for taking pictures as they can consistently do'.

<sup>96</sup> 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express*, 25 June 1900. As if to acknowledge his debt to this supply department, one of Ackerman's films, *Unloading Lighters, Manila* was described in the catalogue as, 'Illustrating the work in the Quartermaster's Department'. General Elwell Otis was the US commander in the Philippines through 1899, but was thought unsuited to the irregular warfare which developed in the Philippines by late 1899, and was recalled in May 1900 (about the same time Ackerman too departed, coincidentally). See entry on 'Philippines Insurrection' in R. Holmes, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

<sup>97</sup> The first of his films for which we have an exact date were dated as shot on 1 November, though that might actually mean any date in November.

<sup>98</sup> One article states that: 'Mr. Ackerman spent nearly eight months with the American army' ('Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal* 13 July 1900.) Also giving the 'nearly 8 months' figure is the *Post-Standard* of 14 July 1900. Courtesy OCPL and OHA. Charles Musser states that Ackerman was filming in the Philippines from November 1899 to early March 1900, which would seem correct, though Ackerman's complete stay, including a non-filming period at the end, was probably a little longer. Musser, *Emergence*, p.264-5.

<sup>99</sup> According to one article he 'took over fifty pictures': see 'C. Fred Ackerman is to lecture', *Post Standard* (Syracuse) 14 July 1900, p.6. Another article claimed that he returned with 'nearly fifty different views'. 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express* (New York) 25 June 1900. Some of the details I have found for Ackerman's films are from Biograph's production register. The first group was listed (as received) 21 December 1899, consisting of one film of Honolulu and five films made in Manila. More listings of Philippine films followed in 1900: ten films on 28 Feb, nine on 22-23 March, and seventeen on 8-10 May. Frames from these Philippine War films are also in the Biograph clippings collection in MoMA, nos.1349-53, 1383-90, 1399-1404, 1448-1464.

<sup>100</sup> 'Pictures that will be historic', LW 13 Jan 1900, p.18.

<sup>101</sup> 'Stories of the...', *Post Standard* (Syracuse) 18 Dec 1899. Courtesy OHA. The article adds that Ackerman had written to friends that he'd seen enough interesting things 'to fill a large book'. Sadly though, this book never seems to have materialised.

<sup>102</sup> 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express* 25 June 1900.

<sup>103</sup> 'The first biograph camera used in this country ... weighed a ton altogether. ... Next came an electric camera of one-fourth the weight of its predecessor.' From Roy L. McCardell, 'Pictures That Show Motion', *Everybody's Magazine* 5, August 1901, p.231. Two photographs in the Hendricks Collection show this second 'portable camera' which was used on their roof stage in New York before 1900. Though smaller than its predecessor, it is still large, a box in the shape of a cube, about 450 cm. each side. (Hendricks Collection, Series 2, Box 3, folder 7, '2<sup>nd</sup> Camera'. There is a similar photograph, but with operator, in folder 8 'Misc Cameras'.) George Eastman House and the Cinémathèque française may hold models of these smaller cameras. The George Eastman House Biograph camera is illustrated in Raymond Fielding, *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) p.106. It seems to be similar to a Biograph held in the Cinémathèque française, which weighs 110 lbs and is about 20" x 14" x 16" (50 x 35 x 39 cm): see item 1034 in Laurent Mannoni, *Le Mouvement Continué* (Paris: CF, 1996). Strangely this looks as if it has a hand-crank, and is marked 'Kruger', which may refer to the filming of President Kruger when he



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came to Europe from South Africa in November 1900. Biograph's sub-100 lb hand camera was introduced in late 1900.

<sup>104</sup> The average length of Ackerman's Philippine-shot films, where the footage is given, is as follows: for his 17 half-load films, approx 154 ft.; for his 24 full-load films: approx 309 ft. The release length of 35mm film is respectively in the mid 20's or the low 50's measured in feet. That is a little less than a sixth of the original lengths, this vast difference being partly because the 35 mm format is physically smaller, but also because, I surmise, these versions may have been step-printed from the Biograph large-format originals, missing out every other frame, which would enable projection at a more standard rate of 15 to 20 fps. The Biograph film's image area was four times larger than standard 35mm film, and the film was run through the camera at 30 or 40 fps – double the normal frame rate for that date. Bitzer and McCardell, op. cit., claimed that Biograph films were taken at 320 ft/minute or 5 ft/sec. During the late 1890s the Biograph camera was usually loaded with between 150 and 200 feet, various sources tell us: Eugene Lauste said the camera film was usually about 160 ft long but might be thousands of feet long. ('The American Biograph', *Bristol Evening News*, 28 Aug 1897, p.3). Dickson's camera for filming the Worthing lifeboat had a load of 200 feet. ('Cinematographing at Worthing', *OMLJ*, vol.9, 1898, p.72). 'The ordinary length of a film is about 200 ft., but on the occasion of a Paris fire about 700 ft. were used.' [R.H. Mere, 'The Wonders of the Biograph', *Pearson's Magazine* 7 (Feb 1899), p.198]. The film in the camera is about 150 ft long, though 'length may be either greater or less than this'. [E.W. Mayo, 'The Making of Moving Pictures', *The Quaker* 6 (Oct 1899), p.466.] McCardell, op. cit., says 160 to 300 feet.

<sup>105</sup> The only one of Ackerman's films which is significantly longer is his film of Lawton's funeral, at over 400 feet, which was perhaps made this long by combining film loads together.

<sup>106</sup> 'The Biograph in the Philippines', *Boston Journal* 25 March 1900.

<sup>107</sup> The photograph is in LW 10 Feb 1900, p.113.

<sup>108</sup> For example, between January and April 1900, US forces had some 124 skirmishes with the Filipinos. Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines*, p.341. By April there were more than 63,000 US troops in the Philippines.

<sup>109</sup> Basic descriptions of what he did were published in two newspaper reports, and give some idea of the chronological order. 'Mr. Ackerman, after reaching the Philippines, went out with the Thirty-third Regiment and took a number of photographs. Then he was with Gen. Grant at Magalang and secured some valuable views. He was with the Twenty-fifth Colored Infantry at the time of their advance on Mount Arayat. He was with Gen. Bell's expedition through Pingisnan Province and over the mountains.' 'Moving Pictures of War', *NY Mail and Express* 25 June 1900. 'While with the Thirty-third regiment he got a number of interesting pictures and then joined Gen. Grant at Magalang. He was with the Thirty-third Infantry (colored), when they advanced on Mount Ariat, and witnessed the slaughter of the five American prisoners which was one of the most startling events of the campaign. He was with Gen. Bell's expedition through Pingisnan Province and over the mountains.' From 'Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal*, 13 July 1900. Pangasinan was sometimes called 'Pingisnan' province at the time.

<sup>110</sup> He seems to have been with the Thirty-Third in Pangasinan too. One of his still photos shows 'Filipino trenches at San Jacinto, captured by the gallant Thirty-third Regiment'. (LW, 10 Feb p.114). San Jacinto lies a little inland, between Dagupan and San Fabian.

<sup>111</sup> LW 9 Feb 1899, p.112 has photographs of insurgent damage to the Manila-Dagupan railway, which, the writer reiterates, is the only railway in the islands. (It was built in 1892.)

<sup>112</sup> The unit was under Capt. H.G. Lenhauser, and the name Lenhauser (or Leaubaeuser) is mentioned in an article about Ackerman's work, 'Tales from the Philippines', *NY Telegram* 4 June 1900. Captain Lenhauser features in *Responding to an Alarm*, which Ackerman filmed in Magalang, probably in early 1900. Ackerman may have reported this story at second hand, for he was apparently in Manila at the time. See C. Fred Ackerman, 'How brave young Logan died', *LW* 13 Jan 1900, p.30. The by-line for this story reads 'Manila, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1899'.

<sup>113</sup> He states Manila as his starting point in the *Boston Journal* article cited below.

<sup>114</sup> General Otis' strategy was to try to trap Aguinaldo between Dagupan and the Pampanga plain and prevent his escape to the mountains further north. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines: A History of the Insurrection*, p.141-57. Sexton calls it 'an almost brilliant plan', while Cortes calls it 'clear, masterly, comprehensive'. [Rosario Mendoza Cortes, *Pangasinan, 1801-1900: The Beginnings of Modernization* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1990), p.104.] The three columns, under three Generals, would act as follows: 1. Lawton to move

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north through Nueva Ecija province, closing the mountain passes. 2. Wheaton to land from the sea near San Fabian and block escape to the Beguet mountains to the north. 3. MacArthur then to advance along the railway, and push Aguinaldo into Wheaton's and Lawton's forces. But, says Sexton, Lawton's task was too difficult, Wheaton was too cautious and so Aguinaldo escaped. This was during the middle part of the war, after it had become a guerrilla conflict but before the get-tough policies instigated by McKinley (through General MacArthur) after his re-election in November 1900, and I suggest was one of the most interesting periods in the conflict, though, strangely, the least discussed in the historical literature. For example, the Library of Congress chronology misses out the whole of 1900, as does one web account, 'Events of the War' at [www.geocities.com/Athens/Crete/9782/](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Crete/9782/) [sic!]. This passes from the battle of Tirad Pass in November and December 1899 to the Battle of Lonoy in March of 1901, mentioning nothing in between. T. Agoncillo also glosses over early 1900. Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Milagros C. Guerrero, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: R. P. Garcia Pub. Co, 1977). Linn, thankfully covers this period in some detail.

<sup>115</sup> San Fabian is in Pangasinan province. I originally supposed that Ackerman had made only one trip to Pangasinan, c Jan-Feb 1900. Now I believe that he made two trips to Pangasinan, one in November, another in February, for the following reasons: the February visit is proven by the filming dates in the Biograph register of at least half a dozen films that he shot there; the previous November visit is proven by the photograph of himself with Aguinaldo's family, who were captured at that time, and by the fact that in mid December it was reported that Ackerman had already been with Bell's regiment in the mountains of northern Luzon. ('Stories of the...', *Post Standard* (Syracuse) 18 Dec 1899.) Though Ackerman's disastrous journey by boat is not dated, I believe it was during the November visit, because that was when the American assault on San Fabian was launched, whereas by February the area was effectively under US control.

<sup>116</sup> On 6 November Wheaton's force, 2,500 strong, left for Lingayen Gulf and arrived on the 9th, while MacArthur's troops, the Seventeenth Infantry, advanced, clearing country between Angeles and Arayat, and on 20 November MacArthur entered Dagupan. (See Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines*.) On 7 November the Thirty-Third had landed near Dagupan, as Ackerman reported, though the cameraman presumably only joined them later. (C. Fred Ackerman, 'How brave young Logan died', *LW* 13 Jan 1900, p.30.) Incidentally, San Fabian was also a key location in the Second World War during the Japanese occupation: in January 1945 American forces landed at San Fabian, and the town became the scene of severe fighting. As in the 1900 campaign, the Dagupan to Manila route was the locus of the American effort, but in the 1940s they were headed toward Japanese-occupied Manila rather than spreading out from it.

<sup>117</sup> Both parts of this account are from 'The Biograph in the Philippines', *Boston Journal* 25 March 1900. Ackerman states in this article that he departed Manila 'two weeks ago', but the account probably dates from December, with a delayed publication in the Boston newspaper in March.

<sup>118</sup> The photograph of Ackerman is in *LW* 10 Feb 1900, p.113. The story about the capture in Carbaran is on p.106. (Aguinaldo himself was captured in March the following year).

<sup>119</sup> The Thirty-Third made the capture on 20 November. This information is given in: C. Fred Ackerman, 'Aguinaldo's son captured', *LW* 10 Feb 1900, p.106-7. By-line 'San Fabian, P.I., November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1899'. The capture was near Mangatarem, say other sources. Cortes says it was in Pozorrubio. (Cortes, *Pangasinan, 1801-1900: The Beginnings of Modernization*, p.109.) Most sources (e.g. Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines: A History of the Insurrection*, p.157-8) say only Aguinaldo's son and mother were captured. But a soldier in the Thirty-Third recorded that his unit captured Aguinaldo's 'wife and mother and child' some way out of San Fabian (and recovered some cash too), but he gives no date except indicating that it was sometime between 11 and 27 November. The family were taken into custody and were well treated. See William Oliver Trafton and William Henry Scott, *We Thought We Could Whip Them in Two Weeks* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1990), p.29.

<sup>120</sup> Then on Christmas day the Filipino forces under Aguinaldo, fleeing from the pursuing Americans, gave up their remaining women and children. Aguinaldo himself would remain free, though in remote hiding, for more than another year.

<sup>121</sup> C. Fred Ackerman, 'Brave Sergeant Green', *LW* 10 Feb 1900, p.107. In this article, Ackerman extols the courage and marksmanship of Green, a Sergeant in the Twenty-Fifth Infantry regiment. The story is by-lined, 'Bamban, P.I., December 2d, 1899'. Bamban, then

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the forward base for General Burt's Twenty-Fifth, was on the railway about 10 miles north of Angeles in Pampanga province.

<sup>122</sup> Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.127. In 1899 the Americans employed over 100,000 Filipinos (the figure presumably including Chinese), says Linn, 'The Philippines: Nationbuilding and Pacification'. Photographs of Chinese drivers and coolies at the dock, taken from Ackerman's film, appeared in *Leslie's* – in Biograph scrapbook at Seaver Center.

<sup>123</sup> Agoncillo and Guerrero, *History of the Filipino People*, p.251. A description of the death and funeral of Lawton and photographs are in Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines*, p.325-31. A detailed description of the funeral and a photograph of it appear in Charles F. Gauvreau, *Reminiscences of the Spanish-American War in Cuba and the Philippines* (St. Albans, Vt.: Messenger Office, 1912), p.108-9.

<sup>124</sup> The Twenty-Fifth Infantry fought with distinction at El Caney, Cuba. The regiment were sent to the Philippines in August 1899, and engaged frequently with the enemy in many skirmishes. (Library of Congress information).

<sup>125</sup> According to one source ('Amusement notes', *Philadelphia Record* 10 May 1900, p.10) the advance on Ariat and finding of the prisoners occurred after the scene was filmed of the *Attack on Mt. Ariat* (see below).

<sup>126</sup> The expedition went to Ariat via Magalang, Ackerman tells us. Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.270, suggests that the date was 5 January, and that the General was Servillano Aquino. See also *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain and Conditions Growing out of the Same, Including the Insurrection in the Philippine Islands and the China Relief Expedition, between the Adjutant-General of the Army and Military Commanders in the United States, Cuba, Porto Rico, China and the Philippine Islands from April 15, 1898 to July 30, 1902, Etc* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1902). This mentions the problem of 'robber bands' in the Arayat area, and the finding of the five badly-treated American prisoners. Insurgents, sometimes called 'bandits' or 'brigands' by US forces, were said to be preying on the local people, as well as fighting the Americans. Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines*, p.337-338, 356.

<sup>127</sup> C.F. Ackerman, 'Avenging the bloody slaughter by the Filipinos of defenceless American prisoners', LW 14 Apr 1900, p.294-95. *Leslie's* also published nine of Ackerman's images (film frames) relating to the campaign, credited to AM&B, and principally concerned with the American attack on Filipino forces at Mt. Ariat, led by Gen. Grant and the Seventeenth and Twenty-Fifth Infantry. The frames published in this issue of *Leslie's* were presumably from Biograph films, though it is possible that some were actual still photographs that Ackerman may also have been taking. They included images of General Grant and the march on the mountain stronghold of the Filipinos, with the Seventeenth, Nineteenth (?) and Twenty-Fifth infantry and Third Artillery. In a note about their Battle of Mt Ariat film AM&B claimed that they had a certificate from Gen. Burt stating that 'the operator' (Ackerman) was the only civilian present at the attack to rescue the five US prisoners. See 'Amusement notes', *Philadelphia Record* 10 May 1900, p.10. Ackerman's reporting of this campaign was the most significant written work that he produced in the war, for he happened to be on hand for this significant news story.

<sup>128</sup> C. Fred Ackerman, 'Awful butchery by Filipinos of defenceless American prisoners', LW 14 April 1900, p.286, and photographs on p.294-5.

<sup>129</sup> Agoncillo and Guerrero, *History of the Filipino People*, p.259-262. Agoncillo shows commendable even-handedness in parts of his account, though in general he is pro-nationalist. Henry O. Thompson, Matthew Plowman, and Thomas Solevad Nielsen, *Inside the Fighting First : Papers of a Nebraska Private in the Philippine War* (Blair, Neb.: Lur Publications : Danish Immigrant Archive, 2001), p.113. This notes that the maiming of dead US soldiers by Filipino insurgents enraged the Americans, and Linn adds in his book that troops were particularly infuriated by the ill-treatment of fellow soldiers by the other side during this war. See Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.221.

<sup>130</sup> According to dates entered in Biograph's register, on 8 January Ackerman filmed Gen. Grant in Pampanga in the process of 'inspecting the old market place at Angeles', and on 11 January filmed the Seventeenth Infantry near Dagupan in Pangasinan province (sometimes called 'Pingsinan' province at the time).

<sup>131</sup> Ackerman was at various times during this Pangasinan assignment with the Thirteenth, Seventeenth and Thirty-Sixth Infantry regiments. See 'Pictures that will be historic', LW 6 Jan 1900, p.18.

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<sup>132</sup> A photograph attributed to the Biograph Co. (presumably by Ackerman) depicting the aftermath of one of Bell's actions was in LW of 10 February, which, given the time required to mail a photograph back to the States, suggests that Ackerman might have been with Bell's unit from about mid January. This photograph shows 'Filipino artillery captured by Colonel Bell', LW 10 Feb, p.114.

<sup>133</sup> 'Pictures that will be historic', LW, op. cit.

<sup>134</sup> *Lieut. Howell's Light Battery D* was shot with the Sixth Artillery in La Loma, Blumentritt (today in Quezon City). Incidentally, this is where the Filipinos had first fought the Americans during this war.

<sup>135</sup> This was one sortie during an offensive in south-eastern Luzon from January 1900. Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.162-69. The by-line of the article, 'Awful butchery by Filipinos of defenceless American prisoners', LW, op. cit., is 1 March in Magalang but this date/place combination may be a later attribution, as Magalang is a long way from south-eastern Luzon.

<sup>136</sup> 'Swearing to serve Uncle Sam', LW 16 Jun 1900, p.464; and "'Swearing in" Filipino officials', LW 16 Jun 1900, p.466-7. This was by-lined Sual, 25 April 1900, and presumably the event had happened recently.

<sup>137</sup> It is worth adding that, coincidentally, just after Ackerman departed, in May 1900, the US commander in the Philippines, General Otis requested to be replaced and he was succeeded by General MacArthur. Wilcox, *Harper's History of the War in the Philippines*, p.341. Biograph sent one other cameraman to the Philippines, Robert K. Bonine, who filmed two scenes there for the company, well after Ackerman had departed: *A Filipino cockfight* (photographed 15 Aug 1901 ; copyrighted 21 May 1902) *Bridge Traffic, Manila* (photographed 14 Aug 1901 ; copyrighted 23 May 1902).

<sup>138</sup> 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express*, 25 June 1900 states that Ackerman's colleague was Mr. F.J. Merriam, which must surely mean Marion. The article, by-lined Washington 23 June, states that the exhibition was 'yesterday afternoon', adding that the Department was making up photographic albums of the war which would include Ackerman's images. Another article with the same Washington by-line of 23 June states the exhibition was 'this afternoon'. See 'The Mutoscope in War', *Kansas City Star*, 24 June 1900, p.8. This June meeting gives a latest date for Ackerman's return to the USA.

<sup>139</sup> 'The Mutoscope in War', *Kansas City Star*, 24 June 1900, p.8.

<sup>140</sup> 'Moving Pictures of War', *Mail and Express*, 25 June 1900.

<sup>141</sup> 'Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal*, 13 July 1900. 'Theatrical Notes', *Philadelphia Item*, 1 July 1900, p.14; McCardell, op. cit., p.231. Perhaps the films are still held in the US Government archives/records in some form?

<sup>142</sup> 'The Mutoscope in War', *Mail and Express* 2 Aug 1900. Incidentally, the Biograph company also had a cosy relationship with the British military, and it was reported at this time that the company planned to present a set of their Boer war films to the British government (see Boer war section).

<sup>143</sup> 'C. Fred Ackerman is to lecture', *Post Standard* (Syracuse) 14 July 1900, p.6. This was to be on a Sunday evening at the Lakeside Theater, Syracuse.

<sup>144</sup> '...the Government of the United States... have just authorised the representative of the American Company who went through that war to proceed to China.' British Mutoscope Co report, 9 July 1900, p.23.

<sup>145</sup> Another example: *Aguinaldo's Navy* [1454] was rated in the Biograph register as 'good', and was described in the company's published 'Picture Catalogue' as 'unusually fine photographically', and a viewing of the surviving print confirms a pleasing quality of the image.

<sup>146</sup> *Panorama of Water Front, Manila* [1462] also seems to involve a pan, or a track.

<sup>147</sup> See the section on celebrity culture in Stephen Bottomore, "'Every Phase of Present-Day Life": Biograph's Non-Fiction Production', *Griffithiana*, no. 66/70, 1999/2000, p.147-211.

<sup>148</sup> Most of Ackerman's non-arranged films were scenic views of streets in Manila or elsewhere, though even in one of these, *Making Manila Rope* [1384], the natives may have been placed in position for filming. Incidentally, in many documentaries, some minimal setting up is commonly practiced: for example, when the camera starts running, the participants sometimes need to be cued to start their activities.

<sup>149</sup> The place was cited as Mangaterin or Mangataven, but Linn calls it Mangatarem. Ackerman mentions a 'General' Fowler, but in fact he was only a Captain. 'Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal* 13 July 1900; Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*.

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<sup>150</sup> Ackerman told a journalist that the operation was begun by one of Bell's bravest men who 'swam a powerful horse to the opposite bank' carrying a rope. Then this rope was attached to one of the mules and every mule in the train followed. 'Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal*, 13 July 1900.

<sup>151</sup> So even if Ackerman's camera hadn't malfunctioned in November it is unlikely that he would have been able to film the actual expedition.

<sup>152</sup> Biograph film numbers 1449, 1451, 1453, 1455, 1459.

<sup>153</sup> 'Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal* 13 July 1900. Ackerman states that following the success in Mangatarem, General Bell was made a Brigadier General, though it is not clear that it was Mangatarem which made Bell's reputation.

<sup>154</sup> Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902*, p.151.

<sup>155</sup> This is not to belittle the achievements of Bell at other stages of the Philippine War – he was perhaps the most impressive General to emerge from the conflict – merely that Ackerman's assessment of the importance of the march is exaggerated. James Franklin Bell arrived in the Philippines as a Major in a volunteer regiment. Often performing dangerous reconnaissance missions, he rose quickly through the ranks to become colonel in command of the Thirty-Sixth Infantry. Later he was promoted from Captain to Brigadier-General, outranking many officers previously his senior. In the Philippines his achievements included strengthening the intelligence services of the Army, and he was known for taking hard measures against rebels and their supporters, even to the extreme of ordering the concentration of local people into protected zones in order to combat the insurgency. Surprisingly there is no published biography of Bell.

<sup>156</sup> 'Mr Ackerman took pictures', *Syracuse Journal* 13 July 1900.

<sup>157</sup> *Philadelphia Press*, 1 July 1900. Biograph's film was to be exhibited at Keith's theatre that week. The report noted that this film, shot about 25 miles (40 kilometres) from Sual, depicted Bell at the head of a group of his men coming down a mountain. Another report stated that the men carried their weapons and General Bell was in the lead. See 'The mutoscope in war', *Kansas City Star*, 24 June 1900, p.8. The Biograph catalogue commented: 'This picture gives an excellent view of the character of the country through which the American troops fought in their chase after Aguinaldo'.

<sup>158</sup> Frames from the river crossing film are reproduced in McCardell, op. cit., p.234. Not all the Bell films are impressive visually, but they would have been of interest to audiences as they did depict a dramatic expedition. As with so many early actualities, the image itself is often of less importance than what is claimed for it. Perhaps audiences of the time would have been told of the importance of this military mission and primed with an explanation of the action in the film. No doubt they would also have been assured that the film was genuine.

<sup>159</sup> This film was shot in 'Dagupan', according to the Biograph register; or in Manila, according to the company's published catalogue. Deocampo reads the shooting date in the register as 18 February, but I think it looks more like 2 February.

<sup>160</sup> Clodualdo Del Mundo, 'The "Philopene" through Gringo Eyes: The Colonisation of the Philippines in Early American Cinema and Other Entertainment Forms, 1898-1904', in *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.212-222.

<sup>161</sup> This latter description refers to two films, *The Call to Arms!* and *In the Field*, though these may be one and the same film, no. 1381. Another example of an action title, *An Advance by Rushes* [1390], shows, we are told, 'United States troops attacking an insurgent camp near Dagupan'.

<sup>162</sup> Based on a viewing of the surviving films, I believe that all the mentioned titles conform to this 'implied off-screen enemy' pattern, though not all the films survive.

<sup>163</sup> The titles are: *Advance of Kansas Volunteers at Caloocan*, *Rout of the Filipinos, U.S. troops and Red Cross in the Trenches Before Caloocan*, *Filipinos Retreat from the Trenches*, *Capture of the Trenches at Candabar*, *Colonel Funston Swimming the Bagbag River*, *The Early Morning Attack*. The first five were made in May and the final two between June and September. See Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography* #685-9, #720-21.

<sup>164</sup> See the perceptive analysis of Nick Deocampo in his 'Imperialist Fictions: The Filipino in the Imperialist Imaginary', in *Vestiges of War: the Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999*, edited by A. V. Shaw and L. Francia (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p.224-236. The depiction of Funston crossing the river is inaccurately portrayed in the film: Crouch notes that in crossing the Bagbag river, Funston and a dozen of

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his men mainly passed over the semi-destroyed bridge and only partly had to go in the river itself. See Thomas W. Crouch, *A Leader of Volunteers: Frederick Funston and the 20th Kansas in the Philippines, 1898-1899* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1984), p.119-20.

<sup>165</sup> See: Nick Deocampo, *Cine : Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines* (Quezon City; Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003); Clodualdo Del Mundo, 'The "Philopene" through Gringo Eyes: The Colonisation of the Philippines in Early American Cinema and Other Entertainment Forms, 1898-1904', in *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.213 etc.

<sup>166</sup> At the start of the war, most American soldiers were armed with Civil War-era Springfield rifles which were inferior to the Mausers which some rebels were using.

<sup>167</sup> Del Mundo, op. cit.

<sup>168</sup> Kristen Whissel, 'Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: the Battle Re-Enactment at the Turn of the Century, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Early Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 3, Aug 2002, p.225-243; see especially p.233-40. However, Whissel is wrong in stating that these Philippine War re-enactments 'consistently begin with Filipinos firing first', so the American side are seen as victims, for in three of the films, *Rout of the Filipinos, U.S. Troops and Red Cross in the Trenches before Calocan* and *The Early Morning Attack*, the Filipinos are already on the retreat so there is no provocation. Whissel's essay also makes interesting points about the 'impossible' position of the camera in these fakes (see my discussion of this in my Spanish-American war section).

<sup>169</sup> Jose Bernard Tagle Capino, 'Cinema and the Spectacle of Colonialism: American Documentary Film and (Post) Colonial Philippines, 1898-1989', Department of Radio/TV/Film, Northwestern U., 2002, p.69.

<sup>170</sup> Nick Deocampo, *Cine : Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines*, op. cit., p.165-75.

<sup>171</sup> The January ad located the film in the second part of the programme, and the March ad in the first part.

<sup>172</sup> Del Mundo (1998) and Deocampo offer good descriptions of the film, apart from making the error that the man who picks up the flag was an officer. The Edison catalogue states that he was a Sergeant: the film was based on a real incident or real people and the man was a certain Sergeant Squires. I would add that the groups of actors are apparently the same as in the other Edison Philippine War fakes, as is the wooded landscape, demonstrating that these films were shot as a group. The tactics of the Americans, advancing in full view while waving their flag are so laughable, indeed suicidal, as to reveal this as an obvious fake. Incidentally, the Filipinos also have their flag.

<sup>173</sup> Gregory A. Waller, *Main Street Amusements : Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896-1930* (Washington D.C./London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), p.59.

<sup>174</sup> Cited and analyzed in Deocampo, 'Imperialist Fictions...', p.234. It appears under the rubric 'War films', in *Lubin's Films* catalogue, January 1903, but a 50 ft. film with a similar title, *Philippine War Dance*, was being distributed by the F.M. Prescott company (New York) in 1899. See F.M. Prescott, 20 Nov 1899 catalogue supplement no.3. under 'New films'. Both are on Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*.

<sup>175</sup> *Lubin's films*, Jan 1903.

<sup>176</sup> See for example LW 8 Dec 1898, p.443 and 22 Dec, p.495.

<sup>177</sup> *Lubin's films*, Jan 1903, p.74: 'the longest film of the war thus far produced.' And see Lubin ad in *Der Komet* no. 787, 21 April 1900, p.27 – the ad also appears in other issues of this periodical during the year.

<sup>178</sup> 'War in Cuba and the Philippines': section in the Selig catalogue, 1903.

<sup>179</sup> Del Mundo, 'The Philopene...' p.216-7. The stereopticon companies he mentions were Kleine Optical Co., Stereopticon and Film Exchange, L. Manasse Company, Sears, Roebuck and Company. I have some differences with him in interpretation (see above, and in my introduction). The two scenes mentioned are illustrated in Sears Rosebuck catalogue 110, p.213, reproduced in *ML Bulletin* 4, no.4, Jan 1983.

<sup>180</sup> A poster for the lecture 'in near mint condition' was sold on ebay in December 2003, described as being about 28 by 21 inches in size, with black lettering printed on light pink newsprint-type paper, and dated to around 1902 – but this would seem too late. The poster may also have been issued as a broadside, with the same or similar text. The ebay description states (though with no source for the claims): 'The U.S. government under Teddy

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Roosevelt sponsored this early display of the powers of the moving pictures for political reasons. This particular moving picture event circulated around the US in towns large and small. Thus the government was very happy to have this particular moving picture display circulate throughout the continent and was very supportive of the venture.'

<sup>181</sup> The Anti-imperialist League was formed on 15 June 1898 to fight U.S. annexation of the Philippines, and its members included luminaries Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain and William James, though following the signing of the Treaty of Paris the League began to decline. There was quite a wellspring of opposition to the annexation of the Philippines in the US. For example, the Municipal Assembly of the city of New York declared their sympathy for the Filipino rebels in their 'gallant struggle for independence'. Reported in *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 30 Dec 1899, p.14, col.1. The *St Louis Republic* was against annexation, noting that even Britain's colonies were 'a losing investment' and that for America, imperial endeavours were 'distinctly forbidden by the principles upon which our fabric of government rests'. Quoted in *Herald Tribune* 21 Dec 1900.

<sup>182</sup> Jim Zwick, 'The "Stereoscopic" War of 1899', in *Voices & Scenes of the Past: The Philippine-American War Retold*, edited by Maria S. I. Diokno (Quezon City: Jose W. Diokno Foundation, 1999), p.4-5. More on this subject is at Zwick's website <http://www.boondocksnet.com/stereo/wars.html> The content of Andreae and Reeves's presentations is discussed in *The Public* vol. 2, 8 July 1899, p.1-2, and 15 July 1899, p.2. The League's relationship with the pair is discussed in letters from Frank Stephens to Herbert Welsh, 23 June 1899, and 1 December 1899, and William Lloyd Garrison to Frank Stephens, 29 November 1899. In Herbert Welsh Papers, Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia: cited by Zwick.

<sup>183</sup> General Lawton condemned the League for this reason, as have some later military historians, such as Gates and Sexton. See Sexton, *Soldiers in the Philippines :A History of the Insurrection*, p.217- . The suggestion is that while their motives were noble, the effect of the League was to prolong the conflict.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted in Jim Zwick, 'The Profits of Racism: The Campaign Against Philippine Independence', in his forthcoming book Jim Zwick, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898-1935*, and also on his website at <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ail/campaign.html> Also on this site see: 'The Campaign Against Philippine Independence' in *The Filipino People*, vol.2, Jan. 1914. Worcester's lectures were co-sponsored by the non-commercial 'Philippine Society', formed in 1913. For more on Worcester's use of film, see Jose Bernard Tagle Capino, 'Cinema and the Spectacle of Colonialism: American Documentary Film and (Post) Colonial Philippines, 1898-1989', thesis, Department of Radio/TV/Film, Northwestern U., 2002.

<sup>185</sup> Incidentally, as historians we should recognise that language which is today unacceptable in describing other cultures, was in the 1900 era unexceptional.

<sup>186</sup> See Amelia Lapena-Bonifacio, *The "Seditious" Tagalog Playwrights: Early American Occupation* (Manila: Zarzuela Foundation of the Philippines, 1972), especially a section, p.36-41, on 'The use of theatrical machinery and stage effects': this describes the use of symbols and flags of the katipunan revolutionaries in stage imagery as a form of visual resistance to US rule. See also the section 'Suppression of nationalistic journalism and literature', in Agoncillo and Guerrero, *History of the Filipino People*, p.290-293.

**Chapter 9**  
**THE BOER WAR (1899-1902)**  
**I. The emergence of professional cameramen**

**INTRODUCTION**

**The first modern war**

The Boer War (or 'Anglo-Boer War', as it is sometimes called) broke out in October 1899, pitting the forces of Britain and its Empire against the Boer forces of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. Among the various causes was the Boers' denial of political rights to the mainly British 'Uitlander' workforce, but belligerence from both the British representatives and the leading Boer figure, Paul Kruger, exacerbated matters, and led to a Boer ultimatum. The Boers invaded the eastern territory of Natal on 11 October 1899, and the British forces were overwhelmed. A relief expedition was dispatched from the UK under Sir Redvers Buller which made a two-pronged attack: to the west between Cape Colony and Orange Free State, and to the east in Natal, attempting to relieve a siege at Ladysmith.

Major reverses were suffered at Magersfontein, Colenso and Spion Kop in mid December – in what became known as 'Black Week' – and the overall command was taken over by Lord Roberts who began a strong push from Cape Town northwards to Kimberley. By February 1900 the British were winning, and succeeded in the following months in taking first Bloemfontein and then Johannesburg and Pretoria by mid year. The fighting then developed into a guerrilla war which carried on until May 1902, when the Boer forces were eventually subdued by Lord Kitchener's ruthless approach.<sup>1</sup> The Boer War was a major and costly conflict for Britain, and became a testing ground for novel military technology and tactics; it was discussed for years afterwards by military strategists as exemplifying a new kind of warfare.<sup>2</sup>

This was an important war for media coverage too, and is sometimes hailed as the first 'media war'.<sup>3</sup> All available means of reporting, from newspapers to film were fully mobilised.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly the coverage was on a large scale: over 200 war correspondents or war artists chronicled the war, with nearly a hundred departing from the UK alone in a period of a few weeks in 1899.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the Boxer Uprising, which flared up and died down swiftly, there was more warning of an impending war in South Africa, giving journalists and cameramen more time to be sent to the scene. Some pressmen were already in the country in early October 1899, a couple of weeks before the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>6</sup> Others arrived there in good time, including several film cameramen.

**Filming the war**

Even before hostilities broke out, the *British Journal of Photography* prophesied, 'There is little doubt that, if war does unfortunately come about in



South Africa, enterprising cinematographers and photographers will not be far off...'<sup>7</sup> How right this was, and indeed more cameramen covered the Boer War from the war zone than any previous conflict. Some eight cameramen are known to have filmed in South Africa during the war. These were: W.K.-L. Dickson for the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company (with his assistants William Cox and Jonathan Seward); John Benett-Stanford, Edgar Hyman, Joseph Rosenthal and Charles Sydney Goldman – all for the Warwick Trading Company; Walter Calverley Beevor (and perhaps Sydney Melsom) for Robert Paul; and C. Rider Noble for Walter Gibbons. I have also found some evidence that two other men, A.S. Underwood and René Bull, filmed during the war. On the other hand, the claims for Albert E. Smith are almost certainly false, while plans to film the war by, of all people, Winston Churchill, came to nought. (See Appendix for the latter).<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter I will describe the work of these cameramen in filming the war. I will show that many of them had little experience of camerawork, being the same sundry amateurs and part-timers who had done most filming in wars till then – war correspondents, stills photographers, military officers, etc. But things were changing, and the Boer War was something of a watershed in this respect. Producers were realizing that the amateurs were not really up to the job, and professional cameramen made their first strong appearance in this war, principally in the persons of Rosenthal and Dickson. These men were true professionals, with suitable technical and artistic skills, and not lacking in perseverance, meaning that at least they had a chance of recording some moving images related to the conflict, amid all the inherent difficulties of filming this war. In this chapter I will examine this contrast between amateur and professional cameraman, and show how and why the latter were starting to take over the work of war (and other non-fiction) filming.<sup>9</sup> But first we will take a look at the main problems these cameramen faced.

### **Changing warfare, stricter press regulation**

Cameramen (and war correspondents in general) had to contend with two major difficulties in trying to report on or represent the Boer War. Firstly, there was the problem of capturing on film a mobile, fast-moving conflict where the foe was using accurate, long-range weaponry, while often being largely hidden from sight (this was the first really modern war in these respects). This problem had confronted cameramen in previous wars, but it was more acute in South Africa: Britain's enemy here were determined, skilled marksmen, using the latest artillery and rifles; and, knowing the landscape, they could find places of concealment. Many British soldiers complained that though they were coming under attack with well-aimed bullets and artillery, they never actually saw a Boer. (I discuss this issue of military visibility in more depth in Chapter 1). [see Fig. 1 and 2]

The other difficulty cameramen had was the increasingly onerous official regulation and censorship during the Boer War. Of course there had been regulation of war correspondents before, but not in such a stringent manner: during, for example, the Sudan campaign, control was exercised in a somewhat piecemeal fashion. But a year on, in South Africa, control over reporters of all kinds was enforced strictly (if unsystematically) through a

system of passes and military censors. This applied to cameramen as much as to print journalists. Both Rosenthal and Dickson, as we shall see, complained bitterly about certain officers and censors who hampered their efforts to get to the conflict zones and to film (despite, in the case of Dickson, having General Buller's written approval).<sup>10</sup> Things became a little easier after Lord Roberts took control in early 1900, for Roberts was a believer in a fairly light regime of censorship. Perhaps he realised that it was mainly unnecessary anyway, as most of the correspondents – and almost all the cameramen – supported the British side in the war. However his censors may have taken a stricter stance and there is some evidence that from mid 1900, when most of the journalists and film men departed, the censorship regime was stepped up. [see **Box**]

**Box:**

**Official regulation of cameramen during the Boer War**

From the start of the Boer War, internal discussions were taking place in the War Office about the advisability of letting war correspondents accompany the troops, and some negative comments were made about the media (especially about foreign reporters) by some officers.<sup>11</sup> As it transpired, correspondents were allowed to the front, though the censorship, especially in the first weeks, was draconian, with many press dispatches being ruthlessly pruned. As an example of this, war correspondent Winston Churchill sent one report back to his London paper with the words, 'more than 2000 Boers were assembled', only to find that the press censor had substituted the words 'small parties'.<sup>12</sup>

The cameramen were subject to censorship and regulation as much, if not more, than the print correspondents, and it seems to have affected the two main cameramen of the war, Rosenthal and Dickson, more than the others. As I show in my main text, both had to obtain special passes to film and to travel; Rosenthal had to get films approved by the censors, while Dickson faced interference from officers who objected to the camera's presence. But it seems that the regulatory regime was about to get even stricter.

After the main battles of the war were over in mid 1900, a re-think about censorship of the press and visual media was going on in the British military by the middle of 1900. The first indications of this came in June, after the fall of Pretoria and its occupation. At this point, most of the journalists and cameramen left, the conventional explanation being that this seemed to be effectively the end of the conflict, for few expected the Boers to hold out and turn the struggle into a guerrilla war lasting nearly another two years. However, according to one journalist, there was a more direct reason for correspondents to leave, for they were virtually ordered out by the British authorities, being told that if they stayed, 'they would not be allowed to send any matter', and he added, 'Nearly all the correspondents came out at this time'.<sup>13</sup>

Just a month later, the chief censor Lord Stanley wrote a report for Lord Roberts assessing how press censorship had fared during the war, and was not complimentary: he stated that from the start of the campaign there had been no proper regulations for

either censors or correspondents, nor any uniformity for the granting of licences, nor any guidance about which newspapers were allowed to have correspondents at the front; and he had specific complaints about certain correspondents who had turned up at the war representing no newspaper as such. Most significantly for us, Lord Stanley was also not keen on the latest means of reporting, and noted, ‘... it will be a question in any future war whether or no [sic] the Army is to be followed by photographers and cinematograph agents’.<sup>14</sup> (i.e. cameramen).

Early the following year the army produced another report about war correspondents, again with negative conclusions about film cameramen. It was written by Major W.D. Jones, who had been Buller’s main press censor in Natal (so presumably dealt with Dickson in the field), and, over the following weeks the report was circulated and received comments, notably by Lord Stanley. The interesting point for our purposes is that, while Jones and Stanley disagreed about how strictly press correspondents should be controlled, they agreed that film cameramen were unwanted. Jones stated (p.11) that ‘Independent photographers and Biograph-workers should be excluded’, and Lord Stanley also recommended, ‘doing away with biographs, etc.’<sup>15</sup>

Thus, by early 1901, two of the British army’s top censors were recommending that cameramen should be banned from the front during wars. And they attained their wish, at least for the remainder of the Boer War, for no more cameramen covered the conflict in South Africa after the end of 1900. While it is possible that this was solely a decision by the film companies not to send further cameramen (as the war was now less newsworthy than in its earlier phases), perhaps the proposed ban had already, unofficially been put into effect. The outcome in any case was just what the British authorities would have wished, and at just the point, from January 1901, when the Boer War was entering its most controversial phase – with farms being burned and civilians removed to concentration camps – conveniently no cameramen were on hand to film any of this unpleasantness.

## **THE AMATEURS: 1. BULL, UNDERWOOD, BEEVOR AND NOBLE**

By the time of the Boer War, there were several film cameras available for sale in Britain, from fully professional, large affairs down to small models for amateurs. In these circumstances it was perfectly possible, indeed quite straightforward, for an individual or company to obtain a camera, and thereby equip a ‘cameraman’ for the job. However, while there were several film companies which wished to send a cameraman to film the war, very few operators were trained for the job. In this section I shall describe some of the less experienced cameramen who went to film the war, all of whom had recently come from other walks of life (one was a correspondent, another a stage designer, another a military officer). Such was the situation in a film industry which was so new that there was as yet no pool of experienced labour.

## **René Bull**

We last came across the war artist, René Bull (c.1870–1942) at Omdurman, and he had also been present with Frederick Villiers at the Greco-Turkish war, both men working for *Black and White* magazine. It seems that Bull was filming during the Boer War (as perhaps he did at Omdurman), this time using some kind of a portable film camera. The evidence for this comes from a passing mention in a letter home from William Cox, the assistant of Biograph cameraman, W.K.-L. Dickson. Writing from Durban, 7 Apr 1900, Cox noted to his wife with annoyance that he and Dickson were facing competition from René Bull whom they had encountered several times with a film camera. Cox notes that Bull was more mobile than themselves (the Biograph crew had a vast camera), as he was filming with a much smaller machine: or as Cox put it somewhat enviously, an ‘insignificant little machine which he can carry on horseback’.<sup>16</sup> This would most likely have been a Biokam, a small amateur film camera introduced that year.<sup>17</sup> One particular incident rankled: it seems that a British artillery unit (Naval Brigade) based nearby had put on a skit about President Kruger, ‘Hanging of Kruger After a Mock Trial’, and Dickson and Cox had arranged to film this.<sup>18</sup> But the *Black and White* man had managed to film it first, for with a Biokam, Bull could have filmed the skit almost in passing. And this suggests one other possible interpretation of this diary entry from Cox.

Though Cox refers to René Bull by name, I wonder if perhaps he could have mistaken Bull for cameraman Edgar Hyman, for the two men looked quite similar, and Hyman was apparently using a Biokam camera (see Hyman section below). On the other hand, Hyman was predominantly on the western front, and as far as we know was not near Durban in April, so the more likely interpretation is Cox’s own: that it was indeed René Bull. The other question is: for whom was Bull filming? Cox refers to him as ‘the cinematograph man of *Black and White*’, but could Bull have been shooting for a magazine? This seems unlikely, given that it was a print publication, with no known interests in cinema. Perhaps then, Bull was filming on his own account while also working as artist on the magazine, and perhaps hoping to sell any film he would shoot on his return? At present we have no answers to these questions.

## **A.S. Underwood**

By early 1900 the film business was booming in Britain, and at least two companies, John Wrench & Son and Walter Gibbons (involved in film distribution and exhibition respectively), resolved to go into production. They decided that the most important subject to shoot was the war, and therefore each took on cameramen (Underwood and Noble, respectively) who both managed to obtain footage from the seat of war. This was quite an achievement given that the lack of experience of these two companies in film production was only matched by that of their neophyte cameramen.

We begin with Wrench, which was a well known photographic supply business but was moving strongly into the cinematograph trade by early 1900, initially merely distributing film titles made by others. The cameraman whom they found to cover the Boer War was a man called A.S. Underwood (no relation, as far as one knows to the stereoscopic company of that name), and this

seems to have been his first experience of filming, for there is no record of him having shot anything else before the war.<sup>19</sup> Underwood's name crops up in only a handful of trade journal articles. A writer for the *Photographic Dealer* reported visiting Wrench's headquarters in the Spring of 1900 and seeing a letter (dated Bloemfontein, 30 March) which the company had received from 'one of their war staff'. It seems that this man had succeeded in taking 'some very interesting records of the present Boer War', and the journal added:

'The writer of the letter is right at the front with Lord Roberts, and has already sent home excellent films of Sir Alfred Milner arriving at the Presidency at Bloemfontein, a wounded soldier on stretcher being lifted into hospital van and subsequent procession of the ambulance party and troops in Bloemfontein.'<sup>20</sup>

The *Photographic Dealer* later gave the cameraman's name as A.S. Underwood, and confirmed that he had indeed been 'at the front with a cinematograph'.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the films mentioned in the quotation above, a trade journal quoted by Barnes credits Underwood with another film: the change of the guard outside the Bloemfontein Presidency. This source also lists two other Boer War films from Wrench, possibly taken by Underwood: *Washing Boer Prisoners* and *The Military Train*.<sup>22</sup>

But sadly, Underwood's career as cameraman came to an abrupt end. The following month the *Photographic Dealer* reported that Underwood had 'died recently in Bloemfontein from enteric fever'.<sup>23</sup> I have now found a report of his death in *The Times* which confirms that A.S. Underwood did indeed die of enteric fever on 25 May in Bloemfontein. His profession is given as 'civilian servant', the only non-military man among some twenty British forces personnel who are listed in this report as recently dying of disease.<sup>24</sup> But servant to whom? No further details are given, and as it stands, this is the extent of our knowledge about Underwood, though I hope that more details may emerge in future.

### **Surgeon-Major Beevor: R.W. Paul's cameraman**

The pioneer film producer, Robert W. Paul, had a twin track approach to covering the Boer war. As we shall see in the following chapter, he was one of the first to make staged films of the war, released from November 1899, but also claims to have sent two cameramen to film in South Africa: Sydney (or Sidney) Melsom and W.C. Beevor.<sup>25</sup> Melsom was reputedly a member of the C.I.V. – the City Imperial Volunteers, a renowned regiment raised in the financial heart of London – though a search of the membership of this regiment has only found an F.A. Melsom.<sup>26</sup> I can find no further information about this Melsom, but in any case I believe that all or most of the films shot in South Africa and released by Paul were probably shot by Beevor, and Paul himself stated that the films by Beevor were more successful than whatever Melsom might have produced.<sup>27</sup> This must be partly due to the fact that, even if the mysterious Melsom really had a film camera, he arrived in South Africa in the new year, much later than Beevor, for his C.I.V. group departed months after the Scots' Guards.<sup>28</sup> Until further information comes to light, I have nothing further to say on Melsom.

Walter Calverley Beevor (1858-1927) was a Surgeon-Major, i.e. a military doctor, in the Scots' Guards.<sup>29</sup> Fig. 4] As well as being one of the first war cameramen, he was even more significant for pioneering another piece of new technology on the battlefield: the use of X-rays, as a means of locating bullets in wounded soldiers, and thereby saving lives. Beevor used a mobile X-ray apparatus for the first time in warfare during the Tirah campaign on the Indian North-West frontier, from 1897 to 1898.<sup>30</sup> It proved a great success, and when the Scots' Guards were sent to the Boer war in November 1899, Beevor was again accompanied by an X-ray machine, and this technology was used during the campaign.<sup>31</sup>

As regards Beevor's filming activities, it is not clear how his involvement came about, but it may have been via W.J. LeCouteur of the Photographic Association. It is known that before the Tirah campaign Beevor had been in touch with LeCouteur, whose photographic studios were equipped with both X-rays and animated photography. The Photographic Association had a large number of military officers as members, possibly including Beevor.<sup>32</sup> LeCouteur, being on the fringes of early filmmaking, may also have known Robert Paul, and have put him in touch with Beevor.

As far as Paul was concerned, there was a certain advantage in entrusting a camera to a military man like Beevor, who was bound to be sent to where the action was, and was also less likely to face official meddling than a journalist (ditto Melsom of the C.I.V.). There were further advantages in Beevor being a doctor, for he would already have some technical expertise, and yet was not a combatant as such, so could pursue other activities from the sidelines as it were. There are several examples from the 19th century of military doctors who took war photographs, so Beevor had some precedent. However the disadvantage for Paul in placing his camera with a combatant like Beevor is that the work would never be anything more than a spare time activity, and Beevor could surely never match the professional commitment and drive of a Rosenthal or Dickson. Nevertheless, Beevor was quite successful both as a war film cameraman and stills photographer.

The Scots' Guards were one of the first regiments to depart, embarking on the 20 October, and Paul may have chosen to entrust the camera to an officer in this regiment to ensure that it would get to the front early.<sup>33</sup> The regiment arrived in Cape Town 13 November and disembarked the next day. Within little more than a week the Scots' Guards were involved in heavy fighting, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November at the battle of Belmont, and again at Modder River on the 28<sup>th</sup>: they suffered badly, losing about 50 men as casualties in each battle. The Scots were luckier at Magersfontein, 10-12 December, where they sustained trifling losses, unlike other regiments, for this was one of the three humiliating British defeats of 'Black Week'.<sup>34</sup>

Beevor was active in a medical capacity during these engagements, and was notably courageous, being fired on from the Boer side as he led his men in the grim task of collecting dead and wounded from the battlefield at Modder River,

and at the battle of Magersfontein he was again seen leading his men to rescue casualties.<sup>35</sup>

Despite his medical work amid the carnage, Beevor managed to take both films and still photographs. But these were taken between engagements, and certainly not during the battles themselves, for, as he noted later, about still photos made by his colleagues in the regiment: 'most of the photographs were, in fact, taken at our leisure, and on sunny days', and that these did not, 'illustrate the fighting'.<sup>36</sup> Probably the same was true of many of his films, that they were taken during relative lulls in the campaign. There was enough time to film such general military activities, for after the battles of November and December the Scots remained in the Modder River area till 18 February.

In the new year Roberts and Kitchener had arrived in South Africa and the main British army started advancing steadily north from the Cape toward the republics, and Beevor and the Scots' Guards were part of this general advance. On 27 February General P.A. Cronjé and 4,000 burghers surrendered to Roberts at Paardeberg, the Boers' most humiliating defeat of the war, and the first important British victory (the news was greeted by wild celebrations in Britain).<sup>37</sup> It was also to be Beevor's greatest moment as a filmmaker.

Beevor was lucky enough to be on hand as the captured Cronjé was taken away in a cart, escorted by British C.I.V.s, and he managed to get a shot of this action. Amazingly enough, we have a brief description of how this film was taken, written by a war artist, Mortimer Menpes, who was present as Beevor was cranking his camera. [Fig. 6 and 7] This description by Menpes (who also drew a picture of Cronje in the cart) is a rare early account of a cameraman at work on the battlefield, almost matching in significance that by Bonsal of Paley in the Cuban war. This account also explains why Cronje is seen 'peering out at the camera in amazement' (see film description below), for he was looking at Beevor's noisy camera. Menpes writes:

We had attached to the brigade a surgeon who was an enthusiastic photographer [i.e. Beevor], and he came with his cinematograph to get a record of this final scene – the departure of General Cronje. This cinematograph was a funny thing. It occupied an entire Cape cart, and received more attention and care than almost any waggon on the march. Wherever the Guards Brigade went, there went this wretched machine. It never missed anything, and whenever you heard its terrible buzz ! buzz! you might be certain that something of unusual interest was happening. All through that long march to Bloemfontein, you would see the doctor and his cinematograph lumbering along in an enormous waggon, always occupying a prominent position. And here he was with his machine again, taken out and carefully placed. On went the procession, mounted C.I.V. and wagons – on went the buzz. The moment Cronje came within earshot, he popped his head out of the window in abject terror. Then Mrs. Cronje was seen to get up hastily, lean over her husband, and tear down the blind in irritation. The buzzing went on, and the procession passed by. The surgeon,

occupied with his machine, had not noticed this little by-play ; but when I told him what had occurred he threw up his cap in great glee, and shouted, "I've got something historic – something historic !"<sup>38</sup>

The film survives in the NFTVA, and actually, though Cronjé is visible peering out of the window, his carriage passes through shot fairly quickly, and if his wife did 'tear down the blind in irritation' it was done out of shot. One film historian describes the action in this 'remarkable film' as follows:

'... the camera is trained on an open piece of veld. Three C.I.V.s cross to the left, followed by a horse-drawn cart. There the General sits, peering out at the camera in amazement. The cart is followed by an escort of C.I.V.'s.'<sup>39</sup>

Paul's catalogue highlights this as a 'historical film' – presumably based on Beevor's opinion – and this is not an exaggeration. Though it is on the surface a humdrum shot of a troop escort accompanying a partially hidden Cronjé in a cart (and the portion with the cart lasts only a few seconds), any kind of shot including the real Cronjé, who was such a leading figure in the Boer war, was and is of immense value, and quite a 'scoop' for Beevor. In Paul's catalogue the film is entitled, *Cronje's Surrender to Lord Roberts*, which suggests that the actual process of surrender was depicted – another example of mis-description – but despite this, one feels that audiences would not have been disappointed.

It is interesting that Paul's film camera was seen by Menpes as a complicated and laborious device, and bulky ('it occupied an entire Cape cart' or 'an enormous waggon'). A photograph of Beevor on location with this camera does not show it as being enormous (though Menpes was probably exaggerating), but it does have a 'flywheel handle' (typical of Paul cameras) and it is mounted on a tripod, which could explain why the apparatus required a cart to itself.

Beevor filmed another significant scene near Paardeberg at this time, *Boer Shell-proof Pits*, indicating the Boers' aptitude for building defensive works.<sup>40</sup> After the success at Paardeberg, the route was now open to Bloemfontein, and the British column advanced on this major town, which was captured on 13 March. Beevor recorded the entry into the town of his regiment (filmed at the Market Place). The men were weary after a forced march, but were marching sturdily to bag-pipes, as the catalogue tells us. This film was later released by Paul as *Entry of the Scots' Guards into Bloemfontein*, and survives, being a nicely photographed view of the men as they troop past camera in formation.<sup>41</sup> [Fig. 5]

Through the rest of March and April, Roberts waited for supplies and regrouped in Bloemfontein, before launching north to capture the town of Kroonstad, and then the strategic prizes of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Beevor seems not to have made any films during the break in Bloemfontein, but as the army moved into Transvaal, he filmed the troops crossing the Vaal River (with one film including Lord Roberts), then later some scenes of British



units in and around Pretoria, including a war observation balloon. (see **Box** for list of Beevor's films).

It was now June, and with these scenes Beevor finished his filming activities in South Africa. He continued to serve with the Scots' Guards until 3 October, and then stayed on in the country with the South African Constabulary until May 1902.<sup>42</sup> Beevor published an album of his experiences during the war, though sadly he scarcely refers to his film work.<sup>43</sup> As far as we know, the Boer War marked the beginning and end of Beevor's camerawork, a brief but significant episode in the early days of war filming, when, for a time, the amateur was king.

In all, R.W. Paul released some 21 films shot in South Africa during the war, showing scenes of troops on the march, artillery and ambulances, and locations such as crossing the Vaal and Modder rivers. (I will have more to say about river crossings in the conclusion to this chapter). Of these, 11 of the best were selected to be listed in Paul's catalogue, tallying with the producer's later recollection that Beevor shot 'about a dozen good films'.<sup>44</sup> A continuing theme in Beevor's coverage is worth remarking: that three of his films are concerned with battlefield casualties. This is, of course, little surprise, given that he was a military doctor. Two of his films depict ambulances, and one of these which survives in the NFTVA, *Ambulance Crossing the Modder*, includes, as the catalogue notes, a wagon full of wounded Boer fighters. This is an indication – evidently felt important to stress by both Beevor and Paul – that the campaign was conducted with relative humanity, one side caring for the other's wounded. Another Beevor film about battlefield casualties, *Telegraphing Casualties*, showed a new type of open-air telegraphic apparatus at work. This is significant in the context of the war, because many thousands of telegrams were sent during the campaign, often conveying details of casualties. The shot also suggests – as does his film of the observation balloon – that Beevor (as pioneer of both X-rays and war cinematography) was keen to depict new technology in action.

**Box:**

**Boer War films shot by W.C. Beevor for R.W. Paul  
(December 1899-June 1900)**

Notes: These films are listed in the approximate order of shooting (mainly based on dates given by John Barnes). Only some of the films (noted below) were credited to Beevor, though all were, I believe, shot by him. The word [Cat.] indicates that the film title was listed in Paul's catalogue of 1903.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date filmed</b>	<b>Footage</b>	<b>Review or catalogue date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Bridging the Modder River	6 Dec	60'	6 Jan	Shows Royal Engineers at the Modder, and another shot of the Horse Artillery watering their horses after a battle at Enslin.
Ambulance Crossing the Modder [aka Modder River Drift]	6 Dec	80'	6 Jan	Ambulances with Boer wounded. Survives in NFTVA at 74'. [Cat.]
Cavalry Watering their Horses in the Modder	6 Dec	40'	13 Jan	
Mule-Wagons crossing the Modder	10 Dec	40'	6 Jan	[Cat.]
Naval 47 Gun	Dec	60'	13 Jan	Shot at Modder river (refers to 4.7 gun).
Ambulance Train	Dec	60'	3 Feb	Shot at Modder river station. [Cat.]
Telegraphing casualties	Dec	50'	3 Feb	Shows an open air telegraph: the first use of this technology in warfare.
Hurrah for the Queen	25 Dec	40'	3 Feb	Shot at Modder river.
Naval Gun	Dec	60'	3 Feb	The catalogue states that this was not a 'brilliant' film due to the colours of the guns and men's uniforms - presumably meaning that these blended into the landscape.
Fording a River	Dec	50'	3 Feb	[Cat.]
Dragging up the Guns	22 Jan	80' & 100'	24 Feb	[Cat.]
Transporting Provisions to the Front	22 Jan	50'	24 Feb	[Cat.]
Cronje's Surrender to Lord Roberts	28 Feb	60'	31 Mar	Credited to Beevor. Survives in NFTVA at 57'. [Cat.]
Boer Shell-proof Pits	28? Feb	?'	6 Apr	

Battle of Poplar Grove	7 Mar	?’	14 Apr	
Entry of the Scots’ Guards into Bloemfontein	13 Mar	120’ & 80’	14 Apr	Paul 1903 catalogue notes that the entire unit was filmed, not only the pipers, as the <i>Era</i> states. As this shows the Scots’ Guards, we may be sure it was shot by Beevor. Survives in NFTVA at 56’: i.e. much is missing. [Cat.]
Crossing the Vaal	27 May?	55’	28 Jul	Credited to Beevor. Includes Lord Roberts and Guards crossing on a pontoon ferry. [Cat.]
Naval Gun Crossing the Vaal River	27 May?	50’	4 Aug	
The Royal Engineers’ Balloon	early June	60’	28 Jul	Credited to Beevor. Taken on road from Johannesburg to Pretoria. [Cat.]
Transport by Mules in a Ravine near Pretoria	June	50’	4 Aug	
Artillery Crossing the Vaal River	June	50’	Sep	[Cat.]

### Charles Rider Noble

Like Underwood and several other early film cameramen, Charles Rider Noble (1854?- ?) had little relevant prior training or experience for the job. He had been a designer and director at various theatres in England, and then manager of the Brixton Theatre in the late 1890s.<sup>45</sup> How he turned from this theatrical career to camerawork is unknown, but probably it was due to Walter Gibbons whom he likely met through their shared work in the entertainment business. Gibbons was a leading music hall entrepreneur, and by 1900 was an important film pioneer too, being in John Barnes’ words, ‘the foremost exhibitor in England’.<sup>46</sup>

In the earlier part of the year Gibbons was merely distributing films of the war made in South Africa by other companies, notably by Warwick.<sup>47</sup> But later on he took a more active role in production. An article about Gibbons in October stated: ‘He has three persons in Africa taking war pictures, one leaving there in about two weeks’ time for an extended tour round the world in search of subjects’.<sup>48</sup> The figure of three persons again appeared in an advertisement by Walter Gibbons in December, which also mentioned Noble’s name, stating: ‘I have three photographers now in South Africa, my principal, C.R. Noble, being with Lord Roberts in Durban’.<sup>49</sup> The identity of the other two cameramen is not known, and I suspect that this may have been bluff, and perhaps, apart from Noble, Gibbons simply had an arrangement to acquire films shot by cameramen from other companies. (But this is speculation).

In late 1900 several films from the war were released by Gibbons’ company, which had been shot during October and November, probably by Noble.<sup>50</sup>

This late date – many people thought that the war was more or less over by June – means that Noble was the only cameraman (with the possible exception of Goldman, described below) to have filmed this middle stage of the war. The titles listed included the following three films:

- The End of the War.* This showed the Royal Canadian Regiment embarking on the ship 'Idaho' for Halifax, 1 October.<sup>51</sup> The film had just arrived at Gibbons' London offices at the time of this ad, 10 November.
- In Pursuit of De Wet: Departure of General Knox's Command.* This showed the unit setting out from Stockholm, South Africa. Unknown date.<sup>52</sup>
- Funeral of the Late Prince Christian Victor at Pretoria.* This event took place 1 November, and both Roberts and Kitchener were present.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, several scenes showed the C.I.V. regiment in Cape Town, 7 October, prior to departing on the *Aurania*, and included the following four titles:<sup>54</sup>

- The C.I.V.'s at Cape Town.* This film showed the men throwing their ammunition on heaps in the harbour, prior to departure.
- Rifles to the Armoury.* The men were depicted handing in their rifles to the 'Armoured Sergeant'.
- The C.I.V.'s Procession.* This included the regiment's cyclists (in khaki), and a captured Boer flag being displayed.
- C.I.V.'s at Cape Town.* The men were seen gathered in parade, to be seen off by Sir Alfred Milner (British High Commissioner for South Africa), who walked up the gangway with other VIPs.<sup>55</sup>

Extraordinarily, a description of this filming as it took place has come to light, written by one of the members of the C.I.V. regiment, Erskine Childers. Childers wrote a book about his experiences in the war, published just a few weeks after his return to England (he later became a famous novelist). In this book he describes the scene at Cape Town on 7th October, as he and his regimental colleagues paraded at six a.m. and gave in their weaponry and kit preparatory to departure. He noted that in the afternoon:

'At about three there was a great shouting and heaving of the crowd, and the High Commissioner came on the scene, and walked down the quay through a guard of honour which we and the Infantry had contributed to form, industriously cinematographed on his progress by a fat Jew. Several staff-officers were with Milner, and a grey-bearded gentleman, whom we guessed to be Sir Gordon Sprigg.'<sup>56</sup>

Ignoring the apparently racist jibe (anti-Semitism was rife in this era, and among the British forces<sup>57</sup>), the question is, was the Jewish cameraman he refers to Rider Noble? There are indications elsewhere that Noble was indeed Jewish, and somewhat plump.<sup>58</sup> An additional argument for it being Noble is that the film in question would seem to match the last title on Gibbons' list above (the Milner film).

Incidentally, there was something of a trend for Jewish cameramen at this war, for three of Warwick's cameramen were also of this ethnicity: Joe Rosenthal, Edgar Hyman and Sidney Goldman. Indeed, one other possibility is that perhaps the cameraman seen by Childers was one of these men, though if so it could only have been Goldman (as Rosenthal had departed several months before, and Hyman, judging from photographs, could not be described as 'fat'). The likelihood is, though, that it was indeed Rider Noble. And though new to camerawork, he does seem to have worked 'industriously', as Childers states, and did well to have shot the films above, and had them distributed by Gibbons. In fact, though at the Boer War he was an inexperienced amateur (or at least a neophyte) after this period of filming in South Africa, Noble worked as a professional film cameraman in several other places over a number of years.<sup>59</sup>

## **THE AMATEURS: 2. BENETT-STANFORD, HYMAN AND GOLDMAN**

The Warwick Trading Company, a British film company managed by the American Charles Urban, put a considerable effort into filming the war. At one time or another Warwick had four cameramen in the field in South Africa: Edgar Hyman, John Benett-Stanford, Sydney Goldman and Joe Rosenthal, which was more than any other company. However, though there was this strong commitment, probably borne of Warwick's (and Charles Urban's) continuing interest in non-fiction, the first three operators listed here were amateurs. Indeed the operation to film the war began with sending out two of these men, and only two months later was the much more professional, Rosenthal, sent out (whom we shall cover later in this chapter).

### **John Montagu Benett-Stanford**

We last encountered John Benett-Stanford (1870-1947) during the 1898 Omdurman campaign. In the interim he had done little filming, apart from taking a couple of shots on Madeira, where his family had a house, as well as sundry scenes such as a farmyard. When war loomed, Benett-Stanford managed to get himself appointed as a war correspondent for the *Western Morning News* (the same newspaper he'd worked for at Omdurman) and was included in the War Office's first list of approved correspondents of 29 September.<sup>60</sup>

He contacted G.A. Smith for film equipment (Smith regularly supplied Warwick with technical and processing services), but Smith apparently sent him to the equipment manufacturer Prestwich from whom he bought an amount of expensive film gear.<sup>61</sup> Stanford left Southampton 7 October on the steamer *Mexican* bound for Natal, which makes him the first cameraman based in England to leave, a week before Dickson and two weeks before Beevor.<sup>62</sup>

On 10 November Stanford was near Belmont with Lord Methuen's force, apparently taking still photographs.<sup>63</sup> His earliest film taken at the front (and probably the very first film shot at the Boer War) seems to have been made on 12 November when he took two scenes: one of the Northumberland Fusiliers (the 'Fighting Fifth') making trenches at Orange River, and another of the

passing of an armoured train. These were released as a single 40 ft. film, entitled (lengthily), *The Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers Digging Entrenchments at Orange River, South Africa. The Passing of the Armoured Train* [5507].<sup>64</sup> Stanford must have despatched this double film very quickly, for it was back in England and developed on 5 December.<sup>65</sup> It is extant in the NFTVA, and offers a tantalisingly brief and evocative snapshot of this early stage in the war, though it also suggests Bennett-Stanford's lack of expertise in filming, in that both segments were cranked very slowly and are brief.

Stanford's next films were shot at the locations of important battles at the Modder River.<sup>66</sup> Some of these seem to have been made after the battle of Enslin, 8 December, according to the catalogue. One film, which survives, records a troop train carrying the Seaforth Highlanders over the Modder River (*Troops Passing Over Modder River By Train*, [5525]). This is a nicely framed shot, filmed from a high angle, and shows hundreds of troops riding in open coal trucks crossing on a temporary bridge erected in place of the one blown up by the Boers, with both ends of the train guarded by an armoured car and engine. Another scene, which does not survive, showed the Ambulance Corps attending the wounded on the battlefield after the Modder River battle (*Ambulance Corps at Work*, [5524]). As the Warwick catalogue noted: 'While this view was taken, sniping by the enemy was still in progress, and occasionally is noticed a cloud of dust thrown up by a stray bullet'.

At about this time Stanford filmed Lancers under the Earl of Airlie fording the Modder River after these troops had taken part in the battle at Enslin (*Lancers Crossing the Modder River*, [5523]).<sup>67</sup> Again this survives, and like the earlier title I mentioned, was cranked very slowly. The film offers an interesting detail on the state of British tactics in this war, for the lancers are indeed carrying old fashioned lances, an extraordinary anachronism when their opponents were armed with state-of-the-art Mauser rifles.

The first two of these Modder films arrived back in the UK by the end of the year, and were developed by G.A. Smith on 1 January.<sup>68</sup> The lancers film isn't listed in the Smith account book, and I surmise this may have been shot later, so despatched later too.<sup>69</sup> All four films were advertised for sale from January. The films were well received, one journalist writing that Stanford had been responsible for 'many of the best films' of the war seen to date in the UK, and that 'the pictures are interesting and novel'. He described three of the Stanford films as follows:

'One can see the armoured train rushing rapidly by, with the muzzles of guns projecting from its side. The train consists of only two carriages. One of the most vivid and striking pictures of the series, and also one of the most successful bioscope films ever taken, shows the Lancers under the Earl of Airlie fording the Modder River on their return from the Enslin engagement. Another extremely fine film depicts the hospital corps on the battlefield after the Modder River fight picking up the dead and wounded. The rapidity of movement is remarkable, and the celerity with which a wounded man is picked up and driven away in the

ambulance is a great compliment to the skill and energy of the Ambulance Corps.<sup>70</sup>

The comment on the 'rapidity of movement' is interesting, and this perception was perhaps as much due to the films having been under-cranked by Stanford as to the actual speed of the ambulance men. In addition to the titles mentioned already, G.A. Smith's account book has another couple of entries for films, presumably by Stanford too, these being listed as, *4.7 Gun*, and *Roberts Cape Town*. The first was filmed on 26 December, developed by Smith 27 January, and released by Warwick as *The Big 4.7 Inch Naval Gun in Action at Modder River Engagement Firing One Shell* [5539].<sup>71</sup> The Roberts title was apparently unreleased.

In all therefore, Benett-Stanford had managed to film fewer than half a dozen films during his time in South Africa. (In the circumstances it is lucky indeed that three of the titles survive). As he was filming the last of these, Warwick's chief cameraman, Joseph Rosenthal, was *en route* to South Africa, and Rachael Low has suggested that the reason that Urban sent Rosenthal was that Benett-Stanford had sent back so few films.<sup>72</sup> However this is not credible, for Stanford's films had not even arrived back in England when Rosenthal departed on 2 December, and I would suggest that Rosenthal was sent out in any case, because covering this war was surely a top priority for the company, meriting the presence of their top cameraman, and the only surprise is that he wasn't sent earlier. What is entirely possible however, is that after Stanford's films were received and developed in the UK between early December and early January, Warwick realised that he had not been very industrious, nor very competent (as I've mentioned, at least two of the titles were under-cranked), and at that point decided to dispense with his services. Certainly no more films of the Boer War by Stanford ever appeared, and he was effectively replaced as Warwick's principal Boer War cameraman by Rosenthal when the latter started work in earnest in January 1900.<sup>73</sup>

### **Edgar M. Hyman**

By the outbreak of the Boer War Edgar M. Hyman (1871-1936) had already been associated with the film business for some time. During the 1890s he was the manager of the Empire Theatre of Varieties, Johannesburg, where magician Carl Hertz gave South Africa's first film shows in May 1896.<sup>74</sup> Greatly impressed by this novelty, Hyman ordered a camera and projector, receiving a camera (from Charles Urban) by 1897. Hyman was undoubtedly making films by the following year, among which were street scenes in Johannesburg.

In September 1898 he claimed to have filmed President Kruger leaving his house in Pretoria en route to the Raadzaal, though Joseph Rosenthal (q.v.) stated that this film was his own work. Actually there seem to have been two films showing Kruger departing in his carriage, one of him leaving the Volksraad and the other leaving his residence.<sup>75</sup> Probably Rosenthal and Hyman filmed one apiece. What is certain is that in January 1899 Hyman, together with the Empire's musical director, Dave Foote, gave a show of one of these and other films also, to the President himself and his guests at the

Residency in Pretoria, and Kruger was said to have been most impressed, especially with the film of himself. These films of the Transvaal's President were distributed by Warwick and were of great significance during the Boer War, for Kruger was a particular hate figure in Britain at this time (as we shall see when we come to deal with film exhibition).

When the Boer War loomed in the Autumn of 1899, Hyman had been visiting England for several months, where he regularly came to book acts for his music hall.<sup>76</sup> The coming conflict encouraged him to go back to South Africa to safeguard his interests there.<sup>77</sup> He departed Southampton 23 September on the *Norman*, along with a host of military personnel and war correspondents who were heading for the war zone.<sup>78</sup>

This departure date, exactly two weeks before Benett-Stanford embarked, makes Hyman (technically) the first cameraman to go to the war, though as a music-hall manager in South Africa he was not, of course, going there solely to shoot films. Nevertheless, camerawork was to be a major part of his life for the following few months, and next to Rosenthal, he was to be Warwick's most reliable and long-lasting cameraman. We know that before leaving on the *Norman* he had already agreed to film aspects of the war for Warwick, because Warwick reported that 'another operator left for the seat of trouble in company with several war correspondents, sailing three weeks ago' (this statement was published on 14 October, which is indeed three weeks after Hyman sailed).<sup>79</sup> Warwick then proclaimed that Hyman had, 'landed in Capetown [sic] several days before anyone else with like intentions sailed from Southampton'. This was a veiled reference to the company's rival W.K-L. Dickson; and Warwick boasted that, because their man was so fast off the block, Warwick would be able to furnish prints four weeks earlier than any other company.<sup>80</sup>

On arrival Hyman headed straight for Johannesburg, but found that his Empire Theatre was closing that same evening in preparation for the coming hostilities, and he decided to return to Cape Town, with his company of performers.<sup>81</sup> At least 16 artistes made the journey with him, which proved an eventful one, for their train suffered an accident on route, killing some of the passengers. But Hyman and his group arrived safely in Cape Town, and he soon found another venue, the Good Hope Hall, where his shows began from the 17 November, attracting large audiences.<sup>82</sup> The hall though, proved unsuitable for variety shows, and Hyman closed after a couple of weeks. This loss was probably Warwick's gain, for it presumably meant that Hyman had more time to devote to filmmaking, and he told an interviewer in December that, 'I have been taking some very fine pictures for the Bioscope which I hope will interest you in London'.<sup>83</sup>

Hyman was certainly in the right place to see a lot of activity, as thousands of British and Empire troops arrived in Cape Town in the following weeks to take part in the fighting inland. From November he recorded a variety of British and colonial regiments disembarking or marching through the city.<sup>84</sup> The arrival of the Scots' Guards at Cape Town, 14 November, may have been one of his first films (incidentally, this arrival is significant, for another cameraman,



Walter Beevor (q.v.) was with the Guards). Hyman also filmed the Northumberland Fusiliers at Cape Town, 23 November. He seems also to have been commissioned to take still photographs, for some photos attributed to him appeared in a popular illustrated periodical, *The King*, showing the arrival of General Charles Warren at Cape Town (fresh from his defeats on the Natal front).<sup>85</sup> A couple of Hyman's extant films (held in the NFTVA) give a flavour of his production at this time:

*The Australian Mounted Rifles Marching Through Cape Town* (23 Dec 1899).

This shows the troops riding down the street as crowds wave to them. The film was shot from the side of the road at head height, and interestingly, Hyman (or someone very like him) appears in shot, suggesting that he was working with an assistant to crank the camera.<sup>86</sup>

*Arrival and Reception of Lord Roberts at Capetown* (10 Jan 1900). Depicts a guard of honour arriving, then Roberts inspecting them and driving off in his carriage.

Another title in the NFTVA is less positively attributable to Hyman: *Arrival of Wounded at Hospital Ship* (March 1900), shot from beside a ship's gangway, showing the wounded going aboard. This is a good example of how even such apparently mundane films as troops arriving and departing might have more significance than is immediately apparent. This film shows the sacrifice that soldiers were making in this war for Britain, some of the wounded being in stretchers, some limping, and three – significantly – have their right arms in slings. This was a common place for a wound among the British in this war, for the arm was vulnerable to Boer snipers when aiming a rifle from cover.<sup>87</sup>

If the last mentioned film was really made by Hyman in March, it must have been at the beginning of the month, for he left Cape Town in the first week in March to join General Clements' brigade at Colesburg, a town on the railway line to Bloemfontein. It seems that Hyman had been appointed an officer on Clements' staff, like his colleague Rosenthal, who was also temporarily assigned to Clements' brigade which was transporting portable pontoon bridges.<sup>88</sup> This was part of French's operation under Lord Roberts, pushing north towards the Orange River. Hyman and Rosenthal seem to have joined forces here for a time (see Rosenthal section).<sup>89</sup>

There is some confusion over which film format Hyman was using during the war. Thelma Gutsche reproduces a picture of him in uniform during the Boer War holding a case for what she states is a Biokam, a 17.5 mm amateur film camera.<sup>90</sup> Another photograph shows him on location, holding the same or similar camera case, but with a mule carrying a 'Bioscope' case (i.e. 35 mm camera), as well as a tripod (apparently a lightweight type) and another camera case. [Fig. 13] This latter photograph is reproduced on the same page of a photographic journal as one of Rosenthal, and both are standing next to the identically loaded mule.<sup>91</sup> The pictures were reproduced elsewhere too. [Fig. 12] My suspicion is that both these photographs were taken when the two men met near the Orange River, and that the loaded mule, and therefore

the camera equipment, was Rosenthal's. Perhaps Hyman was indeed working just with the Biokam which he was holding.

But would Hyman really have filmed for Warwick with such a small camera? I suggest that he might well have done so after he left Cape Town when on the march, for such small equipment and films would have made travelling easier. Other Boer War cameramen had to wrestle with large amounts of equipment: Dickson had great problems with the huge Biograph camera,<sup>92</sup> Beevor's gear occupied a cape cart, and while Rosenthal managed to strap his two 35 mm. cameras to one mule during filming forays, this still meant that he needed another animal for himself and his personal effects. For release, presumably the 17.5 mm. Biokam images could have been blown-up by Warwick to 35 mm.<sup>93</sup>

It is unclear what Hyman did after meeting Rosenthal at the Orange River in March, or indeed during April and May. Will Day says he went to film with the Boers, though no such films appear in the Warwick catalogue; alternatively he could have gone back to Cape Town, returning to the front later; or equally, Hyman may have carried on with the British advance. A photograph of correspondents waiting in the road into Kroonstad, shows two cinematograph cameras, one of which was presumably Rosenthal's, but the other could have been Hyman's, and possibly Hyman himself is one of the figures seen standing there too. (For more on this episode, see Rosenthal section).

Hyman was back with the troops in Pretoria in early June of 1900 (along with colleague Rosenthal) for he is credited in the Warwick catalogue for a film *Entry of Troops into Pretoria* [5725]. This was the last that both cameramen would film of the war, Rosenthal returning to London (and then on to film the Boxer events in China) and Hyman presumably back to the now British-controlled Johannesburg, though may have done a little more war-related filming.<sup>94</sup> Despite being a part-timer, Hyman had proved reliable and energetic, and should go down as Warwick's second most important Boer War cameraman after Rosenthal.

### **Charles Sydney Goldman**

Though the main set-piece battles of the war were over by mid-1900 and many correspondents left, it soon became clear that the war was not over. The Boers failed to surrender, and so the British war effort had to be maintained, even stepped up, and more troops were eventually in southern Africa than had been involved in any previous British campaign, these men including many volunteers from all walks of life. There was therefore some interest 'back home' to hear and see news from the field about these thousands of men, and Warwick presumably felt this pressure.<sup>95</sup> But their chief cameraman Rosenthal had left South Africa with the bulk of correspondents around June, so Warwick had to find an alternative, and this they did, announcing:

'Important Notice. Mr. Sydney Goldman has replaced Mr. Rosenthal on our War Staff in South Africa, and operates with Ld. Kitchener's Army at the Front. Mr. Hyman will also continue to photographically record

important events in connection with the Transvaal War in South Africa.<sup>96</sup>

Who was this Sydney Goldman? John Barnes notes that he was a newspaper reporter, though gives no further details. A little more is revealed in lists of war correspondents at the front, for these included two mentions of the name 'Goldmann' and one of 'C.S. Godmann'.<sup>97</sup> It turns out that there were two Goldmann (or Goldman) brothers, both, confusingly, war correspondents, and one of them was indeed the man acting as Warwick's cameraman, Charles Sydney Goldman (1868-1958), his brother being called Richard.<sup>98</sup> Until recently he has not been noticed by film historians mainly because Sydney was not his first but his second name.

C.S. Goldman was born in Burghersdorp, Cape Province, in 1868, and became an expert in mining in the 1890s, based in both the UK and South Africa.<sup>99</sup> During the Boer War Goldman acted as correspondent for the *Standard* and *Telegraph* newspapers, initially with Buller's forces in Natal and then with General French on the western front.<sup>100</sup> How did Goldman become a cameraman? I would suggest that, as both Rosenthal and Hyman were also with French's army on the march to Pretoria, probably Goldman met one of the Warwick cameramen in these weeks and they discussed the possibility of Goldman becoming a 'stringer'.

John Barnes suggests that Goldman probably had had no previous experience of film work, though was perhaps briefed by Rosenthal before the latter's departure in June, both of which seem reasonable suppositions; and I suspect that Rosenthal left his film camera with Goldman, presumably with the permission of Warwick. The company may have felt that, while it was not worth sending a company cameraman from the U.K. to cover this tail end of the war, a freelancer like Goldman was just what was required, at little extra cost, for he was on the spot in any case.

Other factors recommending Goldman were that he was knowledgeable about South Africa, having been born and brought up there, and he knew the country well from his mining work. More importantly, he was a skilled photographer, to judge from the many stills (presumably his own work) reproduced in his book, *With General French and the Cavalry in South Africa* (1902). This volume is illustrated by over 100 half-tone plates, which are technically competent, well composed images.<sup>101</sup>

Unlike so many other correspondents' accounts of wars, which are full of their own personal actions at the front, Goldman's is a non-anecdotal account, not mentioning himself, but merely detailing the campaign. In this case this is somewhat unfortunate, for Goldman fails to write anything about his filming activities.<sup>102</sup> Actually though, it seems there was not much filming. There is only one film credited to Goldman in the Warwick catalogue, *The Annexation of the Two South African Republics*. This was a record of a formal ceremony by Lord Roberts which took place 25 October 1900: the hoisting of the Royal Standard in Pretoria, followed by Roberts awarding medals to soldiers.<sup>103</sup> (The film title was a misnomer: actually only the Transvaal was annexed, not the

Orange Free State). Goldman may have filmed other scenes, but there seems to be no further record of them. In any case, in early November Goldman went back to his home in Johannesburg (the town was now back in British control) and Warwick's coverage of the Boer War ceased. Perhaps this was because the company's executives felt that the conflict was now off the news agenda, or perhaps because the British authorities no longer tolerated cameramen in the war zone (see **Box** on censorship above).<sup>104</sup>

Goldman's brief career as a cameraman also ended at this point, another of these amateur operators who filmed for a while and then dropped out of view. As mentioned, he had taken over as cameraman in South Africa from Joseph Rosenthal, and the latter's Boer War work will be the subject of the following section, along with that of W.K.-L. Dickson. These two men – Rosenthal and Dickson – were examples of a new breed of professional cameramen who were appearing at this time, and helping to re-shape the future of non-fiction filmmaking, especially the filming of war and conflict.

## **THE PROFESSIONALS: 1. DICKSON'S BIOGRAPH IN BATTLE**

By 1899 the Biograph company was probably the leading film company in the world, given its relatively high capitalisation and its multinational character, with principal branches in the United States and Britain. It is an indication of Biograph's major financial resources at this time that during almost exactly the same period that the company's cameraman, Ackerman, was filming the war in the Philippines, another crew of three people was following the war in South Africa. This crew was led by William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson (1860-1935), a man who had played a major part in the invention of moving pictures, and was now carving out a role for himself as a leading non-fiction cameraman and director.<sup>105</sup> Dickson, together with his assistants, William Cox and Jonathan Seward, filmed in South Africa from October 1899 to July 1900, and Dickson himself also took stills.<sup>106</sup> Their assignment began on the Natal front, before shifting to follow the new British advance from the Cape up through Bloemfontein and finishing in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Dickson and his crew faced significant problems in filming in South Africa, in gaining permits to film, and also in managing to film aspects of this elusive war using the vast Biograph camera and its attendant equipment. In the circumstances they managed to obtain a fair amount of relevant footage, and even managed a couple of experiments with film technique which I describe below.

Theirs is the best documented of any enterprise to film war during the early era of the movies. Dickson published a well known book about his experiences as cameraman, *The Biograph in Battle* (1901), which is a rich and detailed account of the expedition in diary form.<sup>107</sup> Until recently this was the main source of information on the enterprise, but myself and other historians have unearthed new sources and revisited older ones which add important details to Dickson's account. Significant works have appeared by John Barnes, Richard Brown and others.<sup>108</sup> A series of contemporary articles

by Dickson has come to light, as well as, most surprisingly, diary entries written by Cox during the war, which I found in the National Army Museum.<sup>109</sup>

These and other sources have been skilfully put together by Paul Spehr into a full narrative of the expedition in a forthcoming biography of Dickson. Because these other accounts are available, I will be keeping my description of Biograph at the Boer War relatively short, and basing it largely on the summary account by a previous historian of the cinema, Thelma Gutsche (to whom much praise is due) along with additional details from some of the above sources, and some new details that I have found.<sup>110</sup>

### **On the *Dunottar Castle***

Dickson's crew left Britain on 14 October 1899 (three days after the declaration of war) on the *Dunottar Castle*. On the same ship were General Sir Redvers Buller, his officers and troops, as well as several journalists, including a young Winston Churchill going out as war correspondent for the *Morning Post*.<sup>111</sup> The *Dunottar* took fifteen days to Cape Town and during the voyage Dickson filmed as much as he could, though not too successfully. General Buller was notably camera shy, and only through great persistence did Dickson manage to get a shot of him on deck.<sup>112</sup>

One major problem which was also to bedevil the crew on land, was that the camera was enormous and very cumbersome to prepare. At one point they found that the *Dunottar* was going to pass another ship (the *Nineveh*) which was carrying colonial troops bound for the war – significant passengers indeed, exemplifying the Empire's wider involvement – and a suitable scene to film, Dickson would have thought, but they could not set up the 'cumbrous' camera (as Churchill called it, who witnessed this incident) in time to capture it.<sup>113</sup> Another fellow passenger, Earl de la Warr, also noticed the ungainly size of the camera, and expressed doubts about its ability to film events:

'I must not forget to mention that we have a cinematograph on board; an enormous machine which has to be present at any cost at all the actions. Those are the orders, but I think it is doubtful whether they will be carried out. The gentlemen in charge of it are not very military in appearance, and are, I believe, quite new to this kind of work.'<sup>114</sup>

### **Filming the campaign**

The ship made land at Cape Town, and Dickson filmed Buller coming ceremoniously down the gangplank the following morning, this from a camera platform he had quickly improvised on shore.<sup>115</sup> Dickson and his crew didn't tarry long in Cape Town; but due to military restrictions he found it impossible to proceed to the western front and decided to go on to Natal instead. He and his two assistants sailed on to Durban, and there bought a Cape cart, horses, and provisions for the front. The Biograph camera, owing to its enormous weight, was mounted on to the back of the cart 'so as to be able to fire at a moment's notice'.<sup>116</sup>

Dickson had trouble obtaining the necessary permission to film at the firing line (he met with much opposition from staff-officers), but eventually

succeeded in getting a pass from Buller. On 8 December 1899 the Biograph crew joined the Naval Brigade, a force recruited from the British Navy as a means of providing Buller's force with long-range artillery (4.7 inch guns). In the area between the settlements of Frere and Chieveley, Dickson's crew accompanied the guns of the ships *Forte* and *Terrible* which were firing on the Boer fighters from the tops of hills ('kopjes'). The ground was steep and rough, and Dickson and his assistants had great difficulty in getting their cart into position. They were often at real risk, and the Biograph camera offered a large target to the sharp-shooting enemy. [Fig. 8 and 9] At one point Dickson only escaped death by a whisker as a shell exploded nearby. Nevertheless they succeeded in securing films of the British guns firing during hostilities, and of daily life in the British camps. A remarkable film which survives shows a view of the British retreat from Spion Kop, as troops including the ambulance corps ford the Tugela river.<sup>117</sup>

The Naval Brigade men were welcoming to Dickson and crew, and some of the gunners became quite affectionate toward their media colleagues, one officer writing, '...our Biograph friends from home were taking views of us and they took two of myself and my guns firing'.<sup>118</sup> One officer in particular, Lord Dundonald, was helpful, and informed Dickson of military movements and engagements which he might film. Dundonald even set up a unit of cavalry to charge past the Biograph camera, dismount and appear to engage some Boers.<sup>119</sup> With this action, Dickson was making the same kind of 'arranged' subject that Rosenthal produced with his 'skirmish' film, and that Holmes and Ackerman were making in the Philippines (and stills photographers were doing too. See Fig. 3]). Though Dundonald had been so supportive, other officers were obstructive: in the course of just a couple of days Dickson was confronted by two senior officers, one of whom, a certain Colonel Reeves, waylaid the crew with loud and indignant challenges, 'you must fall out', 'who are you?'<sup>120</sup>

In February 1900, Cox and Seward became ill with enteric fever, and for a time Dickson had to work with only an untrained sailor to help, but he continued to film as the British forces learned to overcome their Boer adversaries. The way to Ladysmith was finally secured at the end of the month, and on 3 March Dickson filmed the British entry into the besieged town.<sup>121</sup> In a photograph of this event, the Biograph cart can be discerned at the side of the street as the relieving troops pass by.<sup>122</sup>

Soon after this, Dickson himself contracted enteric fever and the crew returned to Durban, where he partly recovered. Towards the end of April 1900 they sailed back to Cape Town, the idea being to join General Roberts' campaign in Bloemfontein. But again they needed to obtain a permit, and while waiting for this to be granted the crew filmed at the Cape, and also called on Cecil Rhodes, with whom the British Biograph company already had had some dealings.<sup>123</sup> Rhodes gave Dickson a letter of introduction to Lord Kitchener.

Dickson and his crew managed to reach Bloemfontein by the end of May, and filmed the annexation ceremony. Then onward to Kroonstad and Pretoria, and

on the 6 June they 'biographed' the raising of the Union Jack over the Transvaal capital. This was a crucial, indeed *the* crucial part of Dickson's entire mission, for he had received an instruction from the company's executives on England that, above everything else, he must film the raising of the British flag at Pretoria. In the event, Dickson seems to have set this shot up artificially with a larger flag (see Rosenthal section). After this success, he sent a cable back to Biograph in June confirming that he had indeed secured the much-wanted shot.<sup>124</sup> His cable also included two extra words: 'Roberts helping'.

These two words are very significant, because they indicate that General Roberts was offering help in Dickson's attempts to record the war for the British (and world) public. Roberts was something of an expert in media management, particularly when it came to promoting his own image. He had met his match in Dickson, who was a past master at capturing celebrities on film. So at this point, with the war apparently almost over, Dickson spent some time filming Roberts in suitable scenes.<sup>125</sup> Some of these were totally posed, though in one case events worked to Dickson's advantage: the day after the flag-raising was filmed, he had his camera in position with Lord Roberts and his staff just as a despatch-rider rode up with papers, and Roberts was photographed in the act of opening them.<sup>126</sup> What had happened is that, fortuitously, a party of C.I.V. troops arrived with despatches about casualties. [Fig. 10] As one of the C.I.V. later noted:

'we... delivered our despatches to Lord Roberts himself, just as the ubiquitous and estimable biograph was holding *a seance* over the person of the Commander-in-Chief and his Staff. And thus, should the film survive, a memento of our adventurous ride will appear in due course on the famous screen of the Palace Theatre long before any of us see England again.'<sup>127</sup>

Incidentally, this shows that ordinary soldiers were already aware of cinema, and were interested in being filmed (so becoming part of history, as it were). Dickson also filmed Roberts meeting with Baden-Powell, the hero of the siege of Mafeking. At this time Dickson attempted to follow the British forces as they pursued Boer guerrillas, but it was a hopeless task, and the crew left Pretoria for Johannesburg, here filming scenes at the mines, native war-dances and so on. Then onward to Cape Town, and on the 13 July 1900 they sailed for England on the *Carisbrooke Castle* after what Dickson described as 'ten months' fever-heat of excitement, toil and peril' in South Africa.

### **Problems and achievements**

This expedition had been a major investment for the British Biograph company. In mid 1900 the company reported to its shareholders about the 'heavy expenses' they had borne to keep Dickson and his crew in the war zone.<sup>128</sup> The expenses would have been less and the task easier if the Biograph equipment had been smaller. Dickson and his crew had brought out what was probably the Model A Biograph camera, one of the biggest film cameras ever used for actuality work. Dickson's book records some of the difficulties of dealing with this size of camera, but if anything he underplays

this issue. One of his colleagues later stressed the truly gargantuan task of dealing with the 'heavy and unsuitable apparatus' in South Africa, with the camera weighing 240 lbs, the tripod 110 lbs, and four boxes of batteries weighing 1,200 lbs:

'The whole of this enormous weight had to be driven up mountains and over broken rocky ground in a Cape cart by two wild horses, often in intense heat or rain and frequently under fire.'<sup>129</sup>

The camera clearly was far too big and heavy for such an assignment, and when in actual use the size and noise it generated made it very noticeable. The crew were desperate for a smaller camera which would make easier their task of filming a highly mobile war. In March 1900 a frustrated William Cox cabled to London 'to say that a more portable apparatus was indispensable'.<sup>130</sup> The company was working on the problem, and a smaller hand-cranked model was in development. Biograph cabled back to Dickson's team that 'the long promised camera to work by hand was already on the way from America...'<sup>131</sup> In April the crew expected to receive the new portable camera in Cape Town, though it seems that it never arrived.<sup>132</sup>

It is quite an achievement that Dickson and his crew in South Africa managed to record what they did with such an encumbrance, for the Boer war was, after all, a guerrilla campaign, with an almost invisible enemy – the world's first conflict so dependent on long-range weaponry. On top of all this the crew had to deal with sickness, uncooperative officers, and other practical problems. In the circumstances they did surprisingly well. Their films do capture British soldiers on the battlefield, sometimes during actual military operations. There are even some technical experiments: *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere* includes a pan, and the crew used a telephoto lens to try to capture images on film of this spread-out war (though it didn't work as planned). This the only proven attempt in the early period to use such a lens, and it is no surprise that it was Dickson who did it. His expertise in both the technology and 'art' of non-fiction filmmaking, meant that he could turn his hand to almost anything.

There is one further achievement by Dickson in filming this war, and that is in respect of setting up or 'arranging' shots for the camera. Dickson had been doing this kind of 'directing' of non-fiction subjects for some time, setting up posed scenes with celebrities for filming purposes. Here in South Africa he managed something similar, except under war-time conditions. We have mentioned earlier three examples of such arranging: the gallop past by Dundonald's men, complete with a mock skirmish with Boers; the scenes of Roberts in Pretoria; and the filming of the large British flag being raised instead of the small, genuine one. There were other examples of arranging during this war, including among still photographers. [Fig. 3]. Ackerman at about the same time in the Philippines was doing a similar kind of arranging of moving images with US troops. But it seems that the American troops were far more co-operative in this regard than the British – for as Dickson tells us in his book, several British officers were actively hostile to the presence of his film camera, whether or not any active 'arranging' was asked for. In these circumstances Dickson's task was inevitably tough, and he did well to get



what he got. Furthermore, being the professional that he was, Dickson's footage was technically better and more consistent than that of Ackerman, who was a newcomer to the camera game.

## **THE PROFESSIONALS: 2. JOSEPH ROSENTHAL**

As we have seen, the Warwick Trading Company at one time or another had four cameramen covering the Boer War. The most experienced and best known of these was Joseph Rosenthal (1864-1946), who really made his reputation in filming this war, and this was the springboard for a career involving years of travel round the world as one of the first professional news cameramen.<sup>133</sup> The professionalism was evident even at this early stage in his career, and distinguished him from his fellows at Warwick and from other cameramen at the war apart from Dickson, for his work was more extensive and often better shot than that of these amateurs.

Largely thanks to Rosenthal, Warwick filmed and released more films from the war than any other company. By the end of the war, their catalogue (July/August 1902) listed no fewer than 111 films related to the 'Transvaal War', though many of these were of troops back home.<sup>134</sup> Of those shot in South Africa, Rosenthal accounted for more than any of his colleagues, with perhaps 40 films. The figure would no doubt have been higher if some of his films had not been lost in transit (as we shall see), but here too Warwick had made the best plan they could, and had a special arrangement with Donald Currie of the Castle Line of steamers to return films to the UK.<sup>135</sup> Warwick also made a special effort to gain official approval for the enterprise, and was the only film company to be included in a list of officially approved correspondents, appearing as, 'Cinematograph – Warwick Trading Co. Ltd. – Messrs. Rosenthal, Hyman'.<sup>136</sup> Warwick trumpeted this approved status as, 'the first instance in history where the cinematograph is officially recognised by the War Office', which was almost certainly true.<sup>137</sup>

Warwick's forward planning – both in arrangements for the shipping home of their war film negatives, and in their care in officially registering their cameramen – reflects an increasing professionalism in the company. However this 'professionalisation' was still an ongoing process, and was undercut by a lingering belief in amateur cameramen, and in a half-hearted commitment to their experienced professional man. As a result, Rosenthal was sent belatedly to cover the war, two months after Warwick's first amateurs, Hyman and Benett-Stanford, were sent out. But professional or not, Rosenthal's task was not easy, for he faced repeated official restrictions on his movements, and it is to his credit that he persisted, and managed to cover the war in a quite effective manner.

### **Rosenthal's pre-war work**

Rosenthal had come into the business almost by accident. He was from a humble Jewish background in east London, and initially found work as a pharmacist. But in the mid nineties his sister was employed by the Maguire and Baucus film company, and Joseph joined her there, staying on when, in

1898, the company became the Warwick Trading Company under Charles Urban. Urban steered the company from sole reliance on film distribution into film production too, and found in Rosenthal a skilled photographic technician and cameraman. The one-time east ender was sent on various filming assignments in the UK and Europe, and then as far afield as South Africa.

During his 1898 South African trip (which provided valuable experience for his Boer War work), Rosenthal obtained two very news-worthy items: a scene of the Johannesburg 'Zarps' (police) who at the time were brutalising the Cape Coloured population; and also an 'animated portrait' of President Kruger which showed him, as the Warwick catalogue put it, 'as he leaves his residence and steps into his carriage ... The well-known figure of "Oom Paul" is unmistakably delineated'. Rosenthal later said of his film of Kruger: 'That was the only one ever taken of him in South Africa. I had to approach him through his son, Chard Kruger, as the old man would never speak English.'<sup>138</sup> The first claim was untrue, for Warwick itself distributed another, similar film of Kruger departing from the Volksraad (see Hyman section). In any case these films were important in depicting Kruger, the key figure on the Boer side.

### **The War**

Early in 1899, Rosenthal was apparently sent again to South Africa, on the SS *Carisbrooke Castle* to record the voyage to the Cape.<sup>139</sup> Thus when the Boer War began later that year, Rosenthal had already been in South Africa twice and was therefore uniquely qualified to cover the conflict. It is somewhat strange therefore that Warwick initially relied on two other men to film the war, Hyman and Bennett-Stanford, neither of whom was a 'professional' cameraman. While these two arrived in South Africa in October, Rosenthal himself, now dubbed Warwick's 'head operator', didn't even depart for the seat of war until 2 December. He travelled out on the *Avondale Castle*, bound for Durban in Natal.<sup>140</sup>

Rosenthal was well equipped with film cameras and film stock, and equipment for stills photography also, for as well as working for Warwick, he was also taking photographs for the *Illustrated London News*, which were also used for illustrating the Warwick catalogue. (Many of Rosenthal's glass negatives of the war survive). It was stated at the time of Rosenthal's departure, that he was travelling:

'...with Government permission to photograph all incidents on board the troopship during the voyage to South Africa, also to accompany the troops and photograph everything of interest transpiring on the march, including camp life, skirmishes, etc.'<sup>141</sup>

It seems from this quotation as if 'Government permission' had granted for his entire mission, but in fact permission to film still needed to be obtained from the military command in the war zone, and this involved Rosenthal in something of a maze of bureaucracy, as we shall see.

Arriving by the turn of the year, Rosenthal initially went to the Natal front (in the east). He later recalled being at the second crossing of the Tugela in the

middle of January, and at the British defeat at Spion Kop the following week, where 'a lot of my friends were killed'.<sup>142</sup> Rosenthal made at least one film of General Buller's forces, *General Buller's Transport Train* – a film which survives, though may not have been released at the time.<sup>143</sup> This was apparently the only film he made of Buller's forces, and his other films in Natal were not shot with the British forces at the front. For example, he shot a film released as *Scene on Mr N. Smit's Ostrich Farm, Impanzi, Natal* along with another film of the ostrich farm, *Driving the Ostriches*. Then he shot a view from a train on the line from Durban to Ladysmith, and three films of British forces in the port of Durban.<sup>144</sup>

That he had filmed mainly non-war films in Natal suggests that things were not going well for him there. Perhaps he was barred from the front by the censors, as was to happen to him later. In any case, commander Redvers Buller was suffering setbacks in Natal, and several correspondents seem to have given him up as a lost cause in early 1900 and travelled west to join the other British front. Rosenthal joined them.

### **In Kimberley: arranging action; filming the Boers**

Rosenthal seems to have managed to get to the neighbourhood of Kimberley at this point, and made a very interesting film with the British cavalry, later released by Warwick as *A Skirmish With the Boers Near Kimberley*. This film, which survives, was clearly set up or arranged in situ (as the catalogue suggests, for it uses the word 'portray' in its description).<sup>145</sup> The film is in three parts, and shows the troops setting up their weapons to feign an attack on the Boers. It begins with a scene depicting, 'The scouts in pursuit of the Boers', with the mounted troops riding up and past camera. Then in the second part (shot over a hedge) the troops gallop towards us, their leader brandishing a sword(!); they stop dramatically, and set up Maxim guns pointing directly towards the camera. In the third part the troops ride up, dismount to fire a fusillade, and then get back on their horses and ride off. Viewers today would immediately realise that the second part of this film in particular could not possibly have been shot on a real field of battle because Rosenthal would have been in the middle of the crossfire. (A point which I discuss in Chapter 2 in relation to fakes). Nevertheless, it is a very dramatic shot.

The film is also notable for depicting the outmoded tactics still being employed by the British: notably the officer brandishing a sword, and the troops shooting a fusillade, in contrast to the Boers with their free-fire technique (using the latest Mauser rifles). But the real interest of *Skirmish With the Boers* as a film is that Rosenthal, somewhat like Ackerman in the Philippines, was shooting non-fiction scenes by 'arranging' the action, and the two cameramen were doing this at about the same time too. (Though it seems that Ackerman was a more consistent exponent of the technique).

It may have been about this time that Rosenthal filmed with the Boers themselves. Warwick later released two films of the enemy forces credited to Rosenthal: one entitled, *War Supplies and Provisions Arriving at a Boer Laager By a Train of Ox Teams* and another (probably filmed at the same time) also showing an ox team, *A Boer Supply Crossing the Veldt*. I suggest

that, while there is no indication of location in the catalogue, these were, like the 'skirmish' film, shot near Kimberley. My only evidence is that in the Will Day collection is a pass issued to Rosenthal to film with the Boers in Qriqualand West (an area west of Kimberley).<sup>146</sup>

In any case, this was quite a coup for Rosenthal, for Warwick stated, correctly, of the *War Supplies* film that it was, 'One of a very few pictures secured on the Boer side'.<sup>147</sup> Indeed these two scenes might have been the *only* films ever taken on the Boer side (though Boer prisoners were filmed). This achievement was not out of character for Rosenthal, for as well as being highly professional he was independent too, and interested in showing various aspects of a conflict. He was again to exhibit this independent spirit later in the year in China, as we shall see in my discussion of his work at the Boxer Uprising.

### **Obtaining permission**

At about this point Rosenthal seems to have come away from the front, to Port Elizabeth.<sup>148</sup> It may have been at this time that he filmed half a dozen shots of troop arrivals at Port Elizabeth, and perhaps he also filmed one departure scene which survives, a high angle view entitled *Troops Leaving Port Elizabeth Jetty*. Such arrivals and returns were scarcely what Rosenthal had come to South Africa to film, but there was not much else he could do right then. He had returned to the coast to get filming permission to go to where the fighting was taking place, but this authorization proved difficult to obtain.<sup>149</sup> In recently discovered extracts from some of his letters back to Warwick, published in a rare photographic journal, he notes that by this stage (this would be about February 1900) he had already been to the front twice – presumably meaning once to Natal and once to the neighbourhood of Kimberley – but he complained that his further progress was being thwarted by British military officials:

'I am beginning to think that my third trip down here will have to be recorded a failure, owing to the many spokes put in my wheel by the various officials, who should be most willing to grant their permission for me to get to the front to procure true pictures of the various events connected with the present war, the reproduction of which are of such interest to the British public.'<sup>150</sup>

In Port Elizabeth, Rosenthal complained in the same article, he had been shunted from pillar to post as he attempted to go up to film with General French near the Orange or Modder Rivers. No reply to his telegraphed requests for permission came from French. Then he made a long journey inland to Naauwpoort to see a British 'Commandant' (officer) who could supposedly give him the requisite approval, that night sleeping, as he wrote, '...on the dusty ground, with nothing but my waterproof for a cover... and my camera for a head-rest'.<sup>151</sup>

Rosenthal was then advised to travel further inland to De Aar to see another Commandant, and he did as much. (A Warwick film *From Naauwpoort to De Aar*, taken from an armoured train, may have been filmed during this frustrating trip.) Again he slept rough, but then, after arrival, was told that it

was a mistake and permission must rather be granted in Cape Town. Frustrated and dishevelled Rosenthal set off for the Cape, and by this time the pressure was starting to tell:

'I tell you I felt sick of the business... I should have felt most embarrassed [sic] to have you or any of my friends see me after this trip. You would have taken me for some worn-out tramp dressed in dirty kharki. Oh, the pleasures of photography !'<sup>152</sup>

He started back: first by train to Port Elizabeth and then by steamer round to the Cape.<sup>153</sup> At this point he seems to have become so fed up that he wrote to Warwick that 'unless I get my pass, which I anticipate receiving to-morrow, I shall return home by the next Castle steamer'.<sup>154</sup> In the event this did not prove necessary, and in a letter to Warwick dated 21 February (others are undated) he stated:

'Just saw the Press Censor. He states that there are no objections to me going to the front, and that I shall receive my pass to-morrow. My luck is on the up-turn at last, so you may expect some most interesting films if these are at all possible to be procured. Hoorah! Send me another £100 and 10,000 feet of film.'<sup>155</sup>

These extracts from Rosenthal's letters are revealing. They suggest a man who was passionate about his work but perhaps not someone who was as adept or subtle as he might be in dealing with authorities. One also wonders if his time filming with the Boers had told against him? However, General Roberts was known to be relatively 'light' on regulating correspondents, and I suspect that Rosenthal was benefiting from this new regime.

### **Back to the front: a mobile cameraman**

In any case Rosenthal now had his pass, and he was temporarily assigned to General Clements' brigade under General French's overall command, which was transporting portable pontoon bridges. His first film from this period of the war may have been *Pontoons and Guns En Route for Orange River*.<sup>156</sup> Edgar Hyman, who was also commissioned as an officer under Clements, seems to have joined forces with Rosenthal at the Orange River, and as if to celebrate the meeting, Hyman filmed Rosenthal crossing the pontoon bridge, carrying his Bioscope camera and tripod.<sup>157</sup> From the Orange River crossing, Roberts' army headed for the interior of the Orange Free State, and Rosenthal went with them, following the troops to the victory at Paardeberg in the middle of February.

Rosenthal had devised a fairly portable kit of equipment for covering the war. He had a tent, 'portable dark room', and a few chemicals for testing a small piece of film before sending it home.<sup>158</sup> His film gear included two Warwick Bioscope film cameras, models A and B, the one loaded with 650 ft. of film, and the other carrying 165 ft. (less than 3 minutes). Either was portable enough to be carried by hand (this being in marked contrast to Biograph's monster camera). Still, with his other equipment, food and provisions, the total

load was fairly substantial. Sensible packing was therefore essential in order to allow him to film.

Any documentary crew knows that portability in equipment must somehow be combined with comprehensiveness, and these seemingly incompatible objectives are reconciled by splitting the gear into what is required for day-to-day filming, with the main supplies kept at base (the bulk of the film stock, food etc). Rosenthal had developed a system for achieving just this. His main means of transport was a 'Cape cart', which acted as his 'base', carrying supplies etc. But to get closer to the action for filming he rode off with two mules, one carrying himself, and the other his cameras, films etc, leaving the cart at base. Rosenthal's system was summarised by a writer of the time:

'When reconnoitring or scouting the cameras were slung over the back of one mule, the other being mounted by the operator who accompanied the troops, while the assistant watched the balance of the outfit in camp and reloaded a relay instrument ready in case of accident.'<sup>159</sup>

Incidentally, this is a rare mention of Rosenthal's assistant, elsewhere referred to as his 'negro attendant'.<sup>160</sup> The fact that this assistant was actually loading Rosenthal's camera (a skilled job in these early days of bioscope cameras) shows that he was acting as a proper assistant cameraman, surely one of the first black camera assistants in history. That he remains nameless is typical of the general 'invisibility' of blacks during this war, though recent historical writing assigns the black African populations quite a significant role in the war.

By travelling on mules, with his assistant keeping an eye on the base cart or camp, Rosenthal could be especially mobile, sometimes moving, as he boasted, 'as quickly, and very often quicker, than the army'. He added with some pride: 'Thus I was in Bloemfontein before Lord Roberts arrived there'.<sup>161</sup> Another source states that Rosenthal, 'rode all the way in the front of the British army through Bloemfontein, Kroonstad, and Pretoria'.<sup>162</sup> Rosenthal's portable, pared-down kit of filming equipment was clearly working well, and he must be one of the first field cameramen to have so skilfully mastered the logistics of location shooting.

### **Bloemfontein: lost footage; railway filming**

But for a while Rosenthal didn't need to be mobile. On 13 March 1900 Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, surrendered to Lord Roberts, and the army remained in the town for several weeks in March and April as Roberts consolidated his position. Thus Rosenthal had time to have his portrait taken by a photographer in the town called 'Deale', in full military attire with his stills camera case by his side, for once looking reasonably presentable (though even here in the studio he is scarcely as neatly turned out as colleague Hyman).

Rosenthal filmed several scenes around Bloemfontein at this time, including one showing the Cameron Highlanders entering the town [5639] and the Coldstream Guards leaving it [5663].<sup>163</sup> A point of interest in the latter film was

that it included a famous American scout called Burnham, one of the heroes of the campaign, Warwick's catalogue drawing attention to this selling point.<sup>164</sup> Rosenthal also filmed *Hoisting the Union Jack* and *The Balloon Contingent*, though these and 'some of the best sets of films mailed to London' were lost when the ship carrying them back to England went down:

'One series, comprising an interview with Sir Alfred Milner [the High Commissioner] and Lord Roberts at Bloemfontein, was sent by the *Mexican*, and the fate of the steamer, which went down shortly after leaving Cape Town, was of course shared by the films, so that a very interesting set of pictorial records is concealed by the briny waves.'<sup>165</sup>

This was not the only loss that Rosenthal suffered. Another set of his films, also taken at Bloemfontein, was unfortunately part of a convoy sent to the coast which the Boers captured (at the end of March), including *Hoisting the Union Jack*, *The Balloon Contingent*, and *Entering Bloemfontein*, etc.<sup>166</sup> Raw film stock too was lost to the Boers: in his raid on Roodewal junction on 7 June, famous Boer commander De Wet captured and destroyed many items, including five thousand feet of film stock destined for Rosenthal: 'The boxes were opened, and the precious films were strewn over the veldt,' as one of writer put it.<sup>167</sup> (Perhaps the Boers sensed that the cameramen were not telling an even-handed story). Other consignments were simply delayed.<sup>168</sup> War cameramen like Rosenthal were having to learn the hard way that their work would never be straightforward, and any number of perils could mean that their hard-won footage might never actually be seen by the public.

As ever, Rosenthal was technically innovative. He didn't yet have a panning head (he only managed to get one to cover the Boxer events later that year) but in South Africa he did take several inventive tracking shots from trains, and a couple seem to date from this period while based in Bloemfontein: *Panorama of Modder River* [5632] and *Off to the Front By Armoured Train* [5633]. John Barnes describes Rosenthal's railway films at the war, based on catalogue descriptions, as 'stunning' and 'spectacular', for they were not run of the mill views.<sup>169</sup> In this era, most shots from trains – called 'phantom rides' – were filmed from the front of the engine, showing a point of view only, and not including any of the train. The distinctive feature of Rosenthal's South African train shots is that they were filmed from the 'projecting platform' on the train, so including some of the train in the foreground, with passengers leaning from windows etc., thus giving more of a feeling of depth. His *Off to the Front By Armoured Train* [5633] went even further, and was a mini narrative, with views of a journey between Belmont and Modder River showing the landscape and another passing train, and then the engineer stepping from the cab to see to the engine before proceeding again. 'New and novel', 'never portrayed' before, Warwick claimed – and this film apparently caused a 'sensation' when screened at the London Hippodrome.

Travel in the war zone was rigidly controlled by the British authorities, and it seems that even for such seemingly innocuous railway filming Rosenthal needed permission. Two passes survive in the Will Day collection which may refer to this filming, one being for free travel on Cape Government Railways,

from 6 March, and a handwritten one to 'pass Mr Rosenthal over the river', dated 18 March.<sup>170</sup>

### **Kroonstad, and censorship**

By the beginning of May Roberts began to move north again out of Bloemfontein en route to Kroonstad. There were several rivers to ford in the Orange Free State, for the Boers had blown up many of the bridges, and these became Rosenthal's favourite places to film (I will have more to say about this at the end of the chapter). But river crossings could be hazardous: in crossing the Vet river drift, Rosenthal recalled, 'a shell exploded right in front of me, and it was very lucky indeed that I was not hit'.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless he got his shot: of a naval gun crossing the Vet River. Rosenthal also managed to film a siege gun, and most notably he shot *Boer Prisoners Under Escort*, the Warwick catalogue noting of these prisoners that, 'As they all pass closely by the camera every face is... wearing a most dejected look'. [5674-5676] Such a film was, of course, valuable propaganda for the British cause.

Roberts' army pressed on to Kroonstad, and Rosenthal filmed views of the entry of the forces into the town on 12 May [5685-5686], including the brigade of General Pole-Carew, a commander later notorious for burning Boer farms. A still photograph (or rather stereograph) taken at the time shows correspondents standing near to the ford across the river on the outskirts of Kroonstad, waiting for the conquering army to enter after the town's surrender – and two cameras are set up ready to film. One of them is a Warwick Bioscope, Model A camera (the model with the longer film capacity), the other is smaller, possibly being Hyman's Biokam? Rosenthal may be the figure standing between the two cameras.<sup>172</sup>

Perhaps it was at this same location that Rosenthal took a film entitled, *The Surrender of Kroonstad to Lord Roberts*. A trade journal enthused:

'We have seen this on the screen and can testify to its excellence, it really being one of the best we have ever seen. It shows Lords Roberts and Kitchener, with Staff officers, entering Kroonstadt [sic] at the head of the mounted column of Foreign attachés, bodyguard and waggonette, in which are seated the Landrost and other officials who went out to surrender the town to Lord Roberts. The portraits are very good ones, and we believe this is the only cinematograph likeness of Lord Kitchener ever obtained. This scene is particularly pretty apart from its historical value and will draw large houses wherever it is exhibited.'<sup>173</sup>

This film would have been shot with Roberts' and Kitchener's co-operation, and it was perfect propaganda: the British commanders leading their army, with the humbled town officials seated in a wagon. The film survives, and Kitchener is indeed very apparent in the shot, along with several war correspondents, who occasionally stare at camera, one mimicking Rosenthal cranking his camera.<sup>174</sup> Another record relating to this film survives in the form of a photograph of the press censor, Lord Stanley, in the act of impressing his stamp upon some frames of this very film. In the picture Rosenthal stands



watching the censor, having had to come dozens of miles back to British headquarters to get this film approved.<sup>175</sup> This is a telling image, perhaps the first ever photographic record of film censorship in action! [see bottom right of Fig. 11]

Censorship and regulation seemed to stalk Rosenthal throughout this campaign. The regulatory system was implemented through a system of passes, permitting travel and other activities (as we have seen from his railway filming). When Roberts arrived at Bloemfontein, Rosenthal stated that he was issued with an open pass which apparently enabled him to travel freely. But this did not mean, however, that he could *film* freely as well. While Roberts was fairly relaxed about controlling correspondents, he believed in a certain degree of military censorship (he had after all introduced it during the Afghan campaigns twenty years earlier) and this was enforced by press censors at the front. Rosenthal later recalled that he had to give a complete *description* of the film before it could be despatched home:

‘I had to make a report to the censor of what I had taken. If he thought it could safely be allowed through he gave me a pass and at the same time reported home what I had stated. If it had been found that I had mis-stated the contents of the parcel, I was, according to the terms of my license, liable to be court-martialled just like a soldier.’<sup>176</sup>

But judging from the photograph of Rosenthal with Lord Stanley, it seems that he had to give more than a description, and in some cases at least had to show an actual sample of the film. Rosenthal tells us he had the necessary chemicals to test-develop films, and perhaps the reason was not only to see the results himself, but to let the censor see them too.

Perhaps this system to develop a section of each film to show to the censor was instituted by Warwick or by Rosenthal himself in response to censors opening exposed rolls.<sup>177</sup> G.A. Smith, who developed films for the Warwick Trading Company, said that one batch of film that arrived from the front (‘almost the first lot’), with pictures taken in the wake of battles near the Modder River (by Bennett-Stanford), bore the initials of the censor at Cape Town, and was marked ‘in violet-coloured pencil’, with the ominous words, ‘Opened under martial law’. Smith added:

‘I was scared to death, I can tell you. When I examined them I found that about twenty feet of each film had received light; but they were otherwise unhurt. It must have been a dim light – probably an oil lamp in a tent. By using a couple of extra fifty-candle-power lamps I was able to develop them all right.’<sup>178</sup>

Press censorship was instituted more rigidly during the Boer War than in almost any previous British campaign, and this affected cameramen for virtually the first time during any of the wars in the early years of cinema (unless one includes isolated incidents such as the Spanish in Cuba confiscating film from cameramen). In future wars censorship would be an important factor in regulating what sort of images cameramen could shoot or

film companies publish, which makes Rosenthal's experience here with the censors, and that of Dickson too in this regard, all the more significant, being such early examples of military/government control being exercised over the filming of war.

### **To Pretoria: filming under fire**

Eight days after occupying Kroonstad, Roberts' army set off again, and Rosenthal filmed the celebrated C.I.V.s departing the town [5664]. From here the army crossed over the Vaal river, the major river in South Africa, which marked the boundary between the two Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. This was an important place therefore, and Rosenthal (possibly with Hyman) gave full rein to his fondness for filming river traversals, and took no fewer than six such films, on or about 25-28 May. These showed all manner of troops and vehicles of Roberts' vast 60,000 man army fording or otherwise crossing this major waterway: ambulances, water carts, artillery, as well as part of the Essex Regiment on a punt, and the Army's war balloon convoy. Some of the films survive.<sup>179</sup> A still photograph also survives, indicating how important he considered this location for filming, for Rosenthal is seen on the Vaal river bank as the ox-drawn wagons cross the river, with both his bioscope cameras, Models A and B, set up ready on tripods. He is standing nearby, his stills camera over his shoulder, ready to crank the Model B.<sup>180</sup> Here was an industrious cameraman who realised that this was a symbolically significant location for the British advance – the junction of the two defiant Boer republics, which were finally being tamed by the 'mother' nation – so a place where it was worth cranking out half a dozen films.

At this point Rosenthal began to face more hazards. In Elandsfontein on 29 May, Roberts' army was ambushed by the Boers, and Rosenthal found himself under fire in this strategic junction, taking cover in a building as the roof above him was perforated by bullets.<sup>181</sup> Then the army advanced to Johannesburg where he filmed the British flag being raised over the town on 31 May. Almost immediately Roberts pushed on to the final prize of Pretoria, where both Rosenthal and Hyman shot films on 4 and 5 June, depicting the battle for the city and the final raising of the Union Jack [5721-5726].

Again the work was hazardous. Rosenthal shot four films during the taking of Pretoria, some of which he managed to crank during actual battle action – something that he'd scarcely managed to do before – taking his greatest risks. As the catalogue put it, these were 'the only subjects yet photographed while the guns were in action (not prearranged for the occasion)'. He filmed the Essex Regiment actually advancing and looking for cover, with an artillery piece firing in the background. Rosenthal also filmed the Naval brigade gunners in action, firing at the Boers outside Pretoria (4 June), and here he himself came under return shell fire, and at one stage ran for his life. This was described by one rather cynical officer in an account of the battle which I have found:

'... one bold photographer at least got more than he bargained for this day. He had arrived, early in the fight, with a cinematograph, and

requested the officer in charge of the marines' gun to let him know when he was going to fire, as he wanted to take the gun firing. The officer gave some orders and then turned round to the photographer. Meanwhile some Boer shells had come whizzing close over our heads, and all the officer saw was the photographic machine standing disconsolate and the operator in full flight to the rear of the column !'<sup>182</sup>

But while Rosenthal might have run off at that moment, at other times he did film the naval gunners at work during portions of the fighting, and the catalogue description of a resulting film, *The 4.7-inch Gun in Action at the Battle of Pretoria* [5722] showed the risks he was running:

'Mr Rosenthal photographed this incident in company with Mr Bennett Burleigh, war correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph," while bullets fell thick and fast, and both gentlemen were almost smothered twice by the dirt thrown up by bursting shells, which fell in rather too close proximity for comfort. One of the officials, within 30ft of our photographer, was wounded in this battle, and several horses and mules were killed.'

Taken in a different part of the battlefield, equally under fire, another of Rosenthal's films (which also, sadly doesn't survive) must have been quite a scene. The catalogue states of *The 5-inch Siege Guns in Action at the Battle of Pretoria* [5723]:

'Little clouds of dust are thrown up constantly by the enemy's bullets striking the ground. Our photographer's horse was shot in this battle. Mr Rosenthal, referring to the taking of the film, writes that Boer shells were bursting all around and overhead, and that but very few of the thousands of people who will see the reproductions of these films "will think of the poor devil who turned the handle of the camera".'<sup>183</sup>

That night Pretoria surrendered, and the following day, 5 June, Rosenthal walked into the town intending to film in the newly captured town. But not all the Boers had surrendered, and some didn't recognise his non-combatant status; Rosenthal records that 'they started firing on me'.<sup>184</sup> Fortunately he was saved by the intervention of some Canadian scouts and went over to the town square to make what was to be his last film of the war, *Lord Roberts Hoisting the Union Jack at Pretoria* on 5 June.<sup>185</sup> This latter film deserves some comment.

### **Filming flags: Rosenthal and Dickson's different approaches**

This ceremony – raising the British flag over Pretoria, capital of the Transvaal – was of course of great symbolic importance, for it represented the final subjugation of the rebel Boer republics to Britain. (One of the popular published accounts of the war was indeed entitled, *With the Flag to Pretoria*.)<sup>186</sup> This was not the first flag-raising film that Rosenthal had made, for he had also filmed the British flag being raised over Johannesburg a week earlier. In each case the flag used was a very small silk one made by Lady Roberts, which Lord Roberts had promised her to raise over every town that he occupied.<sup>187</sup> It was a fine sentiment, but the flag was so small as to make

little impact, and each time it was raised over conquered towns, a short time later it was replaced by larger, permanent Union Jacks.<sup>188</sup> This was of little help to Rosenthal however, for as a filmmaker he needed to see the actual ceremony as the flag was raised. And that is what he filmed with Lady Roberts' tiny flag being raised, the catalogue having to note, however, that this flag 'is only just visible in the picture'.

This was in contrast to what Dickson filmed, in what was, as Richard Brown has pointed out, the Biograph cameraman's only deliberate case of 'faking'. The Biograph company had instructed Dickson that on no account should he miss filming the raising of the British flag at Pretoria, and Dickson himself considered that making such a film was, 'the principal aim of our enterprise'.<sup>189</sup> To ensure his shot had real impact, Dickson, ever the enterprising cameraman, had another flag run up (probably it was the big flag which the authorities installed in place of Lady Roberts' one) and filmed it with just the upper part of the building as a background, thereby disguising the fact that the square in front was now devoid of crowds.<sup>190</sup>

But the deception was revealed when both Dickson's and Rosenthal's films of the hoisting were shown in South Africa later in the year, for it was noticed that the 'Biograph' showed a much larger flag than the 'Bioscope'. A letter to the press from a Mr. Wilkes pointed this out, and Warwick's representative in South Africa wrote in to explain that Warwick (Rosenthal) had filmed what actually occurred, whereas their rivals at Biograph had resorted to deception. The flag that had actually been raised, he noted, was the 'mere pocket-handkerchief' made by Lady Roberts, and while it was regrettable that such a small flag had been used – 'thus depriving historical events of all impressiveness' – this was what had *actually* happened, and this is what they had filmed. He contrasted their British cameraman, Rosenthal, with the over smart 'yank', Dickson:

Whereas the British operator present at the hoisting ceremony was content to photograph the actual occurrence and thus produce a picture lacking impressiveness (though genuine), the enterprising 'Yank' had a large Union Jack hoisted a few days after the event for the purpose of photographing it; and, as the public of Durban and probably Mr Wilkes had the pleasure of seeing a magnificent picture of the hoisting of the Union Jack at Pretoria a few weeks ago, they will admit the smartness of the "Yank"; and the taste of Mr Wilkes for a pretty picture rather than a true one, must have been amply satisfied. The company I represent, 'The Warwick Trading Company of London', refuse absolutely to accept and develop any film not a genuine reproduction of passing events.'<sup>191</sup>

Here we have an early instance of an important debate in non-fiction film-making, between those who believe that documentary cameramen should film only what literally happens, and those who believe that some intervention is desirable – a debate which has been revisited several times in the history of the cinema, and is unlikely ever to be resolved.<sup>192</sup>

### **Rosenthal's achievements**

Although the war was to drag on as a guerrilla campaign for another two years, most of the correspondents, including Rosenthal, went home after the surrender at Pretoria on 5 June, leaving the writer/photographer Sydney Goldman as Warwick's cameraman representative in South Africa. I estimate that Warwick released some forty short films of the war by Rosenthal (of which some half dozen survive in the NFTVA). Not a huge number, given that he had been in the country for nearly half a year, but he had shot many more which never made it back due to accident and enemy action. In all he apparently shot some 15,000 ft. of film (about four hours worth).<sup>193</sup> This is not a bad record, bearing in mind his practical difficulties and issues with officialdom.

During his time in South Africa Rosenthal managed to travel to, and film at several of the fronts, including in Natal and along the railways from Cape Town and Port Elizabeth to Pretoria; and had even filmed with the Boers for a time (the only cameraman to do so). There is a wide range of subject matter in his resulting films, including troops on the march; various different kinds of military equipment in use, such as artillery and balloon observation units; the leading commanders; images of Boer prisoners; victory ceremonies; and even, from Pretoria, some 'action' footage filmed under fire.

In terms of content and technique, Rosenthal's Boer War films are quite impressive in a number of respects. There seem to have been few 'dud' films. The Warwick catalogue often praises his films – unlike films of some other cameramen – with words such as, 'splendid', 'interesting', 'full of action', 'magnificent', 'photographically perfect', 'clear, sharp photography', 'fine definition'.

Rosenthal's ability to cope and overcome difficulties and his willingness to experiment are impressive. He travelled to several fronts in the war, he developed a pared-down shooting kit, and shot visually interesting images (such as his train films). All this despite suffering several problems: official controls on his movements, dangers while filming under fire, the 'invisible' nature of this new kind of warfare; and with many of his films being lost or destroyed. One trade journalist, who described Rosenthal's tribulations and adventures filming the war, came to this conclusion about Warwick's head cameraman:

'It is evident that he who would send animated pictures home from the battlefield has much to contend with, and must find his path a thorny one, though it has some roses in the form of honour and glory, while there is a pleasure in knowing that your trials are endured in the service of the fatherland.'<sup>194</sup>

This was obviously phrased with the patriotic spin of the time, but the general drift seems well-founded. Rosenthal had indeed surmounted a number of practical problems and bureaucratic hurdles, and managed to film several key moments and important events in the conflict. He was deservedly praised in Warwick's catalogues, and he was interviewed by magazine journalists after

his return from the war, one of the first film cameramen to be lauded in such a manner.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Aesthetics**

I have suggested above that an interesting aspect of the filming of this war is the differing degree of professionalism (and competence) among the cameramen. I would suggest that this was not just a variation, but a development, for while amateurs would still be recruited for filming wars in the future, they were increasingly replaced by professional cameramen. Here at the Boer War the professionals, Rosenthal and Dickson, generally managed better than their amateur colleagues, especially given the greater problems they faced of onerous regulation and (in the case of Dickson) ponderous camera equipment. But all Boer War cameramen confronted one main problem: that of managing to capture and depict a war fought by soldiers who were often hidden from view in a vast theatre of operations

In these circumstances, little visible conflict could be secured, and most of the films which were shot showed little more than the background to the war, with British troops on the move and guns firing at distant targets. Nevertheless, some had the unmistakable aura of actuality about them, and captured some hints of the fighting and of how Britain's forces were adapting to this changing battlefield. So it would be wrong to describe this war, as some commentators have implied or stated, as a failure in the history of war filming.

For one thing, there were some important cinematic developments; principally aesthetic advances in terms of what the cameramen managed to film and how they did it. I have mentioned some of these above, and they include such matters as: Dickson's pioneering efforts with a telephoto lens, a device which would revolutionise war filming (and other actuality filming); Rosenthal's development of a mobile shooting system, allowing him to keep up with the advancing front line, and even, at short notice, to record moments of action; also a significant feature of the filming of this conflict was the 'arranging' of shots – a technique which both Rosenthal and Dickson employed effectively.

I should mention one other aesthetic point of interest, a common theme found in several films from the war zone. On the face of it this might seem a somewhat trivial point, but I suggest that it exemplifies wider issues. I refer to the tendency of some cameramen who covered the war to film extensively at river crossings. Certainly it was a marked trend among the cameramen. Of Beevor's twenty-one films of the war, no fewer than seven of them – a third – depict the crossing of a river. One finds a similar inclination for river crossings in the war coverage by Rosenthal, though to a lesser extent. And while Goldman shot few films, he took up the same water theme in his still photographs: his book about the war includes several photographs of river traversals, including the crossing of the Vaal River at Viljoen's Drift.

Why so many such scenes? One reason is that these river landmarks were often the most interesting features in the wide landscape of the interior of South Africa, providing a visual marker and some relief. A river crossing also offered interesting activity: the armoured column would be in dense formation, giving maximum 'animation' to the picture as drivers struggled with draft animals, etc. And a river at the least was an identifiable location; whereas a shot of soldiers merely crossing a landscape – even if the location were identified – would offer no visual cues as to its actual locality. But there was more to it than that. This 'river theme' is an example of how actuality cameramen were learning about the power of visual symbolism. A river suggests a mark of definite progress in the military advance, and indeed was sometimes a frontier between provinces or states. In this way, a river crossing could have wider significance than a scene of troops simply marching across the open veldt. So this penchant for rivers suggests to me that actuality cameramen were learning to be more selective in what they shot; were learning to film scenes which were not only picturesque but also symbolic of some wider theme. (One might add that the flag raising scenes which I have mentioned above are another such example of the use of symbolism in actualities).

### **Propaganda**

But while aesthetic developments were important, an even more significant filmic development during this war was in the relationship between the moving image and the military. It is evident from the British army's proposals for official regulation – written while the war was still in progress – that the Boer War cameramen had not made a good impression with the authorities, and some officers effectively called for the banning of cameramen entirely in future wars (see my discussion in the first **Box** above). Some of the cameramen at the front had already faced considerable antagonism from officers (I am thinking of Dickson). It is hard to see why this should be so, as the cameramen themselves had – as far as one can tell – cooperated fully with officials, and had gone out of their way (hundreds of miles out of his way in the case of Rosenthal) to obtain the relevant official permits to film at the front; they had also submitted to having their hard won films officially approved.

What's more, they had also done their best to 'fit in' to the military units which they were filming. In one case this was a foregone conclusion, for cameraman Beevor, being an officer, was actually part of the army. But this 'fitting in' is also evident in the case of ostensibly 'independent' cameramen. All or most of the cameramen at the Boer War were attached to particular military units, and were wearing British uniforms. The photographs of Hyman and Rosenthal in South Africa show them in khaki uniform, and both were, as we've mentioned, for a time attached to General Clement's brigade. Photographs show that Dickson and his crew too were wearing British military issue, complete with solar topee hats; and they were traveling with a Naval artillery brigade.<sup>195</sup>

These cameramen were, in short, *attached* to the British army which they were filming, almost as tightly as Ackerman in the Philippines was tied to the US Army (and he too, of course, was in military uniform). This suggests that a system was emerging among the British military and among the Americans, in

which war cameramen, as well as being regulated heavily, would be tied closely to the forces which they were filming.

There is another sense, too, in which these cameramen 'fitted in' with the military of their own side, for they were, as Elizabeth Strebel has noted, effectively self-censoring their filming: as she puts it, 'through selection, omission and emphasis'. In other words, they tended to film those subjects which were favourable to the British side, and avoided those aspects which would cast a poor light on Britain or British tactics in the war.<sup>196</sup> Thus the British army – the chief subject of the films – was recorded in active, ascendant mode, with only occasional scenes of casualties (and even these could be given a positive spin, showing that the wounded were well cared for).

On the other hand, when the Boers were filmed, it was generally when they were prisoners or had otherwise been subdued. And this was a rarity, as the cameramen themselves had doubts about filming Britain's enemy. At one point Dickson thought he might have a chance to film from the Boer side, but then wondered if he could do so, 'without disloyalty to my people'. He concluded that this could only be done when the conflict was over or nearly so.<sup>197</sup> Even Rosenthal, more independent than the others (as we shall see from his work in China), only filmed a couple of shots with the Boers, during an apparently short sojourn in their territory. Thus, even if there wasn't explicit censorship, the mainly British cameramen and companies were to some extent tied to the 'home' side, and largely shared the aspirations of the British authorities.

I will conclude this discussion about the filming of the Boer War with these observations. That, while cameramen in this era were becoming ever more competent and professional, able to represent a war in more imaginative and technically adept ways than their more amateurish predecessors, the corollary of this growing ability to film warfare was that official regulation on such filming was becoming stricter. The authorities in South Africa were increasingly zealous in controlling cameramen's activities, through a variety of strategies, voluntary and otherwise. The Boer War does therefore seem to mark a new, more 'serious' attitude toward the moving picture from those in authority, and in this sense above all this war was a very significant conflict for the media.

#### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> My summary is largely based on Luke McKernan's pithy introduction to the Boer War filmography on the BFI website, as is my summary listing of the cameramen.

<sup>2</sup> The war cost Britain £250 million, which is more than each side expended in the Russo-Japanese war. As a proportion of national income, at some points it cost the country more than the First World War: the costs in 1902 amounted to 14.4% of the British national income, compared, for example, to war expenditure of 12.6% in 1915. Clive Trebilcock, 'War and the Failure of Industrial Mobilisation: 1899 and 1914', in *War and Economic Development: Essays in Memory of David Joslin*, ed. J. M. Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.141. Jeffery argues that Britain's military didn't learn the lessons of the Boer War and continued to believe in the 'offensive spirit', etc. See Keith Jeffery, 'Kruger's Farmers,



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Strathcona's Horse, Sir George Clarke's Camels and the Kaiser's Battleships: The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence', in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. D. Lowry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.188-202.

<sup>3</sup> In Simon Popple's words, this was the 'first fully mediated conflict in British imperial history'. See Simon Popple "'But the Khaki-Covered Camera is the Latest Thing": The Boer War Cinema and Visual Culture in Britain' in *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896-1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2002), p.13-27.

<sup>4</sup> For more about the press during the war, see Donal Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.5-6 and chapters 3 and 4. The latter chapter especially, by Jacqueline Beaumont, is excellent.

<sup>5</sup> These hundred departures for South Africa were in the past few weeks, stated 'Our Special War Correspondent', *Bookman* 17, Nov 1899. The total number of known licences issued to correspondents in London, Natal and Cape Town was 108, representing 74 different newspapers and agencies. See 'Report on the issue of licenses to press correspondents accompanying troops in the field' by Major W.D. Jones, 4 Feb 1901. PRO: WO 32/7141.

<sup>6</sup> At least four war correspondents – James, Burleigh, Maud and Steevens – were in South Africa before the war started, from the beginning of October. Lionel James, *High Pressure : Being Some Record of Activities in the Service of the Times Newspaper* (London: J. Murray, 1929), p.112. The first military transport set sail from the UK 17 Sep 1899. See Kenneth Griffith, *Thank God We Kept the Flag Flying: The Siege and Relief of Ladysmith, 1899-1900* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), p.6.

<sup>7</sup> *BJP* 22 Sep 1899, p.596.

<sup>8</sup> I hope to publish an article in the future exposing the false claims of Smith.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Frank Kessler for this insight into the varying/growing degree of professionalism among Boer War cameramen.

<sup>10</sup> W. K-L. Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle : Its Story in the South African War* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), p.64-5. Earlier, when Dickson departed England, one journalist predicted hopefully, 'The biograph ... will tell the truth in all things, owing neither loyalty to chief nor submission to esprit de corps', then added more cynically, 'How far its truthfulness will please the authorities remains to be seen'. From 'A novel war correspondent', *Today*, 26 October 1899, p.403. Quoted by Elizabeth Grottle Strebel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage', in *Film before Griffith*, ed. J. L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> The comments in the file PRO: WO32/7137 date from September to October 1899, and make clear that of the foreign journalists, American ones were viewed much more sympathetically than their Continental cousins, and particular ire was directed at certain German correspondents. There was to be some reason for this: after the British defeat at Spion Kop, a German photographer had been seen piling up the bodies of British dead to make a more effective photograph. It is said that a British soldier, outraged by this disrespect, shot him dead.

<sup>12</sup> Winston Churchill, *Ian Hamilton's March* (London, 1900), p.97.

<sup>13</sup> So states James Archibald, 'The war correspondents of today', *Overland Monthly* 37, March 1901, p.797. The feeling that the war had ended is reflected in the *Illustrated War Special* for 6 June 1900, p.28 which stated that, '...the war has now practically come to an end', and the paper ceased publication at that point. Another war-related periodical published an article, 'The end of the Boer War and the growth of the trouble in China', *Under the Union Jack* 14 July 1900, p.843.

<sup>14</sup> 'Report on press Censorship by Lord Stanley', Headquarters, Pretoria, 7 July 1900. PRO: WO 108/262. The report was specifically addressed to Field-Marshal Lord Roberts.

<sup>15</sup> 'Report on the issue of licenses to press correspondents accompanying troops in the field', by Major W.D. Jones, 4 Feb 1901. PRO: WO 32/7141. This file also includes comment by Buller. Stanley recommended that in future wars there should be three categories of correspondent, A, B and C: C being blacklisted ones. And as well as excluding cameramen, he suggested the army should also limit the number of correspondents for illustrated papers. As an indication of how sensitive this subject was, the file was closed in the PRO until 1956 !

<sup>16</sup> William Cox diaries, National Army Museum, 8209-33-11. Cox calls Bull, '... the cinematograph man of *Black and White*'. An article, 'Journalism and the South African War', in *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press*, 1901, p.51, confirms Bull was working for *Black and White* as does another article in *Black and White Budget* 3 Feb 1900, p.6-8, which notes that

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Bull worked independently, travelling away from the main towns. He seems to have been quite a maverick, and his stealing a march on Cox and Dickson was therefore in character. Cox notes that Bull 'has gone home to England for some unexplained reason': only a search of the pages of *Black and White* is likely to reveal the reasons for Bull's departure from the front. The Kruger skit is also mentioned in Dickson's book, *The Biograph in Battle*, and in other sources about the Naval Brigades at the war.

<sup>17</sup> It could perhaps have been a Kinora or a Birtac, other early amateur film cameras, and it is possible that it may even have been a standard 35mm film camera, which Cox simply thought 'insignificant' compared to the enormous Biograph camera which he and Dickson were using.

<sup>18</sup> Incidentally, the 'Hanging of Kruger' skit to which Cox refers was based on a common theme of the time. The South African leader, Ohm Kruger had become an object of hatred for the British (and of admiration for much of the rest of the world), and several films deriding him were released about this time. However, I can find no record of a film of this exact description, depicting a hanging, in any company's releases.

<sup>19</sup> The name 'Underwood' immediately brings to mind the stereoscopic firm Underwood and Underwood, but it seems that this is just a coincidence of names, and though they had sent a man to photograph the war in stereographs, the intrepid American photographer/reporter Henry F. Mackern, he is not believed to have shot any films. I have traced two other A.S. Underwoods – a well known doctor and a man who exhibited a painting in 1885 (both London-based) – but the doctor was still living after the Boer War and the artist seems an unlikely identity for our Bloemfontein cameraman.

<sup>20</sup> 'John Wrench & Son', PD, May 1900, p.115. See 'Films from the front', *The Optician*, 18 May 1900, p.347, quoted by John Barnes, 1900 volume, pp.109-10: this stated of the last film that it depicted the ambulance van driving off (which is what PD must have meant by 'procession of the Ambulance party') so was effectively a continuation of the wounded soldier film.

<sup>21</sup> PD June 1900, p.128. *The Optician*, 18 May 1900, p.347 named the cameraman as simply A. Underwood.

<sup>22</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.110.

<sup>23</sup> PD June 1900, p.128.

<sup>24</sup> 'Deaths from disease: Bloemfontein', *The Times* 30 May 1900, p.12, col.1. The majority of the deaths in this report were from enteric fever, mainly in the period 24 to 26 May (as 'reported by the General at Cape Town').

<sup>25</sup> 'In 1899 I sent two cameras to the Boer War,' Paul recalled, mentioning Beevor and Melsom. See Robert W. Paul in 'Before 1910: Kinematograph Experiences', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, no. 38, 1936, p.5. Paul's two brothers were in the C.I.V. so probably this is how Paul decided to give a camera to Melsom. The C.I.V. did indeed include two men with the name Paul, with initials A.L. and G.H. See Barnes, 1900 volume, p.20; and *Reports on the Raising, Organising, Equipping and Dispatching the City of London Imperial Volunteers to South Africa* (London, 1900-1903), p.33.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Hiley initially did a search for Melsom, discovering the name F.A. Melsom. I have since examined other printed accounts of the regiment and can find little further information. F.A. Melsom is mentioned in, for example, William Henry Mackinnon, *The Journal of the C.I.V. In South Africa* (London: J. Murray, 1901), p.251. This states that he was a Private from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Middlesex V.A. The regiment included, printed sources state, a journalist, three to five photographers and two artists, but no names are attached to these. Further research in the papers of the C.I.V. in the PRO and Guildhall might reveal more details. One other possibility occurs to me: was Paul mis-remembering the name Sidney Melsom for the cameraman with a vaguely similar name, 'Sidney Goldman', who was filming the war for Warwick?

<sup>27</sup> Paul wrote to Thelma Gutsche: 'Colonel Beevor's films which I developed here... were the more successful. They included...' and he lists 5 films, with variations on titles which appear in his catalogue. Thelma Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895-1940* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1972), p.45.

<sup>28</sup> The C.I.V. departed on 13 January, two and a half months after the Scots' Guards. However, F.A. Melsom was in the C.I.V. 'draft', the second batch to be sent out, so was in South Africa even later than the main group, making it even less likely that he could have filmed much. Mackinnon, *The Journal of the C.I.V. In South Africa*, p.251. Incidentally, Paul shot and released a film of the main C.I.V.'s departure: *Embarkation of the City Imperial Volunteers for South Africa*. See details in Barnes, 1900 volume.

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<sup>29</sup> Some sources describe him wrongly as 'Colonel', but he was a Surgeon-Major until 1904 and only thereafter a Colonel. See *Roll of Commissioned Officers in the Medical Service of the British Army, 1727-1898* (Aberdeen, 1917). This states that he had been attached to the Scots' Guards since 1885. He was educated at Edinburgh University.

<sup>30</sup> In the Tirah region the British faced a formidable danger from snipers, and if a soldier was hit it was sometimes difficult to locate the bullet. For this reason Beevor brought an X-ray apparatus from Britain, thus being the first person to use this technology on active service.

<sup>31</sup> BJP 3 Nov 1899, p.700 notes that Beevor 'took with him a Röntgen-ray outfit for the purpose of localising the bullets'. There is much literature on this issue, including: 'The working of the Röntgen Ray in warfare', BJP, 27 May 1898, pp.342-43; L.J. Ramsey, 'Bullet wounds and X-rays in Britain's little wars', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, v.60, 1982, pp.91-102.

<sup>32</sup> *St. Veronica*, May 1899.

<sup>33</sup> See W.C. Beevor, *With the Central Column in South Africa* (London, 1903). They sailed on the *Nubia*, and Paul later released a film of this embarkation. See Barnes, 1899 volume. Stirling states that they sailed on 20 Oct and arrived 13 Nov. See John Stirling, *Our Regiments in South Africa, 1899-1902: Their Record, Based on the Despatches* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1903), p.19-21. Other sources state the sailing was the 21 Oct. A photograph of Beevor on the *Nubia* en route to S. Africa is in Cuthbert (see below), 1904, p.1, and another image of his on p.257.

<sup>34</sup> Stirling, *Our Regiments in South Africa, 1899-1902*, passim. The British lost nearly 900 men killed and wounded at the battle of Magersfontein, though the Boers also suffered one of their worst numbers of casualties in this battle, with 320 killed or wounded. Casualty figures from Clodfelter. Stephen Badsey has an interesting view on these 'Black Week' defeats, noting that they were less significant militarily than for their effect on the publics in Britain and the colonies through the media, and arguing that though the British suffered losses in these battles, they had also had some successes earlier. Stephen Badsey, 'The Boer War as a Media War', in *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, ed. P. Dennis and J. Grey (Canberra: Army History Unit, 1999); Stephen Badsey, 'War Correspondents in the Boer War', in John Gooch, ed. *Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p.187-203.

<sup>35</sup> Based on reports from the *Times* correspondent, reproduced in Raymond Sibbald, *The War Correspondents: The Boer War* (Bridend: Bramley Books; Sutton, 1997), p.53 and 73. Beevor was later awarded medals and mentioned in despatches for his work in the war. John Barnes has dated some four of his films here to the days just before Magersfontein.

<sup>36</sup> Noted in an account of the Scots in the campaign, which was heavily illustrated with still photographs taken by members of his regiment who had amateur stills cameras. James Harold Cuthbert, *The 1st Battalion Scots Guards in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London: Harrison, 1904): prefatory remarks. Their number included Lord E.D. Loch, in the Grenadier Guards (associated with the Scots' Guards for this operation), who had also photographed in the Sudan. This profusion of cameras meant that Beevor would not have been entirely out of place with his movie camera. Incidentally, some photographs, published in a popular history of the war, were credited to Beevor/Paul. See Herbert Wrigley Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria: A History of the Boer War of 1899-1900* (London: Harmsworth Brothers, 1900). p.154 photo credited to R.W. Paul: 'Thirsty soldiers at the water-wheel at Belmont', Nov 1899; p.232 photo credited to Surgeon-Major Beevor – of a volunteer on a Burmese pony, probably Dec 1899; and p.432, photo credited to Surgeon-Major Beevor: of 'Cronje's cavalry, after the surrender'. Beevor's 1903 album was published by *The King* periodical for whom he had presumably been photographing at the war.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Warwick and S. B. Spies, *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1980), p.59. Significantly, the 27<sup>th</sup> was the anniversary of the Boer victory at Majuba in 1881. The siege of Kimberley ended in mid February, so this was a hopeful time for the British campaign. On this Paardeberg victory, see Jacqueline B. Hughes, 'The Press and the Public During the Boer War 1899-1902', *The Historian* 61, Spring 1999, p.14. Hughes is apparently working on a book about the press during the Boer War.

<sup>38</sup> Mortimer Menpes and Dorothy Menpes, *War Impressions: Being a Record in Colour* (London: A. & C. Black, 1901), p.201. Menpes was not taken with Cronje, and wrote (p.200), 'General Cronje is a heavy man, cunning and vulgar, with a long, unkempt beard, and rude manners. He sulked all the time.' Menpes was a skilled artist working for *Black and White*

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magazine. He is on the list of approved war correspondents as Mr. Mortimer Mempes [sic]. Quoted from *The Friend* April 1900: cited in Unger, *With Bobs...*, p.408-9.

<sup>39</sup> Description including assessment as a 'remarkable film', from Elizabeth Grottle Strebel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage', in *Film before Griffith*, ed. J. L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.268. In Paul's catalogue the synopsis notes that, 'as the cart passes the camera, Cronje is seen to look out in astonishment at it'. This source adds that Cronjé was being taken away in the early morning. Presumably, therefore this was shot on the day *after* the battle, the 28 February. Incidentally, stills photographers also recorded the defeated Cronjé: see Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War - Illustrated Edition* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993), p.178-9. See also Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria : A History of the Boer War of 1899-1900*, p.429: this has an uncredited photo of Cronjé just after he surrendered. Mackern (photographing stereographs) managed to take a picture of 'General Cronje and party leaving headquarters for the train'. See 'Stereoscopy at the seat of war', BJP Suppl. 4 May 1900, p.36.

<sup>40</sup> We know that it was filmed near Paardeberg, because a report in BJP 6 April 1900, p.221 describes the scene of the captured Cronjé, adding that Paul also has 'a view of the Boer shell-proof pits in their camp, showing the camp exactly as it was left by Cronjé's army on its surrender'.

<sup>41</sup> This film survives in the New Zealand Film Archive, (though is missing some footage) and two others by Beevor are in the NFTVA: *Ambulance Crossing the Modder*, and *Cronje's Surrender to Lord Roberts*. Richard Brown suspects that a Beevor film collection existed in the mid 1930s, but hasn't managed to find its whereabouts.

<sup>42</sup> Cuthbert, *The 1st Battalion Scots Guards in South Africa, 1899-1902*, p.257.

<sup>43</sup> Beevor, *With the Central Column in South Africa*, p.23. The book includes a photograph of him with camera, captioned 'Surgeon-Major Beevor's biograph at Modder River'. And in Cuthbert, 1904, op. cit., is a photograph showing him with his colleagues on the ship to South Africa. After the Boer War, Beevor served in India from 1902 to 1903, and during the Great War he came out of retirement to work with the Territorials in a medical capacity.

<sup>44</sup> Robert W. Paul in 'Before 1910', op. cit., p.5. See 'Pictures of the Transvaal War', in R.W.Paul Catalogue, 1902, and also in the 1903 catalogue, an example of which is held in the BFI, and another copy is in the Cinémathèque Française. Film descriptions are also reproduced in Barnes' 1899 and 1900 volumes of the 21 films originally advertised in the *Era* etc (though it is possible Beevor shot more which were not released). See Paul's ad in *The Era* 8 Sep 1900, p.28.

<sup>45</sup> He worked at theatres in Exeter, Bristol and Northampton, from about 1890, according to the 'Backstage' database website of RSLP. The 1901 British Census records a Charles Noble, aged 47 living in Lambeth, south London (born Cheshunt, Herts). He is described as an out of work theatrical manager, and I believe that this is the man known as Charles Rider Noble.

<sup>46</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.113.

<sup>47</sup> 'Bio-tableaux: a chat with Mr. Gibbons', MHTR 18 May 1900, p.315. In this article a Warwick film is described, filmed by Edgar Hyman (and presumably being exhibited by Gibbons).

<sup>48</sup> 'A chat with Walter Gibbons', *The Era* 20 Oct 1900, p.22.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Gibbons ad, *The Showman*, Dec 1900, p.4. The text with its list of films is reproduced in J. H. De Lange, *The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902 on Film* (Pretoria: State Archives Service, 1991), p.114-116, though omits the source. The ad lists a series of films relating to the war, totalling 611 ft. None of the films were apparently new, and the headliner films depicted the victory parade in Pretoria, which had taken place back in June.

<sup>50</sup> Listed in, 'Gibbons' latest film subjects', *The Era* 10 Nov 1900, p.30. Also listed in J. H. De Lange, *passim*.

<sup>51</sup> On 1 Oct 1900 the first returning draft of the Royal Canadian Regiment embarked at Cape Town, aboard the S.S. *Idaho* for Halifax (16 officers and 430 other ranks). See R. C. Fetherstonhaugh, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, 1883-1933* (Montreal, 1936), p.149.

<sup>52</sup> Doyle mentions General Knox, but gives no date for this particular event. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War : A Two Years' Record* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1902). Chapter 33 concerns the northern operations from January to April, 1901.

<sup>53</sup> The latter two titles are listed in J. H. De Lange, op. cit., p.117. Prince Christian Victor of Schleswig-Holstein was a grandson of Queen Victoria, born at Windsor Castle 1867 and died

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of malaria or enteric fever at Pretoria (while serving in the war) on 29 October 1900, aged 33. He was interred in the Pretoria cemetery on 1 November 1900. From Wikipedia.

<sup>54</sup> Date noted by Childers. Also *The Times* 8 Oct 1900, p.5e: 'Dateline Cape Town, Oct. 7. The transport *Aurania* left here with the C.I.V. on board at 5 30 pm.'

<sup>55</sup> J. H. De Lange, op. cit., pp.118-119. An ad for Gibbons, *The Era* 3 Nov 1900, p.31, lists three films taken in South Africa, including two re the C.I.V. preparing to return home and then embarking.

<sup>56</sup> See chapter 13 of Erskine Childers, *In the Ranks of the C.I.V. : A Narrative and Diary of Personal Experiences with the C.I.V. Battery (Honourable Artillery Company) in South Africa* (London: Smith, Elder, 1900). Sprigg was Cecil Rhodes' nominee in the Cape government. Childers notes that during this departure ceremony, 'the quays were swarming with soldiers and civilians'. He adds that just after the filmed episode, 'The pilot appeared on the bridge, shore-ropes were cast off, "Auld Lang Syne" was played, then "God save the Queen." Every hat on board and ashore was waving, and every voice cheering, and so we backed off, and steamed out of the basin.'

<sup>57</sup> Several members of the British forces complained that they were fighting in South Africa to defend the interests of Jewish money men (who were profiting from the Johannesburg goldfields) and even expressed admiration for their enemies, the Boer farmers with their rural, 'ideal' way of life. See Donal Lowry, ed. *The South African War Reappraised, Studies in Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.205 re anti-Semitism among British officers; and see Deian Hopkin, 'Socialism and Imperialism: The ILP Press and the Boer War', in *Impacts and Influences : Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*, ed. James Curran et al (London: Methuen, 1987), p.17-18: this covers anti-Semitism among left wingers in the UK, some of whom maintained that it was Jewish capitalists and the Jewish-owned press which had fomented the war. However, for British Jews at the front, fighting in the war was often seen as an affirmation of their Englishness: see Richard Mendelsohn, 'The Jewish war: Anglo-Jewry and the South African war', in *Writing a Wider War : Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War, 1899-1902*, ed. G. Cuthbertson et al (Athens: Ohio University Press ; Cape Town : David Philip Publishers, 2002), p.247-65.

<sup>58</sup> His sister is listed in the Census as Ida Gabriel, a very Jewish-sounding name. I suspect that Noble himself had changed his name, perhaps to enter the theatrical profession. A photograph of Noble in 1909 shows a somewhat stocky man, though scarcely fat.

<sup>59</sup> The following year Rider Noble went to film in Morocco, being based in the court of the Sultan, and by the autumn of 1903 was in the employ of Charles Urban, for whom he travelled to the Balkans and filmed scenes with the insurgent rebels in Macedonia. In 1905 Noble was filming in South America, again for Urban. It is not clear what happened to him after this, though he seems to have continued travelling.

<sup>60</sup> Listed 'Mr. J.B. Stanford', as the correspondent for the *Western Morning News*, and not as a cinematographer. In this list are 36 names of accredited correspondents. PRO: WO 32/7137.

<sup>61</sup> Low and Manvell, p.25.

<sup>62</sup> The *Mexican* departed 7 Oct 1899. Among the passengers listed were Mr Benett-Stanford [sic], single male, no age or profession given. He was bound for Natal, though it seems he disembarked before there. The passenger manifesto also lists a hundred-odd troops on board, bound for the war. PRO: BT 27/312, 'Departures from Southampton'. W.K-L. Dickson departed on the *Dunottar Castle* 14 October, and Walter Beevor, filming for R.W. Paul, left on the *Nubia* 21 October. Edgar Hyman left England even earlier than Stanford (on 23 September), but he was based in South Africa, and was returning home as much as going out to film.

<sup>63</sup> Nick Hiley informs me that on 10 November 1899 Benett-Stanford was near Belmont in Cape Colony, taking still photographs of a reconnaissance by Lord Methuen's force. (A battle later took place at Belmont, 23 Nov, a loss for the British, with over 70 killed and 220 wounded.)

<sup>64</sup> Number 5507 in 'New Warwick Subjects', c. Jan 1900. A copy of this slim catalogue is at the back of the Warwick 1899 catalogue in the Urban Collection. Unusually, no lengths are given for the four Stanford films listed, the catalogue simply noting that they were, 'Photographed by Mr. Bennett Stanford, of our War Staff now with Lord Methuen's Column in South Africa'. The Warwick Apr/May 1901 catalogue, p.134, reprints comments on the film

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from the *Times* 12 Dec 1899 ('Cinematograph enterprise and the Transvaal War') and *Morning Post* 13 Dec 1899.

<sup>65</sup> This information comes from George Albert Smith's Account Book, 1898-1899. It lists several entries for J. Bennett-Stanford, 9 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, W., mainly for developing negatives, from August 1898 to April 1900, including for 5 Dec 1899, 'Dev neg "Armoured Train"'. In addition, Smith's cash and account books show that raw film stock was purchased by Stanford from Smith, probably for filming the Boer war. Thanks to Tony Fletcher for these details regarding Smith.

<sup>66</sup> The main Modder River battle took place 28 November, and was a loss for the British, with over 70 killed and 413 wounded.

<sup>67</sup> These three films appear under the heading, 'The Modder River Engagement' in 'New Warwick Subjects', c. Jan 1900.

<sup>68</sup> Warwick announced on 19 January 1900 the release of the four films taken by 'Bennett Stanford', who was then with General Gatacre.

<sup>69</sup> Smith's Account Book, 1898-1899 includes these entries: 1 Jan 1900, Dev neg 'Collecting Wounded'; 1 Jan 1900 Dev neg 'Troops Crossing Modder, train'.

<sup>70</sup> 'Triumph of the War Bioscope', *Daily Mail* 22 Jan 1900, p.7, cols.4 -5. Reference from Nick Hiley. This article characterised Mr. Bennett Stanford [sic] as 'a millionaire with a strong love of adventure'.

<sup>71</sup> Smith's Account Book, 1898-1899, includes these entries: 27 Jan 1900, Dev '4.7 Gun' 'Roberts Cape Town' (fogged); 19 Feb 1900, Dev '4.7 Gun' (fogged). It is not clear why Smith developed the '4.7 Gun' film twice. Apparently, though, while this was being filmed, the 4.7 gun came under sniper attack. When the negative reached Smith, he noticed that the filming had been 'left off in a hurry', and states that Stanford had been wounded, though the catalogue says that Stanford was merely 'compelled to retire' under the enemy fire. (see V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of 'Living Picture' Making'). These films were presumably fogged by being opened by the censor in South Africa, as Smith claimed.

<sup>72</sup> Low and Manvell, p.25.

<sup>73</sup> A newspaper as late as 22 January described Bennett-Stanford as 'head of the bioscope war staff' for Warwick in South Africa, but I believe this was probably based on out-of-date information. See 'Triumph of the War Bioscope', *Daily Mail* 22 Jan 1900. Incidentally, Stanford was not included in the long list of war correspondents granted the South African war campaign medal in 1902, Nick Hiley informs me.

<sup>74</sup> *Variety Stage* 13 June 1896, p.5: this is about Hertz at the Empire, Johannesburg. See also interview with Hyman in the same journal, 8 August, p.6, which is interesting even though he does not mention cinema.

<sup>75</sup> Both are noted in a Warwick ad in *The Era* 14 Oct 1899, p.28.

<sup>76</sup> Hyman's music hall business was heavily reliant on booking international acts. His brother Sydney was based in London to manage this end of the operation, though Edgar himself also paid regular visits to the British metropolis. His name regularly crops up in the British theatrical press of the time.

<sup>77</sup> MHTR 1 Sep 1899, p.122; 22 Sep 1899, p.171: he planned to move his artistes to Cape Town in the event of war. Two weeks later Sydney received a cable to hold artistes in London as Johannesburg was 'closed to amusements'. MHTR 29 Sep 1899, p.201; and MHTR 13 Oct 1899, p.217.

<sup>78</sup> There was a great send off for Hyman. MHTR 29 Sep 1899, p.186. Warwick later added that correspondents on board were from 'two principal London illustrated journals'.

<sup>79</sup> Warwick ad in *The Era* 14 Oct 1899, p.28. This statement was made in the context of Warwick commenting on its pre-war filming trips to South Africa.

<sup>80</sup> *The Era* 21 Oct 1899, p.28. In BJP 10 Nov 1899, p.705, Warwick also claimed that they would get negatives and furnish prints of war films 'four weeks earlier than any other concern on earth'.

<sup>81</sup> MHTR 20 Oct 1899, p.233 and *The Era* 21 Oct 1899, p.19. In my *Sight and Sound* article on Rosenthal I wrongly stated that Hyman was manager of a music hall in Cape Town – but this was only a temporary activity, and as stated here, his music hall was in Johannesburg.

<sup>82</sup> MHTR 24 Nov 1899, p.314. The company included J.B. Fitts, a pioneer film exhibitor, who had previously given film shows in the Good Hope Hall. See Gutsche, op. cit., p.25. The music hall audiences in Cape Town were notably jingoistic and violent. See Ernest Nathaniel

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Bennett, *With Methuen's Column on an Ambulance Train* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1900), p.9-11.

<sup>83</sup> 'In South Africa: an interesting letter from Edgar Hyman', MHTR 29 Dec 1899, p.428. 'Mr. Edgar M. Hyman... is constantly sending negatives of events he succeeded [in] photographing.' This was stated in 'Special Warwick Films', PD Dec 1899, p.146.

<sup>84</sup> Hyman's films of the Cape Town Volunteers [5488, 5490] may have been the first that he shot.

<sup>85</sup> *The King* 3 Feb 1900, p.138: photographs attributed to Edgar M. Hyman. Pakenham calls the General, 'poor, plodding General Warren'. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Cardinal; Sphere, 1991), p.302.

<sup>86</sup> Warwick's catalogue stated: 'The Australian Mounted Rifle Volunteers - 100 feet. Just arriving at Cape Town are shown marching down Adderley Street on their way to the Front. This View was photographed opposite the Grand Hotel, Cape Town, on December 22nd, 1899, by Mr. Edgar M. Hyman, of our War Staff. Excellent.' (no. 5526 in 'New Warwick Subjects', c. Jan 1900). On the same day he filmed the arrival of the New South Wales Lancers in Cape Town.

<sup>87</sup> A still in the Rosenthal collection (BFI) shows two wounded soldiers at Kroonstad, both apparently with arm wounds.

<sup>88</sup> Hyman: MHTR 30 March 1900, p.202; Rosenthal: *Entr'acte* 31 March 1900, p.6.

<sup>89</sup> Nick Hiley has suggested too that at some point during Bennett-Stanford's South African filming he was joined for a short while by Edgar Hyman.

<sup>90</sup> Gutsche, op. cit., p.39.

<sup>91</sup> PD July 1900, p.8.

<sup>92</sup> Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895-1940*, chapter 3, note 15, states that, 'Many years later, Edgar Hyman recollected how "my rival in the Natal theatre of war who worked for the Biograph company had a far more bulky equipment" than his own compact camera which gave him greater mobility and range of subjects.'

<sup>93</sup> After all, the company had to do the converse (reduction printing) when releasing their films on Biokam (and Biograph were having to do a similar thing when releasing their 68mm films onto 35mm.) Furthermore, it seems that another correspondent-cameraman, René Bull (q.v.) may also have had such a small film camera, which he could carry on horseback.

<sup>94</sup> After the war Hyman continued in the music hall business, and in 1912 formed a company running a chain of theatres and distributing films in South Africa, though the following year this company went into liquidation. He later became a stockbroker in Johannesburg. See E. Rosenthal, *Southern African Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Warne, 1966). This source also states that Hyman was born in England and came to South Africa in 1894, opening the Empire music hall in December 1894.

<sup>95</sup> Hughes, 'The Press and the Public During the Boer War 1899-1902', p.12.

<sup>96</sup> *The Era* 4 Aug 1900, p.24a (cited in Barnes); Warwick April 1901 catalogue.

<sup>97</sup> In a list of war correspondents reproduced in the Warwick catalogue of 1901, the *Outlook's* man is given as Goldmann and the *Telegraph's* as S. Goldmann. In an issue of *The Friend* in April 1900 a list of war correspondents includes Mr. Goldman for the *Outlook* and Messrs Burleigh (i.e. Bennet Burleigh) and S. Goldmann for the *Telegraph*. Cited in Frederic William Unger, *With "Bobs" and Krüger* (Cape Town: Struik, 1977), p.408-9. The first War Office list of approved correspondents, probably of 29 September, included a 'C.S. Godmann' for the *Outlook* among 36 names of accredited correspondents. The list is in PRO: WO32/7137. C.S. Goldman appears in later sources as acting for the *Telegraph*, the *Argus* and the *Standard* newspapers during the war, and he himself stated in his 1902 book that he was acting as correspondent for the *Standard*. See Charles Sydney Goldman, *With General French and the Cavalry in South Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1902).

<sup>98</sup> Charles' older brother was Richard Goldmann (b.1861), also born in Burghersdorp but 7 years earlier, in 1861. This Goldmann was a correspondent for several newspapers, including the *Outlook*, and in his autobiography describes being besieged in Ladysmith and the subsequent campaign to take Pretoria. Richard Goldmann, *A South African Remembers* (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1946-47): see esp. p.108, 119-124.

<sup>99</sup> Data on his birth date and spelling of his name are inconsistent: some sources state 'Goldmann', some that he was born in 1869 or 1866. He was apparently educated in Germany, but came to England in 1891 to work for a mining firm with South African interests,

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later marrying into the British aristocracy. He moved in high circles in the UK, became proprietor of the *Outlook* periodical, and was elected a British MP. See various biographical sources cited under the Saur database, especially *The Jews' Who's Who* (London: Judaic Pub. Co., 1920) and Wills and Barrett, *Anglo-African Who's Who* (London: Routledge, 1905).

<sup>100</sup> Goldman was especially impressed with the cavalry in the campaign, and in the preface to his 1902 book, he wrote that the Boer War proved the value of cavalry, which role was likely to increase in future wars. He was proved correct in the sense that the Boer War demonstrated the need for mobility, though wrong in the sense that the horse was even then being replaced by mechanical transport. Sadly Goldman's book contains no photograph of the author, and I can find no manuscripts by him.

<sup>101</sup> Goldman's 1902 book also includes numerous folding maps. Before the war he had published an authoritative mining map of the Witwatersrand.

<sup>102</sup> Probably a search of the *Standard's* columns for the period might reveal some more personal details.

<sup>103</sup> Warwick catalogue, 1901, p.181.

<sup>104</sup> Goldman's book details the war until about October. It is his brother who tells us that Charles returned to Johannesburg in early November. Richard Goldmann, *A South African Remembers*, p.124.

<sup>105</sup> Dickson was a pioneer motion picture inventor and engineer, of Anglo-Scottish parentage who worked in the USA for Thomas Edison from 1883 to 1895, where he was instrumental in developing the Kinetoscope film viewer, before joining the Mutoscope and Biograph company and moving to Britain as technical manager and cameraman of its British arm. See McKernan/Herbert, *Who's Who*.

<sup>106</sup> Some of Dickson's still photographs were published, though in many cases publishers used blow-ups from the movie film, and these, credited to Biograph, regularly appeared in illustrated periodicals, as well as in some books and newspapers.

<sup>107</sup> W.K.L. Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle: Its Story in the South African War* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901). As Richard Brown indicates in his introduction to the 1995 reprint, the volume has another significance, for it was the first book ever published by a film cameraman. The book came out a year after the events described, being reviewed in March 1901. See PD, March 1901, p.70.

<sup>108</sup> Perhaps the most complete single work available is the reprint of Dickson's book, with a brief introduction by Richard Brown: *The Biograph in Battle* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1995); John Barnes in his 1899 and 1900 volumes distils many details from the photographic and entertainment press; J.H. DeLange, *The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (Pretoria: State Archives Service, 1991) offers many filmographic details.

<sup>109</sup> The articles by Dickson appeared in *The Illustrated War News* from October 1899. This periodical is held uniquely at the British Library in Colindale. Another important source is *The War by Biograph*, a brochure published by the company for their London screenings. Both of these include details and photographs which do not appear in Dickson's book, particularly of the voyage to South Africa. The William Cox diary pages are in the National Army Museum, MSS number 8209-33. See also *Leslies Weekly* 10 Feb 1900, 'How the Boers and the British fight', a long account by Dickson, and William J. Sparks, 'Under fire with a moving picture camera', *NY Herald*, 12 July 1903, literary section, p.8. I wonder if this author could be a pseudonym for William Cox? Incidentally, William Cox's son, Mr. Francis J. Cox (of 37 Carter Avenue, Exmouth, Devon) wrote to the National Film Archive in 1976, donating five Biograph films. This from Luke McKernan, 11 Aug 1999.

<sup>110</sup> Thelma Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895-1940*, p.42-45. See also Michael Eckardt, 'Pioneers in South African Film History: Thelma Gutsche's Tribute to William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, the Man Who Filmed the Boer War', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 25, no. 4, Oct 2005, p.637-646.

<sup>111</sup> The passenger manifest for the *Dunottar Castle*, departing 14 Oct 1899, includes Mr. W.K.L. Dickson, 'Traveller', 27 yrs, Scotch, single. His destination is given as Algoa Bay, presumably meaning Delagoa Bay, which is puzzling, given that it is farther along the coast even than Durban. The manifest also includes these three press men: Mr. A. Collett, 'Reporter', 22 yrs, English, single, bound for Natal (interestingly, Collett is not on the official list of correspondents); Capt. the Hon. A. Campbell, 'Press', 36 yrs, Scotch, married, bound for Cape Town (he worked for Laffans, says the official list of correspondents); Mr. Winston



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Churchill, 'Press', 36 yrs, married, English, bound for Cape Town. Also on board was photographer H.C. Shelley. See PRO file, BT 27/312, 'Departures from Southampton'.

<sup>112</sup> Though in one source Dickson is cited as claiming that Buller was very cooperative on the *Dunottar*! See H.L. Adam, 'Round the world for the Biograph', *Royal Magazine*, v.6, 1901, p.127.

<sup>113</sup> Dickson makes no comment on this, but fellow passenger Winston Churchill noticed the incident: 'We have a party of cinematographers on board... and when they found we were going to speak the *Nineveh*, they bustled about preparing their apparatus. But the cumbrous appliances took too long to set up and, to the bitter disappointment of the artists, the chance of making a moving picture was lost forever.' Winston Churchill, *London to Ladysmith Via Pretoria* (London, 1900), p.8; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 1991, p.157.

<sup>114</sup> Gilbert G. R. Sackville, *Some Reminiscences of the War in South Africa* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1900), p.3. (Earl de la Warr's surname was Sackville).

<sup>115</sup> Again the filming was noticed by Churchill: 'The crew and the stokers of the 'Dunottar Castle' gave three hearty cheers; the cinematograph buzzed loudly; 40 cameras clicked; the guard presented arms, and the harbour batteries thundered the salute.' Churchill, *London to Ladysmith Via Pretoria*, p.20. The ship reached Cape Town 30 October, and Buller's disembarkation took place the following day.

<sup>116</sup> Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle*.

<sup>117</sup> Three versions of this are held in the NFTVA. A still photograph from it was reproduced in *The Biograph in Battle* (p.129) and in the *New York Journal* 30 March 1900 (p.16) where it is captioned 'most remarkable war photograph ever made' (filed in the Biograph scrapbook, A2923-33 at the Seaver Center).

<sup>118</sup> Charles R. N. Burne, *With the Naval Brigade in Natal, 1899-1900* (London: E. Arnold, 1902), p.15. This was referring to the 4.7 naval guns assault on Gun Hill on 12 Dec 1899. And of the Boxing Day sports in camp the officer wrote, 'The Biograph people who are still with us took a scene of the Tug o' War, our Oom Paul and then a tableau of the hanging of Kruger.' (ibid, p.26)

<sup>119</sup> See *The War by Biograph*, op. cit., p.267, which reproduces frames from the film.

<sup>120</sup> Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle*, p.69-70.

<sup>121</sup> At Dickson's side stood Winston Churchill. See *The Biograph in Battle*, p.174.

<sup>122</sup> From Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria*, p.480. Gutsche states that this is the only still of the Biograph cart with the camera in position for shooting, which may be correct, though others show the crew filming with the huge camera on the battlefield.

<sup>123</sup> Cecil Rhodes was involved peripherally in the mutoscope business before the war ('...Mr. Rhodes has ordered half-a-dozen machines!' stated the *Westminster Gazette*, 21 Sep 1899, p.4). There was a South African branch of the Biograph company (mentioned by Gutsche). Dickson's discussions with Rhodes, therefore, were presumably aimed at developing an existing business, though the novel angle seems to have been to use moving pictures as a means of encouraging immigration or investment in the country, 'showing the public the beauties of South Africa'. (Gutsche, p.43) Rhodes' brother, Major Frank Rhodes, was with Dickson on the *Dunottar* and they apparently discussed these plans, though nothing seems to have come of them despite Dickson's later meeting with Cecil.

<sup>124</sup> *Report of the Ordinary General Meeting Held on Monday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1900...* (British Mutoscope and Biograph Co. Limited) pp.6, 10-11. This report is held in the Van Guysling collection at Seaver Center, Los Angeles. Dickson says of the flag scene, 'Thus was the principal aim of our enterprise accomplished, and the heart of the Biographer was at rest.' (From *The Biograph in Battle*, p.237).

<sup>125</sup> This filming with Roberts is detailed in *The Biograph in Battle*, p.249-256.

<sup>126</sup> Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria*, p.660. This book reproduces a photograph of 'Lord Roberts receiving despatches on the lawn of the British Residency, Pretoria' which had been 'enlarged from a Biograph film'. It notes: 'The operator happened to have his camera in position at the very moment when a cyclist despatch-rider rode up with papers requiring immediate attention, and Lord Roberts was photographed in the act of opening them.'

<sup>127</sup> John Barclay Lloyd, *One Thousand Miles with the C.I.V* (London: Methuen, 1901), p.235. This author notes that his unit of C.I.V. was bringing despatches about casualties at Schwartz Kop, having evaded the Boers and just ridden fifteen miles to Pretoria. He adds of Dickson's film: 'This scene was shown at the Palace Theatre for some nights.'

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<sup>128</sup> *Report of the Ordinary General Meeting*, op. cit., p.6. This had been, the report notes, 'an exceptional year for expense' for the company. Though Biograph did, apparently, make a profit out of filming the war.

<sup>129</sup> Joseph Mason in a letter of 1938, quoted in Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895-1940*, p.45. And making the camera even heavier, there was another attachment which was (Paul Spehr believes) to power a pump to maintain the film against the gate. This cycle wheel mechanism may be seen in illustrations of the camera in use in South Africa. Such wheel mechanisms were used in this era to power devices such as projector dynamos. e.g. see illustration in G.M. Coissac, *Histoire du Cinématographe* (Paris: Editions du Cinéopse ; Gauthier-Villars, 1925), p.294.

<sup>130</sup> Cox wrote to his wife (Durban, 17 March): 'After the relief of Ladysmith we cabled to Windmill St to say that a more portable apparatus was indispensable.' William Cox diaries, NAM: 8209-33-9.

<sup>131</sup> William Cox diaries, 8909-33-11.

<sup>132</sup> Later that year, 1900, Biograph did indeed develop a smaller, hand-cranked camera, though Bitzer wasn't able to use it until September. Bitzer had had similar problems with the huge camera in Cuba and so managed to film very little.

<sup>133</sup> I described Rosenthal's career in one of the first articles I wrote on early cinema: Stephen Bottomore, 'The Most Glorious Profession', *Sight and Sound*, 52, no.4 (Autumn 1983) pp.260-65. I have since discovered new information, and some of the data in this article is therefore unreliable.

<sup>134</sup> This figure comes from Strebel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage', p.265.

<sup>135</sup> Warwick's 1899 catalogue, p.110 (held in the Urban collection). Sir Donald Currie (1825-1909), ship-owner and politician, was founder of the Castle Line between England and South Africa.

<sup>136</sup> In Warwick catalogue, 1901. In *The Friend*, April 1900, the entry is given as : 'Cinemetograph [sic] - Messrs. Rosenthal, Hyman'. Cited in Unger, *With "Bobs" and Krüger.*, p.408-9.

<sup>137</sup> OMLJ Aug 1900, p.93.

<sup>138</sup> 'Round the World with a Camera', *Bioscope* 17 Dec 1908, p.22. In another interview Rosenthal stated that, 'he cinematographed Kruger coming out of his house before the war rose'. See 'Some odd characters – the cinematographer', *Glasgow Evening News*, 9 Sep 1901, p.2.

<sup>139</sup> This South African trip may alternatively have been on the *Tantallon Castle*, for the Warwick catalogue of Sep 1900 lists some films shot on board this ship *en route* to South Africa (or perhaps the Tantallon voyage was the return journey, or during his first trip to the Cape).

<sup>140</sup> 'Special Warwick Films', PD Dec 1899, p.146. This gives the departure date as 2 December, though Barnes states it was 1 December. The ship left Las Palmas for the Cape 8 December, but I have so far not found the arrival date in South Africa from shipping information.

<sup>141</sup> 'Special Warwick Films', PD Dec 1899, p.146.

<sup>142</sup> 'Round the World with a Camera', op. cit., 1908. The second crossing was at Trichard's Drift, 17 Jan 1900.

<sup>143</sup> The Buller film was not listed in *The Era*, or at least is not in Barnes, though it survives in the NFTVA as *General Buller's Transport Train of Ox-Teams* and is 91 ft. long. He mentioned this film in a later letter back to Warwick. Rosenthal wrote: 'I am sending you by this mail seven negatives, which I hope will turn out perfect. I have not as yet heard from you with reference to the twenty-odd negatives I sent you from the front on my previous trip, including the "Skirmish," "Ostrich Farm," "General Buller's Transport Train," "Boer Laager," etc.' Letter quoted in 'At the Front With a Cinematograph', PD Apr 1900, p.75-76. The Buller film we have mentioned; the three other titles were later released by Warwick as *A Skirmish With the Boers Near Kimberley*; *Scene on Mr N. Smit's Ostrich Farm, Impanzi, Natal*; and *War Supplies and Provisions Arriving at a Boer Laager By a Train of Ox Teams*. These were all advertised in the *Era* on 3 March (see Barnes, 1900 volume, p.206).

<sup>144</sup> These may have been part of Rosenthal's other consignment of 7 films. The Durban films were *Carrying the Wounded on Board the Hospital Ship at Durban* [5551] and two views of

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sailors training [5635 and 5536]. *A Bit of Natal Scenery* [5630] showed a view from a train between Mooi River and Estcourt, on the Ladysmith line.

<sup>145</sup> The catalogue states: 'These scenes portray one of the many brushes with the Boers...' The full title of the film is, *A Skirmish With the Boers Near Kimberley by a Troop Of Cavalry Scouts Attached to General French's Column*. The three sections were given as *The Scouts in Pursuit of the Boers, Bringing the Maxims into Action and A Charge and General Fusillade*.

<sup>146</sup> The pass was issued by a General Schugt(?), though the date on the pass looks like 4.3.1900, which would be too late, as these two films were released in Britain on 3 March. But perhaps the pass date is a time-limit, rather than a date of issue?

<sup>147</sup> *The Era*, 3 March 1900, p.27c (quoted in Barnes).

<sup>148</sup> Rosenthal wrote to Warwick, 'I returned to Port Elizabeth after my second trip and requested permission to again get to the front...': quoted in 'At the Front With a Cinematograph', *PD* April 1900, p.75-76. This and other articles about Rosenthal were recently discovered by the author in the *Photographic Dealer*, a rare periodical which was not collected in its entirety in any British library, and it appears that the sole issues for this Boer War period are held in the NYPL.

<sup>149</sup> The Port Elizabeth films were Warwick numbers 5556, 5557, 5618-5621, advertised like the previously mentioned titles on 3 March, suggesting that they were sent in the same batch, and at least some of which were shot the first week in February, which we can deduce as follows. One of the films showed the Derbyshire Regiment arriving, and shipping sources record that the *Umbria* left Cape Town for Port Elizabeth on 3 Feb, carrying 89 officers and 2,034 men belonging to the 4<sup>th</sup> Derbyshire Regt. (the ship departed Southampton circa 12 Jan). Four of the six films showed a naval brigade and its 4.7 inch guns arriving. This could be from the *Upada*, which left Bombay 28 Jan for Natal with 320 reserve horses, a transport section, twelve 15-pounder guns, and six 4.7 naval guns. The sixth film showed the Queen's Lancers disembarking their horses.

<sup>150</sup> Rosenthal quoted in, 'At the Front With a Cinematograph', op. cit.

<sup>151</sup> Rosenthal wrote: 'I began to think taking war films was a bit off from my point of view, and used some strong language inwardly.' Inwardly on this occasion, though apparently Rosenthal's strong language was sometimes made in full voice !

<sup>152</sup> 'At the Front With a Cinematograph', op. cit.

<sup>153</sup> He notes that 'I went to the Castle Line Office to get my berth to Cape Town : found there would be no boat for eleven days, so decided to go by the Union steamer, the "Briton." Got into Cape-town Sunday night.' He means that his preference was a Castle line ship (with whom Warwick had a special arrangement), but took the earlier Union line ship to save time.

<sup>154</sup> 'At the Front With a Cinematograph', op. cit. He also notes, 'I received your wire and remittance sent care of Castle Line, Capetown', which helps confirm that there was a special arrangement between Warwick and the Castle Line.

<sup>155</sup> 'At the front with a cinematograph', op. cit. Another source reports the gist of Rosenthal's letter but probably inaccurately, stating that the pass was issued on 21 Feb, and that 10,000 ft. of film was actually sent to him. *AP* 30 Mar 1900, p.242.

<sup>156</sup> This is film no. 5646 in the Warwick catalogue. Hyman's film of Rosie is no. 5652, and nos. 5653-5654 are other Orange River scenes shot by Rosie at or near the pontoon bridge.

<sup>157</sup> This film, shot by Edgar Hyman, depicted war supplies crossing a bridge over the Orange River, and the film also caught, as the first to cross, Rosenthal with his camera and tripod, who had just taken some shots on the other side of the river. See 'Bio-tableaux: a chat with Mr. Gibbons', *MHTR* 18 May 1900, p.315. The fact that the two cameramen were here together, and at Pretoria, somewhat belies Warwick's claim that, 'Mr. Rosenthal will go through a different section of South Africa than that covered by Mr. Edgar M. Hyman...' 'Special Warwick Films', *PD*, Dec 1899, p.146.

<sup>158</sup> 'How war films are made', *The Showman*, Sep 1900, p.11-13. His food was mainly hard biscuit, with tinned meat as an occasional luxury, we are told.

<sup>159</sup> W.T. Stead, 'The Mission of the Cinematograph', in *Review of Reviews Annual, 1902* (London, 1901), p.179. The gist of this Stead article is also in: 'Cinematograph Chats: no.1 The Warwick Trading Company', *Talking Machine News*, Jan 1904, p.178. Another article adds: 'As regards luggage, it was found that the cinematograph apparatus, supplied by the above firm, could be strapped on the back of one mule, while another would carry the personal luggage. By this arrangement it was possible to keep pace with the troops, but if the instruments be conveyed by waggon they must remain in the rear, and therefore the operator

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is unable to obtain pictures of the most interesting scenes.' 'The cinematograph in warfare', PD July 1900, p.7-8. The article continues: 'It is noteworthy that Messrs. Rosenthal and Hyman are the only cinematographers out at the front ; others with like instruments have been content with the waggon method of transport, and have consequently been left behind. When long marches are contemplated, both mules are used with a waggon, but as soon as more rapid progress is desirable the waggon is out-spanned, and the mules used separately as described.' See also 'Special interview with Mr. J. Rosenthal', *Jewish World*, 3 August 1900, p.292-293. As well as covering the war in general, this interview deals with Rosenthal's meetings with members of the Jewish community in South Africa during the war.

<sup>160</sup> Presumably this being the same 'negro attendant' who (see note 165 below), had on one occasion innocently brought a hoard of dynamite into the camp.

<sup>161</sup> 'Special interview with Mr. J. Rosenthal', op. cit., 3 Aug 1900.

<sup>162</sup> W.T. Stead, 'The Mission of the Cinematograph', op. cit., p.179.

<sup>163</sup> These two were advertised on different dates, suggesting they were also mailed on different dates. Also filmed in Bloemfontein and released with the other Coldstream Guards film were nos. 5665 and 5666.

<sup>164</sup> Burnham's role in the war is mentioned in Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1901), p.439.

<sup>165</sup> 'The cinematograph in warfare', op. cit. An almost identically worded report of the loss appeared in 'How war films are made', *The Showman*, op. cit. An 'interview' probably means a shot of the two men chatting together. The *Mexican* sank on 5 April after colliding with another ship, and though all hands and the mails were saved, some cargo was lost, including some photographs and Warwick's films. See C. Hocking, *Dictionary of Disasters at Sea* (London: Stamp Exchange, 1990). The loss on the *Mexican* of one photographer's entire set of photographs of the war to date is reported in H.C. Shelley, 'War and the camera', AP 21 Sep 1900, p.230-32. The unfortunate photographer was Mackern.

<sup>166</sup> 'The cinematograph in warfare', op. cit.; and 'How war films are made', op. cit. The former article details some other adventures Rosenthal had been through, including an incident of filming a field gun which fired mistakenly, and another occasion when his 'negro attendant' came back with some dynamite that he'd found, giving the cameraman a severe scare.

<sup>167</sup> 'Mr. J. Rosenthal – Representing the Warwick Trading Co., England', *Australasian Photographic Review* 22 June 1901, p.9. Also in 'Important notice', WTC April 1901 catalogue.

<sup>168</sup> For example, the Warwick April 1901 catalogue notes that, 'Owing to the activity of the Boers around Johannesburg after the British Army occupied the town, and the difficulty in getting the convoy carrying the mails through to Cape Town, much delay was occasioned in receiving the negatives showing the Johannesburg incidents.'

<sup>169</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.88. Film numbers 5630-5633. These were taken on both transport and armoured trains.

<sup>170</sup> Will Day Collection, Cinémathèque française. These dates are around the time of the surrender of Bloemfontein (the Modder River is nearby). The latter pass was signed Major J.H. Turss, or similar name (it is hard to read).

<sup>171</sup> 'Special interview with Mr. J. Rosenthal', op. cit., 1900. This presumably happened 5 May 1900 while he was filming *Naval Gun crossing the Vet River Drift* [5674].

<sup>172</sup> The photograph is reproduced in Gutsche, op. cit. A war correspondent, Lord Cecil Manners, in reporting Kroonstad's surrender, stated: 'I noticed a 'cinematograph' at work during the march in, so I hope that the public may be enabled to witness for themselves this interesting and memorable scene as it actually occurred'. This cinematograph camera presumably must have been operated by Rosenthal. See 'War letters', *Morning Post* 21 June 1900, quoted in the Warwick 1901 catalogue, p.154. Also in: 'Mr. J. Rosenthal – Representing the Warwick Trading Co., England', op. cit. Incidentally, Rosenthal also recorded Pole-Carew's forces in still photographs.

<sup>173</sup> 'The cinematograph in warfare', op. cit.

<sup>174</sup> The film survives in the Imperial War Museum at full length, and a fragment in the NFTVA. One of these versions was screened at the NFT, Oct 1999.

<sup>175</sup> This was at Smaldeel, on the railway just north of the Vet River, some 50 miles back from Kroonstad. 'The cinematograph in warfare', op. cit. The article notes: 'Very important to the correspondent is the good-will of the Press Censor – Lord Stanley'.

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<sup>176</sup> 'Our Latest Manufacturer, Mr. J. Rosenthal and Some of His Experiences', *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, 15 Oct 1908, p.555, 557.

<sup>177</sup> Perhaps Warwick learned their lesson from this: better to have a small section looked at by the censor in the field and marked as such, thereby avoiding the danger of the cans of exposed films later being opened by military officials.

<sup>178</sup> From V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of 'Living Picture' Making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488; and earlier details from 'Triumph of the War Bioscope', *Daily Mail*, 22 Jan 1900, p.7, cols.4-5. The latter added: "Martial law" is thus responsible for the loss to the British public of some exceedingly interesting pictures. However, most of the large consignments that the Warwick Company have received from the front have arrived intact.' Reference from Nick Hiley. As we have seen, the Boers too applied a de facto censorship on filming at one point, for when they captured a consignment of raw film stock destined for Rosenthal's use, they threw this film 'all over the veldt'.

<sup>179</sup> Film nos. 5731-5733 and 5737-5739. The latter three films were possibly cut from a single 150 ft. film, and two of these survive in the NFTVA, as does the war balloon film (though decayed, as is the shot of ambulances). Lords Roberts and Kitchener may have appeared in one of these films: they are in a still of the Vaal crossing in ILN 11 Aug 1900, p.203. Rosenthal's still photographs survive of the artillery drawn by ox teams crossing the Vaal, and of the Essex Regiment crossing by punt.

<sup>180</sup> The photo is reproduced in Warwick's 1901 catalogue, p.135.

<sup>181</sup> A soldier next to Rosenthal was shot during this battle. See 'Round the World with a Camera', op. cit. Elandsfontein was a strategic railway junction some 8 miles east of Johannesburg.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas T. Jeans and Charles N. Robinson, *Naval Brigades in the South African War, 1899-1900* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1901). p.127. This writer doesn't mention Rosenthal by name, but I believe that the cameraman in question can be no-one else. This section was apparently written by Capt. Leslie O. Wilson, who felt some cynicism toward photographers such as Rosenthal, for he begins the section with this statement: 'It was a curious thing, but our guns, especially the large ones, always offered, apparently, a most tempting bait to every owner of a cinematograph or camera. Whenever we were in difficulties, if we were fast in a bog, or delayed in a drift, or had broken a bridge, then was the moment for every camera within a range of two miles to make its appearance and fix its penetrating eye on us. The same happened when in action...'

<sup>183</sup> Incidentally, Rosenthal was not unique among the media men in facing risks in covering this war, and 33 per cent of correspondents in South Africa were killed or wounded or died of disease incurred in the course of their work – a much higher rate than for combatants. See James Archibald, 'The war correspondents of today', *Overland Monthly* 37, March 1901, p.802. Unger, *With "Bobs" and Krüger*, op. cit., p.409-12, lists over 40 pressmen who were war casualties.

<sup>184</sup> 'Round the World with a Camera', op. cit. Another source states: '...he tried – under a misapprehension – to enter Pretoria an hour or two before it surrendered, and had to retreat hurriedly without shutting up his tripod'. From 'Some odd characters – the cinematographer', op. cit.

<sup>185</sup> Roberts was keenly aware of the importance of being recorded by the media at the right moments, and his triumph in Pretoria was evidently especially image-worthy. See Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The Boer War and the Media (1899-1902)', *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 1, March 2002, p.6.

<sup>186</sup> Such symbolism is always important – one might recall the destruction of statues of Saddam, after the fall of Baghdad.

<sup>187</sup> Personal and family relationships played a significant part in Lord Roberts' campaign in South Africa, for his son, a Lieutenant, had been killed in action in Natal a week before Roberts departed from England.

<sup>188</sup> Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria*, p.544-45, 650-51.

<sup>189</sup> Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle*, p.237. Richard Brown and Thelma Gutsche state that by the time Dickson arrived in Pretoria the ceremony was over, though this is not proven.

<sup>190</sup> As Richard Brown points out, in his book, Dickson rather disingenuously suggested that the scene was too large to include both the flag and the crowds.

<sup>191</sup> Letter from W. Wolfram in the *Natal Mercury*, 19 Nov 1900, quoted in Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa, 1895-1940*, p.44. Dickson was not

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actually a 'yank', but of Scottish French origin. The Biograph film was exhibited by Perkin's Biograph. One might recall in this connection that other such images of flag raisings have been re-shot: the famous photograph of the raising of the US flag at Iwo Jima was posed, it was later revealed.

<sup>192</sup> In the former camp would be cinema verité exponents such as Lee/Pennebaker, and in the latter would be filmmakers such as Nick Broomfield.

<sup>193</sup> 'He used 15,000 ft. of film in photographing scenes on [the] march, and he would have used 5,000 more if the ubiquitous De Wet had not seized the fourth 5,000 ft. of film at his lucky haul at Roodevaal.' W.T. Stead, 'The Mission of the Cinematograph', op. cit., p.179.

<sup>194</sup> 'The cinematograph in warfare', op. cit.

<sup>195</sup> Though while on the ship to South Africa Dickson and his men were probably in 'civvies' (one officer remarked that the crew were 'not very military in appearance').

<sup>196</sup> Strebel points out that there was an 'absence of film footage on the concentration camps or on the razing of farms and crops, etc.' Actually, there was another reason for the lack of these latter kind of scenes showing British targeting of Boer civilian and economic life, for these practices mainly happened in the latter part of the war (1901 to 1902), by which time few cameramen were being sent to South Africa (though one might in turn ask why this was, as I have done in my Box on official regulation in the introduction to this chapter). Strebel, 'Imperialist Iconography...'. Strebel refers to an article by Ferro which raises the issue of distortion through gaps in visual documentation: Marc Ferro, '1917: History and Cinema', *Journal of Contemporary History*, no. 4, 1968, p.45-62.

<sup>197</sup> This was when he met a Boer fighter at one point. See Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle*, p.83. Biograph, of course, was doing business with Cecil Rhodes, the arch imperialist, who had done much to ensure that South African newspapers toed a British line. See Deian Hopkin, 'Socialism and Imperialism: The ILP Press and the Boer War', op. cit.

## Chapter 10 THE BOER WAR II. Staged scenes of British heroism

### INTRODUCTION

When the Boer war broke out, the film industry had been in existence some four years, and had already reached such a capacity that it could represent a big news story quite effectively in several kinds of films. Certainly this was to be the most thoroughly filmed war to date, in terms of both staged and actuality scenes. Staged war films were produced in greater numbers than for any previous (or indeed subsequent) conflict. These scenes were made by several companies in a number of different countries, and altogether I estimate that forty or fifty films of such films were released.<sup>1</sup>

I will cover this theme of staged Boer War films by region: including those made in Britain as well as in other countries. But first some general comments. By the 1890s, as we have seen, 'non-genuine' depictions of wars had already been produced in several other visual media, and this panoply of media representations was also apparent during the Boer war. Lantern slides, for example, through drawn and photographic images, depicted such subjects as commanders in the war, or heroic incidents of battle and dramatic deaths. (Fig. 1 and 2) This latter kind of representation found its cinematic analogy in the form of faked films, which were produced, as mentioned, in large numbers. The logic behind making such staged films was unassailable, as Gaumont's A.C. Bromhead explained. When discussing the rash of films made about the Boer War, Bromhead stated that, while films shot 'in proximity to the firing line' were of great interest to audiences in Britain, not all film companies could afford to film in South Africa, and so:

'Those who had not the means, or the enterprise, to send cameramen overseas, which, I am afraid, included Gaumont, were content with such staged scenes as they could produce at home, of which many were made. Some were very realistic, others hopelessly unreal.'<sup>2</sup>

Bromhead was right to draw attention to a variability in the degree of realism in these staged films of the war (though opinions on this at the time might not match modern perceptions), and there was variety in other respects too. Both battlefield incidents (fakes) and symbolic representations were released, and in some cases there were mixtures between these 'genres' within a single film (e.g. Gaumont's 'atrocities' film, discussed in my British section below). Incidentally, most showmen and spectators would have realised that these were merely representations, illustrations of war, and not reproductions of actual incidents – though there were many spectators who did not know (see some examples in Chapter 2).

Some of the most pertinent comment on the staged Boer War films has come in an article by film historian Elizabeth Strebél, first published in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Strebél analysed some themes and issues that she noticed from viewing surviving prints, and found most of these films to be imperialist propaganda (I discuss this analysis further below). Strebél's work is excellent; however it is also limited, in that she only considered British examples. My own rather wider trawl through Boer War staged films, shows that those made on the Continent and in the USA have a less one-sided message, with, for example, both sides in the conflict being allowed alternately to win and lose, and without recourse to propaganda.

The limited evidence suggests that these staged films of all types were popular with audiences, though generally not admired by more 'serious' persons, who regarded such made-up films as being mendacious and overly sensational. One commentator on the state of the photographic trade in France in 1900 condemned these faked Boer War scenes ('des épisodes apocryphes de la guerre du Transvaal') as contributing to the bad reputation of the cinematograph.<sup>4</sup> Henry James later apologised for taking his pro-Boer niece and friends to a faked(?) film of the Boer war, which had been excessively violent.<sup>5</sup> Some film companies too did not want to be involved with such films. The Warwick Trading Company issued a warning about war fakes:

Do not discredit your exhibits and the general animated picture business by trying to fool the public with faked films. You will be the loser in the long run if you do. The Warwick war films of topical events from all parts of the world are taken on the spot and are not made on Hampstead Heath, New Jersey, France or in somebody's back garden.<sup>6</sup>

But from a film historical point of view these faked films don't deserve such hasty dismissal. One can, indeed, make something of a 'case' for fakes, in the context of the development of film form. Turning New Jersey or 'somebody's back garden' into southern Africa took a leap of imagination on the part of producers. What is more, such fakes often employed vigorous narrative, rich symbolism, and were sometimes inventively staged. They were issued in extensive series by several companies, their makers mobilising considerable resources for their production. All in all, the staged films and fakes of the Boer War demonstrate what I delineate in my Conclusion: that these kind of films – often entertaining and imaginative – contributed to the development of film form in various ways. I should add that on account of the large numbers of films and the incomplete accounts of these in film history to date, I will be including in this chapter more lists of films (in the form of Boxes) than in earlier chapters.

## **BRITISH STAGED FILMS**

Because the Boer War was a British war, the market for films about the conflict was unusually large in the United Kingdom. What is more, production resources in the UK were considerable, for there were several very active film



companies which were producing films, including fiction subjects; some companies had already made or distributed staged films of previous wars, so they knew what could be done in this genre. Furthermore the war lasted a long while and cameramen were not on site for all of it, so these fakes in a sense filled a gap. All the conditions, therefore, were in place for a large number of acted war films to be made, and this is indeed what came to pass. In this chapter I will deal with the British companies which made such films, including R.W. Paul, Mitchell and Kenyon, Hepworth, British Gaumont, as well as a number of smaller producers of such films. First, some comments on general themes which emerge.

Elizabeth Strelbel, as mentioned above, provides an interesting analysis of the British staged Boer War films (she covers films made by Hepworth, Paul, Warwick, Sloane Barnes, and Mitchell and Kenyon).<sup>7</sup> She divides them into 'rather authentic looking' scenes and 'obviously staged propaganda vignettes' (cf. my 'fakes' vs. 'symbolic scenes' distinction), and stresses the imperialist attitudes which so many of them they evince. Strelbel writes that these films are 'highly revealing of the whole imperialist ethos', and had as their goal, 'to boost the morale of the home population'. In these xenophobic films, she finds, the aims of the British are presented as noble and patriotic, and several films promote the 'mystical power of the Union Jack, symbol of the all-powerful British Empire'.

Indeed the symbolic representation films were particularly prominent in the UK at this time, sometimes not specifically relating to the Boer War, but always glorifying Britain and its forces. A film shown in Crystal Palace in 1901, for example, depicted the whole of the Empire's fighting forces in tableau style, these fighters then 'changing to the lions of Britain': the implication being that all the British Empire was rallying round the mother country.<sup>8</sup> In other films of this time, symbols of Britain were rife – Britannia, Queen Victoria, the flag, British lions, Tommies, etc. British leaders were acclaimed and lauded in staged films as in the actualities. The commander in South Africa, Lord Roberts, became a supreme hero who was widely filmed.<sup>9</sup> As a mark of his importance, when he returned to England at the end of 1900, and cameramen missed filming his actual landing, this was faked, as one witness to the filming recalled: 'The "landing" took place on the roof of a London theatre, and the part of Lord Roberts was played to perfection by one of our leading character actors!'<sup>10</sup>

But while Britain and its leaders were glorified, the Boers were represented in a highly unflattering light: 'If the British are ever heroic and duty bound, the Boers are portrayed as complete villains', notes Strelbel. As we shall see, several of the films imply that Boers are guilty of perfidy, unfair tactics in warfare, and even atrocities. There is particular denigration of Kruger, who (as President of the Boer Republics) was thoroughly detested in Britain, and was vilified in the various media, including in films. Strelbel has described a couple of the relevant films (which we cover below), and notes that Kruger 'is the embodiment of evil in these films, completely lacking in morals or a sense of justice'. He is even made out to be an imperialist with insatiable aspirations, 'in a classic example of psychological projection', as Strelbel puts it.

One particular theme which emerged in films was that of the 'dirty Boer', a theme which was prevalent in other British media at this time (as Simon Pople's research into the war has made apparent).<sup>11</sup> I will deal with Mitchell and Kenyon's *Washing the Boer Prisoners* below, together with its presumption that the average Boer had an 'aversion... to water'. Probably the endless repetition of such stereotypes about the Boers in the media would have helped to instil these negative associations into the British psyche. Sometimes such insults were even cruder. Warwick's *Feeding The Boers* (5447b) was actually not a film of Boers at all. It was film of 'a drove of pigs being fed from a trough in a farmyard', which Warwick had re-titled (the practice I have mentioned elsewhere) in order to make an anti-Boer point. The catalogue added: 'In their endeavour to get the food they clamber over one another displaying their anatomy in not too delicate a manner.'<sup>12</sup>

This was indeed crude propaganda, but like all propaganda had some vague connections to exploit, in this case, presumably that many of the Boers were farmers (the Dutch word 'Boer' indeed means 'farmer'), and so dealt regularly with farmyard animals. But this presentation to British audiences of Boers as 'dirty', was in all likelihood the opposite of reality, for while many British Army recruits and indeed film spectators at this time lived in grimy slums, the Boers lived in the expanses of South Africa (and indeed their 'ideal' way of life sometimes inspired the envy and admiration of British officers sent to fight them). For the rest of this section I will look at staged films about the war by particular companies, roughly in order of which were produced first.

### **R.W. Paul**

As I have noted in the previous chapter about filming the Boer War, R.W. Paul sent at least one cameraman to the front, but he realised that such films would inevitably lack action. Making fakes was Paul's parallel strategy to provide more dramatic war imagery to complement his genuine views, as he later recalled:

'To meet the demand for something more exciting, representations of such scenes as the bombardment of Mafeking and the work of nurses on the battlefield were enacted on neighbouring golf links...'<sup>13</sup>

(Incidentally, one later source confirms the golf links claim: see below.) It would seem that Paul was the first British producer to make and release fakes of the war. His first batch was released and reviewed before the end of November 1899, which was over a month before he released any actualities shot in South Africa.<sup>14</sup> Apart from the dramatic aspect, this was another advantage of fakes, that they could be shot quickly and at short notice. A photographic journal at the time reported that these films 'reproduced... a number of the most exciting and interesting incidents of the campaign up-to-date', adding some more details:

'They are the most elaborate animated pictures yet undertaken, and are complete [in] every way. The photographs are perfectly clear and sharp and are printed on a special thick and durable film. Owing to the

enormous expense, and the number of men engaged, the price will be at the rate of 1/- per foot. The subjects up to the present are nine in number but other scenes will be ready shortly.<sup>15</sup>

The figure of nine films seems to tally roughly with the titles which we know appeared before the end of the year (see **Box** below) though the cost was slightly lower than was stated here. Titles included *A Camp Smithy*, *Shooting the Spy* and *Nurses on the Battlefield*, some of which I will discuss later. The following year Paul released other staged films about the war, and altogether I estimate that he made some thirteen such Boer War films.<sup>16</sup>

We do not know too much about the production of these films, though I have found a couple of indications that they were indeed made, as has often been supposed, in Muswell Hill, near where Paul was based. One clue to this is a claim from a couple of years later that:

‘A very striking series of films, showing an armoured train in action in Natal, was popularly known in the trade at the time as “the Battle of Muswell Hill,” for if report spoke truly, it was produced by fitting up a truck with loop-holed sides, manning it with khaki-clad supers, and running it before the camera on a siding to the north of London.’<sup>17</sup>

He was presumably referring to Paul’s, *Wrecking an Armoured Train*, listed below, a representation of one of the first incidents of the war. About the time that Paul’s films were made, another trade writer referred to a title, ‘The Battle of Colenso’, confiding that ‘we happen to know that it was taken near Muswell Hill’.<sup>18</sup> While there is no such film among the list of Paul’s fakes, below, one of his other fakes depicting a battle could easily have been assigned this title. Thus two separate sources give Muswell Hill as the location of the production of fake Boer War films, and the only British producer based there who is known to have made such films is R.W. Paul.

There is little information about the performers who enacted these films. There is one later (doubtful) claim that Paul himself appeared in one of them.<sup>19</sup> There is better evidence that one of the fakes featured a music hall actor, Lewin Fitzhamon (destined to become the leading director for the Hepworth company). It is not clear which of Paul’s films it was, but apparently it comprised a sequence from one of Fitzhamon’s music hall sketches of 1900, ‘Briton vs. Boer’.<sup>20</sup> An article about Fitzhamon added a detail about the film:

‘His first experience in film producing was for Mr. Paul at the commencement of the Boer War, when he experienced his first of many near shaves and escapes from sudden death at the hands of an excitable Boer of Irish persuasion.’<sup>21</sup>

This Irish aspect refers to the fact that there were a group of Irishmen who went to fight for the Boers, though Denis Gifford, who interviewed Fitzhamon, stated that ‘Fitz’ himself played the Irishman (but this is a misunderstanding which might easily arise). Gifford also tells us that, while the film was advertised as taking place on the open veldt, ‘in fact, it was shot on a golf

course'. This ties in with Paul's statement above that he made these fakes on some 'neighbouring golf links'.<sup>22</sup>

One article about Paul's fakes claimed that they were made 'with the assistance of a retired officer who has seen 18 years active service in the Transvaal', or as Paul's catalogue put it, 'an experienced military officer from the front'.<sup>23</sup> [Fig. 3] Who was this man? Paul later recalled that the films were made, 'under the supervision of Sir Robert Ashe, an ex-officer of Rhodes's Force'.<sup>24</sup> I have had no luck in tracing Ashe. He is not in the Army lists in the 1880s and '90s, so was not an officer in the British Army in this period. Nor does Ashe appear in the various biographical dictionaries of the time. It seems possible, suggests an expert at the National Army Museum, that he was a member of one of the various local units which were being formed in South Africa during the 1880s and 1890s, and was knighted for his services during the war. However, no trace of him can be found in biographies of Rhodes nor in the Transvaal Archives.<sup>25</sup> It may be recalled from my section on filming the war, that the cameraman whom Paul also allegedly employed in South Africa, Sydney Melsom, remains equally untraceable in any source. One wonders if Paul was mis-remembering both names.

Until recently *Kruger's Dream of Empire* was thought to be the only one of Paul's fakes to be extant, but two others have now come to light. *A Camp Smithy* was identified at the New Zealand Film Archive, and in 2005 *Attack on a Picquet* was located in a private collection.<sup>26</sup> [Fig. 4] These suggest that the fake films were not all of a piece: while *Attack on a Picquet* is stylized, *A Camp Smithy* is rather realistic. Paul's fakes were listed in his catalogues as, 'Reproductions of Incidents of the Boer War', so there would have been no doubt in purchasers' minds that they were buying fakes, though this information might not always have been passed on to audiences. As Paul later recalled about his staged Boer films, 'These were issued for what they were, though I cannot vouch for the descriptions applied to them by the showmen'.<sup>27</sup>

Most of Paul's staged Boer films were representations of battlefield incidents, though there are few examples of different 'genres'. *Briton Versus Boer* was probably an allegory of some kind; *His Mother's Portrait* was a story film rather than being a 'fake' as such. Then *Kruger's Dream of Empire* was – or rather is, for this film survives – a 'symbolic representation', and is particularly rich in imagery, indeed overloaded with it. As one can see from the synopsis below, the film contains a panoply of symbols of Britain: Joseph Chamberlain, the Crown of England, the Queen, Union Jack, and Britannia. Clearly this falls into Strebel's territory of propaganda, as do some of the fakes, such as *Attack on a Picquet* which demonises the Boer enemy. On the other hand, *Nurses on the Battlefield*, according to the catalogue description, was more sympathetic, with both a Boer and a British soldier being offered medical care on the field of battle.

## Box:

### R.W. Paul's staged Boer War films

Note that release/review dates are from John Barnes' 1899 and 1900 volumes.

Abbreviations: RWP = Paul catalogues.<sup>28</sup> PD = 'Transvaal War Films', PD Dec 1899. [EGS] = Strebel. [C] = one of the films listed in Paul's catalogue (six were listed).

\* (asterisk) indicates a film which is extant.

\**Attack on a Picquet* (40 ft.) (25 Nov 1899) 'A British outpost is seen gathered round a camp fire, when a party of Boers steal out from an ambush, club their sentry and fire on the soldiers from all sides.' [RWP] Or as the archivists who preserved this film describe it: a group of British soldiers hides in the shelter of some bushes, before they're attacked and killed by some Boer fighters, who make off with their weapons.<sup>29</sup> [C]

*Battle of Glencoe* (80 ft.) (25 Nov 1899) 'A party of Boers on a hill are attacked by the British with a Maxim. Volley and independent firing are followed by a gallant charge up the hill, in which the Boers are driven over the ridge, many being left on the field, killed or wounded.' [PD]

*Bombardment of Mafeking* (60 ft.) (25 Nov 1899) 'British soldiers are seated outside a hut when several shells explode near them. The ineffectual bombardment causes much amusement.' [PD] 'The British soldiers are sitting round the camp fire. Several shells explode near them, causing much amusement.' [RWP] [C]

*Shooting the Spy* (60 ft.) (25 Nov 1899) 'Scene outside a guard-room, with a sentry on duty. An escort comes up with captured Boer spy, who is fired upon, falling dead.' [PD; RWP] [C]

*Nurses on the Battlefield* (60 ft.) (9 Dec 1899) 'A most affecting picture, but very beautiful and natural. It depicts the battlefield with the wounded and dead scattered over it. The picture shows the stretcher party with doctor and his orderly, who, with the nurses, are tending a wounded Boer. At the same time a British soldier is carried down by his comrades to the other nurses. Specially recommended.' [RWP]<sup>30</sup> In Paul's catalogue there is a frame illustration from this film. [C]

\**A Camp Smithy* 'Splendid scene of the camp smithy, with horses being shod, &c.' [RWP] 'A surprisingly complex tableau of camp life', says Ian Christie. [C]

*Capture of a Maxim* (? ft.) (9 Dec 1899)

*Wrecking an Armoured Train* (100 ft.) (9 Dec 1899) 'A graphic and complete reproduction of the armoured train incident at Mafeking. The British are seen defending the train and firing on the Boers. Several are wounded, and at last the British officer hoists a white flag in token of surrender.' [RWP] (a shorter description is in [PD]) [C]

*Snowballing Oom Paul* (? ft.) (nd) 'Some school children have made a snowman effigy of Kruger. They then vie with each other to knock its block off. Eventually, the snow effigy is completely trampled under foot.' [EGS]

\**Kruger's Dream of Empire* (63 ft.) (19 May 1900) 'Kruger appears in a room with a large canvas with the inscription "On Majuba Day the British were Defeated".<sup>31</sup> Rubbing his hands and chuckling, he settles in a chair for a nap.<sup>32</sup> He then dreams

that his enemy Joseph Chamberlain offers him the Crown of England, but as he jumps up to grab the crown it vanishes in a puff of smoke. Chamberlain then points to the canvas whose inscription now reads 'On Majuba Day Cronje Surrendered'. Kruger lunges at his tormentor, but the latter vanishes as mysteriously as the crown. Kruger then turns to find that a pedestal which formerly bore a bust of himself now boasts one of the queen of England. He attempts to knock it down but is restrained by four men in khaki who envelop him in a large Union Jack, lift him on a stand, and fire a volley. The flag falls and Kruger has been transformed into Britannia.'<sup>33</sup> [EGS, RWP]<sup>34</sup>

*Briton Versus Boer* (June 1900) [no synopsis]. L. Fitzhamon appeared in this film.

*His Mother's Portrait; or, The Soldier's Vision of Home* (July 1900) 'A C.I.V. is seen parting from his aged mother. She gives him, as a memento, a framed portrait of herself, which he kisses and puts in his breast pocket. The scene switches to the open veld where we find the soldier wounded and staggering for help. He faints and has a vision of his mother praying on bended knee. Discovered by Red Cross attendants, it is found that the soldier's wound is not serious, the bullet having been deflected by the mother's portrait.' [EGS]

*Britain's Welcome to her Sons* (Sep 1900). [no synopsis].

### **Mitchell and Kenyon**

The chief claim to fame in film history of the Mitchell and Kenyon company (or 'M&K' as we shall abbreviate it) has always been their faked films of the Boer War. Indeed for a long while this was thought to be their main activity. In recent years as their films have been rediscovered and restored, and their wider activities in the early film industry have been researched (by the National Fairground Archive and the BFI), it has been realized that Boer related films were but one part of the work of this important company. Nevertheless it was a significant part, consisting of actualities and local films as well as the fakes. [Fig. 5]

M&K were probably the most prolific of all producers of Boer War fakes, turning out between 15 and 20 such films.<sup>35</sup> These included such evocative titles as *The Fight for the Gun*, *Tommy's Last Shot*, *Washing the Boer Prisoner*, and *The Dispatch Bearer*.<sup>36</sup> Several of the films have been rediscovered in recent years, and ten or eleven titles are now known to be extant, enabling us to assess the aesthetics of these films more completely.<sup>37</sup>

Denis Gifford has described them as 'rough but lively re-creations of the Boer War' and this captures the style admirably, if not the chauvinistic message.<sup>38</sup> The films depict the Boers as sneaky and immoral, who repeatedly do dastardly deeds, such as overpowering a sleeping Tommy, poisoning a well, attacking women and the Red Cross. The titles indicate the tone: *The Sneaky Boer*, for example, or *White Flag Treachery* (the latter presumably alluding to instances of Boers pretending to surrender and then firing). The Boers do not even behave decently among themselves, for in *Surprise of a Boer Camp* they are shown fighting one another with knives. The British, by contrast, are shown as heroic and often victorious in the face of these low Boer tactics.

Simon Popple has given a fine brief account of the films and has explored the propaganda aspect. He notes that films such as *White Flag Treachery*, *Shelling the Red Cross*, *A Sneaky Boer* and *Poisoning the Well* allude to anecdotes about Boer atrocities circulating in the popular press.<sup>39</sup> He draws particular attention to *Hands off the Flag* in which the Boers menace a group of defenceless nurses as well as defiling the British flag, and women and flag are only saved when British soldiers arrive on the scene. The flag is an important symbolic element in this film, and other aspects of the symbolic film creep into these fakes at times, such as at the end of *Saved by a Woman* when there is a 'tableau'.

Popple also discusses the one anomaly in the group, and what was probably M&K's final Boer-related acted production: a film entitled *Chasing De Wet* which ridicules the British Army's failure to capture the Boer commander, De Wet. This is a comic trick film, with stop substitution, as De Wet appears and disappears before the soldiers' eyes; and Popple points out that this is the only sympathetic treatment of the Boer enemy in the M&K corpus, in expressing admiration for the General's cunning.<sup>40</sup> I append, as a **Box**, a list of M&K's Boer War acted films, with descriptions where available, which gives a more complete impression of the content and style of these productions.

Despite extensive research in recent years, little is still known about the production of these Boer fakes. To judge from release dates the first titles were probably shot in the Spring of 1900, but there is disagreement about where they were filmed and the identity of the performers. The films were certainly shot near Blackburn in Lancashire, but one source says in the Brownhills [sic] area, another that they were made in 'the sandhills that flanked the railway between Kearsley and Clifton'. The source for the latter claim was an actor from a travelling fairground company, and a newspaper article added about him that, 'he and his whole company were engaged by a Blackburn firm to act for the films in a Boer War story and a mining drama'.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, John East, a film pioneer, stated that the films were shot 'with out-of-work miners playing the part of Kruger's army!'<sup>42</sup> There may be a morsel of truth in all these claims, for, as the films were made in several tranches, more than one group of performers and more than one location might have been used.

### **The popularity of M&K Boer fakes; *The Dispatch Bearer***

The M&K Boer fakes made quite an impression at the time and in later memories too.<sup>43</sup> One of the earliest successes that the film pioneer, Fred Weisker enjoyed, was with exhibiting *Poisoning the Well*, which he recalled was met with great enthusiasm locally (in Liverpool).<sup>44</sup> Another in the M&K series, *Washing Boer Prisoners*, was founded on the insulting stereotype, which I've discussed above, that the Boers were dirty. Stereotype or no, the

## Box:

### The Mitchell and Kenyon Boer War fakes

#### Abbreviations:

PD 1.5.00 = 'John Wrench & Son', PD May 1900, p.115.

Sh 6.9.01 = M&K ad in *The Showman* 6 Sep 1901, p.xi.

Era 28.9.01 = John Wrench & Son ad in *The Era* 28 Sep 1901, p.27.

NWFA = North West Film Archive.

IWM = Imperial War Museum.

CM = Cinema Museum.

EE = *Electric Edwardians* DVD.

\* (asterisk) indicates a film which is extant.

\**The Dispatch Bearer* aka *Despatch Rider* (72 ft.) – Some British riflemen are attacked by Boers and left for dead. One of the Boers then removes a dispatch from a fallen Briton, but another wounded man struggles to his feet, shoots this Boer, and proceeds on his way with the dispatch. (My more complete summary is in main text.) (PD 1.5.00; Sh 6.9.01) NFTVA, NWFA and IWM

*Washing the Boer Prisoners* aka *Washing Boer Prisoner[s]* (PD 1.5.00; Sh 6.9.01)  
(See main text for plot details).

\**Winning the V.C.* aka *Winning the Victoria Cross* (53 ft. or 58 ft.) – Four British gunners are under fire; one falls wounded as the others advance; a cavalryman rides up to the rescue, drags the wounded man onto his horse and rides off. (PD 1.5.00; Sh 6.9.01) NFTVA

*White Flag Treachery* (PD 1.5.00) [no synopsis]

\**Shelling the Red Cross* aka *Boer Attack on a Red Cross Outpost* (68 ft.) – A tent is pitched on the veldt, with a Red Cross flag fluttering prominently outside. Wounded British soldiers on stretchers are taken inside and received by a nurse. A Boer emerges from behind the tent and throws a bomb which fails to go off, then a second bomb, which rolls into the tent and explodes. The Boer runs away, and the victims stagger out of the tent in disarray, the nurse being among the casualties. Strebel describes this as a 'very authentic-looking' fake, and one which underscores Boer treachery, for the second bomb shows that this attack on the wounded was no accident. The film seems to be in the same setting as *The Dispatch Bearer*. (PD 1.5.00) NFTVA, NWFA

\**The Nurse's Brother* – The plot has the protagonist being saved by a woman. Note that the film seems to use the same set as *Lost Scout...* (PD 1.5.00)

\**The Clever Correspondent* (16 m.) (CM) [no synopsis]

\**The Lost Scout on the Veldt* aka *Lost on the Veldt* 1900? (Sh 6.9.01)

\**Rescue of a Wounded Gunner* (55 ft.) – Two British soldiers pull a big gun into position, shots are exchanged and one of the soldiers is wounded. A third soldier arrives on horseback, dismounts, and helps the wounded soldier onto the horse. To create the effect of gunfire, stars are scratched on the film.<sup>45</sup> NWFA

*The Fight for the Gun* (65 ft.) – Boers attack a British machine gun position and capture it after a tough fight. British rescuers arrive and recapture the gun, which is put into operation again, '...amid a scene of wild enthusiasm'. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)



- \**Hands off the Flag* (113 ft.) – A group of nurses are at a Red Cross station captured by Boers. The Union Jack is torn down and trampled, and the nurses are about to be shot when British soldiers return, scatter the Boers, thus saving the nurses who raise the flag again. (Sh 6.9.01, Era 28.9.01 and Poppo)
- \**Poisoning the Well* (91 ft.) – A Boer creeps up to a well, intending to poison it. He is interrupted by two British soldiers, who then depart. As he tries again, another British soldier arrives, they struggle and the Tommy is knifed, but then the Boer is finally killed by two more British soldiers. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)
- Saved by a Woman* (83 ft.) – A wounded British soldier reaches a tent and two women help him. His Boer pursuers arrive but one of the women keep them at bay with a revolver. As they attempt escape the woman is shot, but British soldiers arrive and save the day, ‘... and the picture finishes with a very effective tableau.’ (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)
- \*A [*The*] *Sneaky Boer* aka *A Skirmish With Boers* (75 ft.; orig 82 ft.) – A British soldier on watch falls asleep. Two Boers sneak up and overpower him, but another soldier arrives and overcomes the Boers before helping his wounded comrade away. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01) NWFA; CM; EE.
- Surprise of a Boer Camp* (90 ft.) – A group of Boers are gathered round their campfire when a card game turns into a dispute and then a knife fight. Shortly afterwards some British soldiers attack the camp, which, ‘...after an exciting hand-to-hand struggle, is taken by the Britons’. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)
- A Tight Corner*. (232 ft.) – This film was in four ‘Tableaux’ or shots: *A Dash for Help*; *Through the Enemy’s Lines*; *The Message Delivered*; *Just in Time*. A messenger is sent from a hard-pressed unit to fetch help. Fighting his way through the Boer lines, he reaches the British camp and requests urgent assistance. A relief force is sent, and reaches the embattled force just in time, and after ‘a wild charge’ the Boer besiegers are routed. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)
- Tommy’s Last Shot* (95 ft.) – British soldiers defend a trench but one by one they are shot. The sole survivor rushes forth, firing at the Boers, only to be shot himself, falling amid bursting shells. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)
- \**Chasing De Wet* (1901) (108 ft.) – This comic trick film shows the attempts of an English and a Scottish soldier to capture De Wet, but he keeps escaping, (depicted through stop motion) and they never manage to catch him. (Sh 6.9.01; Era 28.9.01)

film was a hit, and was singled out by a critic at Norwich fair as ‘a most amusing film’.<sup>46</sup> It was even recollected years later by a spectator of the time (then a schoolboy) as hugely popular:

‘During the South African War we schoolboys were excited by “scenes from the front.” One which I remember showed a prisoners’ camp and the aversion of Piet to water. It always ended in his being dipped in a large bucket, head first. Although we boys knew exactly – by constant attendance – what was coming, it never failed to “bring down the house.”’<sup>47</sup>

But of all these films, the most popular and noticed title was almost certainly *The Dispatch Bearer* (or *The Despatch Rider*). This appears in promotional material of the time as the lead item, or most common title, among other M&K fakes.<sup>48</sup> (I offer a synopsis below). It was singled out by one early writer as a picture which was 'hailed with wild applause in more than one London music-hall', this popularity achieved despite, he noted, being the most obvious of fakes.<sup>49</sup> It certainly made an impression on Alfred Bromhead, head of Gaumont: when reminiscing in the 1930s about the films of the Boer War era, this was the one title by Mitchell & Kenyon which he recalled. The film had been taken, he supposed, 'in some ploughed fields near Blackburn' and, he remembered (or rather misremembered) that it 'portrayed a gallant British dispatch bearer, fighting his way with the butt end of his rifle through crowds of Boers...'<sup>50</sup> Another early film pioneer, George Green, also misremembered to the extent of actually claiming to have produced *The Dispatch Bearer* in Scotland, which perhaps indicates more about the success of the film in its time than the reliability of memory.<sup>51</sup>

*The Dispatch Bearer* was widely shown in the UK, and it is almost certainly this film which is being referred to in an interesting article of 1901 about effective showmanship. The article discusses the screening of Boer War films in a large northern city where the attendance had begun to flag, and relates an anecdote on this point (possibly apocryphal). To rebuild local interest it seems that the showman had an idea for a live incident which would grab attention, and so he placed a colleague in the audience dressed up in an Army uniform, to await the right moment. Among the films on show was one which (though it is described inaccurately) must have been *The Dispatch Bearer*. The setting was South Africa, and: 'A dispatch-bearer is seen in the distance, threading his way through the rocks, closely pressed by half a dozen Boers ; he turns and kills three of his enemies, but the rest bear down upon him, and they all roll over and over on the ground.' The article describes what happened as this was being screened with the fake soldier, Bill, in the hall:

At this picture there was a commotion among the audience. A man, evidently a soldier [i.e. Bill], for he was dressed in khaki, was seen struggling in his seat, but held back by companions. "Let me get at them – let me get at them !" he cried again and again. The band stopped playing, the lights were turned up, and the lecturer stepped forward and spoke kindly to the man in khaki. "My good man," said he, "you must not get so excited; those were not Boers, but only pictures of Boers." The man in khaki looked round vacantly for a moment, put his hand to his head, and exclaimed, "Good heavens, I thought it was all real !" and sank into his seat. Cheer upon cheer rose from that audience. This one touch of nature had made them kin. And the next morning the local papers described the incident in glowing terms, one of them in its admiration even going to the length of a leaderette. From that evening the show was patronised so well that not a vacant seat was to be seen. And Bill was richer, that same week, by a five-pound note.<sup>52</sup>

*The Dispatch Bearer* survives in at least two film archives (NFTVA and IWM), and is worth describing in some more detail, both because of its notable status within M&K productions (which I have just discussed), and also because in some ways it is typical of the complex narratives one encounters in faked films of this era. The film runs somewhat over one minute, and is in the form of a single wide shot. There are six characters, three British and three Boers, and for clarity I will call them Brit 1, 2 and 3; and Boer 1, 2 and 3. As will be apparent, this is actually a highly intricate narrative, and it takes several viewings to work out exactly what has occurred. (Perhaps that's why the description by the writer quoted above is inaccurate).

The film begins as Brit1 and Brit2 approach a hillside where there are three Boers. In the brief fight which follows Brit1 is killed and Brit2 wounded, and Boer1 is also wounded. Brit3 then arrives with dispatches, but is shot and about to be clubbed to death by Boer2 when the latter is shot by the wounded man, Brit2. Then Brit3 offers Boer1 water, and as he is doing so is about to be shot by Boer3, but he shoots Boer3 first, and is in turn shot by Boer1, who steals the dispatches. Brit2 struggles with and shoots Boer1 and then carries off the dispatches to be delivered.

As I say, very complex, especially because this rapid tit-for-tat exchange happens in one wide shot in little over a minute of screen time. A spoken commentary would help with comprehension, and my guess is that this would have been provided during some showings at the time, by a lecturer (the anecdote above mentions one). It should be added, however, that even without narration and on a first viewing, though the film is confusing, it is also quite effective in giving a *general* impression of a desperate fight to the finish, even if one cannot take in every incident. A key theme of the film, *pace* Strebels' analysis, is Boer treachery, notably when one of the British soldiers offers water to a wounded Boer and is attacked by another during this act of mercy. As mentioned, Boer perfidy was a regular theme in fakes made by M&K and by other British companies.

There are a number of points of stylistic interest in these M&K films. Staying with *The Dispatch Bearer* for a moment, the details of gunfire are notable. As a means of showing explosions clearly, when there is a shell burst at one point, the first frame or two is scratched onto the image – quite effectively in fact (and this technique is employed in another M&K fake – see **Box**). Another means of showing gunfire visibly in this film is through having lots of smoke issue from the rifles when they are fired. (This was, of course, very unrealistic given that smokeless powder had come into general use in the 1890s, though as I have noted in Chapter 1, this bit of unreality for the camera was to become a regular sight in later films, especially westerns.)

These techniques – scratching on gunshots and smoky powder – were both means of creating cinematic visibility, of drawing attention to particular points of action. Yet ultimately, as I have indicated above, this film remains narratively confusing because, despite these tricks to create visibility, there is simply too much going on in the frame: the acted narrative is too complex and 'uncentered' for a single shot. An emerging solution to this lack of 'centering'

was to split an acted story into several discrete elements or shots. In common with some other filmmakers, M&K seems to have realised about this time that multi-shot construction was the way forward, and in one of their Boer War fakes, *A Tight Corner*, there are four separate shots. This, made in 1901, probably in the late Summer (and sadly not extant), is an early example of multi-shot construction in an acted film, albeit a year after Williamson's *China Mission* film, also in four shots had appeared (which possibly inspired M&K).<sup>53</sup> This film is further evidence that staged and fake films may have helped to drive forward progress in the development of film style and narrative structure (a point discussed further in my Conclusion).

The staged Boer War films by M&K enjoyed some life after the war, for with the conclusion of the conflict in 1902, the company advertised up to twenty of the films as a series, 'How Tommy Won South Africa'. They proclaimed: 'the War is over and now the country is eager to know how Tommy won South Africa – Our films touch the spot'.<sup>54</sup> By that point, however, with reconciliation in the air, these films with their implications of Boer perfidy must have seemed somewhat dated.

### **Hepworth**

Hepworth's productions about the war were symbolic representations rather than fakes. The company's two symbolic films of the war have been dealt with in fine style by Strebel, and I will simply summarise her comments, as well as reproduce Hepworth's synopses of the two films (see **Box**), as given in Hepworth's catalogue of 1903 (though I assume the films themselves were produced around 1900).

The catalogue describes one of the films, *The Conjuror and the Boer*, as a patriotic trick film. It opens as a 'typical Boer' much to his disgust, is enveloped in a large Union Jack.<sup>55</sup> He is thus transformed into a figure of Britannia who hangs up the flag on her trident and waves it back and forth. The camera then closes in on the flag so that it fills the entire screen (a tracking shot?), and the words 'Rule Britannia' appear in large letters at the bottom of the picture. With this the film ended.

As Strebel notes, the Union Jack is hallowed in this and other such films, but enemy flags are reviled. In the other Hepworth film, *Wiping Something off the Slate*, a Boer flag is initially seen waving over a slate on which the word 'Majuba' is written, and then, 'A British soldier tears down the flag, tramples it in disgust, and drenches it in water so that he can wipe the objectionable word from the slate'.<sup>56</sup> Incidentally, one of the points of stylistic interest in these films was their early use of titles (the films themselves don't survive).

Through Strebel's article these films are well known to film historians, but it has generally been forgotten that, in addition to films, Hepworth (who was from a lantern background) also made a remarkable lantern slide about the war. In fact a large number of lantern slides were produced on the Boer War,

**Box:**

**Hepworth's two symbolic Boer War films**

(from Hepwix 1903 catalogue)

*no.93. Animated Cartoon: 'Wiping Something off the Slate'*

At the opening of this picture clouds of smoke rolling away, reveal the figure of a 'gentleman in kharki' near a huge slate, on which the word 'Majuba' is written, and over which the Boer flag proudly waves. The British soldier tears down this emblem, trampling it underfoot, and goes aside for a moment to fetch some water in his helmet. Then, with the bedraggled, saturated flag, he wipes the offensive word from the slate. He has just finished this, when a shell bursting near, wounds him on the temple. Almost fainting, he yet manages to bind up the wound, pick up his rifle and to take up position at the 'ready,' in the well known pose of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar.' The wound, however, proves too much and he staggers and falls just as the Union Jack floats out behind him, forming a striking background to the picture.

Length 75 ft. Price £1.11.3

*no. 94. New 'Trick' Film: 'The Conjuror and the Boer'*

This is a patriotic 'trick' film of a very interesting and highly popular nature. A conjuror enters and advancing to the foot-lights, requests a gentleman to come up from the audience, who proves to be a typical Boer. The conjuror then borrows a lady's handkerchief, which he rolls up in his hands for a moment and unfolding it, shows it to be changed into a Union Jack. The small flag then grows in the conjuror's hands until it is sufficient to entirely envelope the Boer, which last operation is performed much to the victim's disgust. A moment after, the big flag is removed, and the Boer is seen to have changed to a figure of Britannia, who rises from the seat, hangs up the flag on her trident and waves it backwards and forwards, so that it covers almost the entire stage. At the same moment, the conjuror transforms himself into a puff of smoke, which rapidly disperses, while the words 'Rule Britannia' appear in large letters all along the bottom of the picture.

Length 75 ft. Price £ 1.11.3<sup>57</sup>

by various manufacturers, and though I won't go into detail on this subject, Hepworth's slide is of sufficient relevance to his film work that it deserves comment.<sup>58</sup> This special slide depicted the despised President Kruger, who had become a kind of 'man you love to hate' in Britain by this time. It was simply a line drawing of Kruger's portrait on a gelatine slide, which was put into the lantern carrier while it was still wet, and in the heat of the projection light the image melted. This melting slide had quite an impact, and years after he witnessed it a pioneer of the film business, W.N. Blake, remembered seeing it. He recalled: 'the portrait assumed most amusing distortions, as the gelatine gradually melted and he slid from the top of the screen'. As the hated visage melted, a poem about Kruger's ultimate defeat by Queen Victoria was recited:

'There was an old man of Pretoria,  
Whose deeds they grew gorier and gorier,  
Till there came a big shell,  
Which blew him to -- (Bloemfontein),  
And now it's reigned o'er by Victoria.'

This unique slide was followed by a Robert Paul film of the Union Jack flying, and together, Blake added, 'the two made a great finish to the show!' Altogether it was 'a wonderful hit, which was administered to every patriotic audience'.<sup>59</sup>

### **British Gaumont**

British Gaumont made two films about the war, and the first of these deserves fuller discussion, for it sparked some controversy, raising the ire of a correspondent to a trade journal. I will quote from his letter in a moment, but first will describe the film which caused him to complain. It was called *Boer Atrocities*, and this title was part of the problem, more than the film itself. The film does not survive, but the trade synopsis (see **Box**) suggest a story which is little different from the fakes made by Paul or M&K, in which heroic self-sacrificing Britons battled treacherous Boers in rather knockabout style. The plot may be summarized as follows: At a mine, guarded by Boers, a British prisoner is found to have a Union Jack, which leads to an argument and the killing of the prisoner. Then another Briton arrives on the scene, sets off an explosion, so killing the Boers though sacrificing himself in the process. The scene then mixes to images of a large Union Jack and the British fleet.

As I say, this does not seem more sensational than fakes from Paul or M&K. The problem was that Gaumont's film was promoted, notably in Gaumont's own publicity, as something more extremely anti-Boer. Perhaps this sensational element in the advertising reflected a public mood. The film was made late in the war, in the latter part of 1901, by which time the British public were sick of the continuing conflict, and accusations of atrocities were flying on both sides. Gaumont's ad in *The Showman* at the end of September stressed:

'Boer Atrocities. Most thrilling war subject, showing British soldier being shot down in cold blood, and another British soldier to the rescue, ending up with Grand Transformation scene. Good photographic quality and most realistic.'<sup>60</sup>

*The Showman's* reviewer enthused about this film, and stressed its emotive aspects: 'It is the most sensational thing of its kind we have seen, and is calculated to rouse the patriotism of any Britisher.'<sup>61</sup> Gaumont publicised the film, as was their common practice, by issuing a 'special pamphlet'.<sup>62</sup> I reproduce the text from this Gaumont pamphlet below, along with the synopsis from the *Showman* (September 1901), and it is evident in comparing the two that Gaumont's is more inflammatory, with, for example, the British soldier being 'shot in cold blood', and the Boers 'pleased with their dastardly act'. This caught the eye of one customer, who was so shocked by the description of the film that he wrote to a trade journal, the *Optical Magic*

*Lantern Journal*, and signed his letter, 'Fairplay and Honesty'. [Fig. 6] The letter appeared in the November issue, including Gaumont's entire synopsis (see **Box**: 2<sup>nd</sup> synopsis).<sup>63</sup> 'Fairplay and Honesty' reacted strongly to Gaumont's synopsis, concluding his letter:

'Perhaps some reader can inform me what good the issue of such films can do? In my opinion the issue of such has only a demoralising tendency for it is false. It is a made-up scene, a playing to the gallery, and a means of instilling hatred in the heart of the young under the guise of what many are pleased to call patriotism. It is to be hoped that films of this character will not find a place in the Englishman's repertoire.'

In retrospect, the behaviour of British Gaumont in promoting this film in such an intemperate manner and in titling it so provocatively, *Boer Atrocities*, is somewhat curious. Curious because the company's chief, Alfred Bromhead, was a rather cosmopolitan figure, bilingual, with close links to the main company in France, where of course audiences were very pro-Boer. On the other hand, probably in this case Bromhead was motivated purely by market forces, keen to exploit the demand among British showmen for anti-Boer films to appeal to jingoistic audiences in fairgrounds, music-halls and the like. But given the complaint, he had probably pitched it wrongly, and it does appear that this film was British Gaumont's sole attempt to 'play to the gallery' in such a manner. The company seems to have produced only one other Boer War acted film, of a very different hue. This was described as 'a representation', entitled *Signing Peace at Pretoria* (surprisingly long at 165 ft.) and was made to celebrate the coming of peace in 1902.<sup>64</sup> By that time any desire to draw attention to Boer atrocities had passed.

#### **Box:**

##### **Gaumont's *Boer Atrocities***

Two descriptions of the film: the neutral trade version, followed by Gaumont's more sensational one.

##### **Synopsis from *The Showman***

The scene is laid at a Transvaal mine, guarded by a sentinel, a Boer commandant being seen in the foreground. Three more Boers appear with a British prisoner, and on finding on his person a Union Jack, get furious, and after a struggle to recover it, the 'Tommy' is shot. The Boers then disperse with the exception of the sentinel. Another 'Tommy', hearing the sound of the shot, crawls up to his dead comrade and covers him with the British flag, which movement catches the eye of the Boer sentinel, who, however, is not quick enough for the Britisher, who fires with deadly effect, which arouses other Boers around; so, quick as a thought, he explodes a box of dynamite, blowing up everything around. When the smoke disperses, a scene of devastation is seen, which gradually is replaced by a set piece representing Britannia with a giant

Union Jack in the background, which is raised, disclosing the British fleet steaming on the ocean. An excellent film, from photographic and topical point of view, and sure to be popular. (*The Showman* 27 Sep 1901, p.36).

### **Synopsis from Gaumont's pamphlet or circular**

The opening of this picture shows a Transvaal mine with a sentinel on guard, and Boer commandant in fore-ground. Three other Boers appear, bringing with them a captured British soldier, whom they search, and find concealed beneath his tunic a Union Jack, the sight of which drives them mad; the commandant seizes the flag, and covers it with abuse. The British soldier, infuriated, attempts to recover it, but in the struggle is thrown to the ground and shot in cold blood. The Boers retire, evidently pleased with their dastardly act, leaving only the sentinel. Another 'Tommy,' attracted by the sounds of firing, crawls on hands and knees to the spot where his comrade lies dead, and perceiving the flag lying by his side, reaches over to it, and reverently lays it on the dead body. He then looks round and observes the sentinel, who turns on hearing his approach; but before he can raise an alarm the Britisher draws a revolver from his belt, and shoots him dead. Seeing that he has aroused the other Boers, he fires his remaining cartridge into a box of dynamite, blowing to atoms everything around. When the smoke clears away a scene of devastation meets the eye, which gradually fades, being replaced by a tableau representing Britannia with a giant Union Jack as background, which gradually rises half way, and shows the British Fleet sailing defiantly on the high seas. (reproduced in 'Boer atrocities', OMLJ, Nov 1901, p.96).

### **Miscellaneous British producers**

It seems that during the Boer War most of the major British film companies made acted films about the conflict. A man who was active in the industry at this time later recalled that fake films of the Boer War (and Spanish-American war) were taken in various areas of England, and he listed these areas as Hempstead [sic] Heath, the Clee, and Fox's Hills of Aldershot.<sup>65</sup> It is not at all clear which producers would have used these three locations, for none is near any known film producer working at that time, though Hampstead Heath might have tempted any of the London producers.<sup>66</sup> If films really were made at these places, it implies that there were more Boer fakes made by other filmmakers than we yet know about.

But what of known filmmakers (in addition to those whose work I've already described above)? The Sheffield Photo Company made at least one Boer fake, *Attack on a Convoy*. Frank Mottershaw, the company's producer later recalled that, '...practically the whole of the staff of men and horses of the principal coach and cab proprietors in this town were requisitioned for use in this film'.<sup>67</sup> Another source, though, suggests that the film was made in co-operation with the Sheffield Fire Brigade who provided men and horses.<sup>68</sup> Presumably it would have been shot on the neighbouring Yorkshire moors.

Claims have been made that Arthur Melbourne-Cooper's extant film, *Matches Appeal* was produced during the Boer War. But staff at the NFTVA believe



that it is more likely to have been made as a fundraiser during World War 1. Certainly, from what we know of these wars, a film appealing for funds at the time of the Boer War would be surprising, whereas such appeals were fairly routine by the time of the Great War. It has also been suggested that Melbourne-Cooper may also have made fake Boer War films for Charles Urban in Hadley Woods, though no hard evidence for this is forthcoming.<sup>69</sup>

Interestingly, the Brighton filmmakers, G.A. Smith and James Williamson did not manufacture staged Boer War films. As we've seen, G.A. Smith's only real connection with the conflict was in his capacity as technician, developing films of the war, notably those shot by Bennett-Stanford. As for James Williamson, he restricted his Boer themes to two story films made just after the war, in 1902: *The Soldier's Return*, and *A Reservist Before the War, and After the War*. Both of these were about soldiers returning from service in the Boer War.<sup>70</sup>

John Sloane Barnes is not a well known name in early film history, mainly because he only seems to have made one film: a remarkable anti-Kruger film, which survives in the NFTVA. Probably made in March 1900, *A Prize Fight or Glove Fight Between John Bull and President Kruger* is a political pantomime on the Boer War in the form of two rounds of a boxing match.<sup>71</sup> The seconds for Kruger are France and Russia and the second for John Bull is Uncle Sam. Part of the point of the film is to criticize the 'unfair' tactics, as seen by Britain, used by the Boers in this war and so, as Strebel notes, 'In round two Kruger begins to engage in foul play. He kicks John Bull, waves a white flag, and hits Bull from behind while his back is turned.'

A very different anti-Kruger film came from the Warwick Trading Company. Warwick expressed some contempt for 'made-up' subjects, and preferred, as we have seen, to put a major effort into documenting the actual war in South Africa. Nevertheless the company did release a couple of films which, while scarcely fakes, are more than just records of the war. In *Guy Fawkes Day Incident* (5880b), a group of men and boys stab at an effigy of Kruger before igniting it and watching as it is consumed by the flames. The other Warwick film, *Feeding the Boers*, was an even more vituperative attack on the Boer side, which I have mentioned in my introduction.

### **Imperialistic and pro-British**

As Strebel first noticed many years ago, the British acted films of the Boer War are almost all very pro-British and imperialistic in tone. British soldiers are seen as heroes, Boers as skulking and treacherous villains; imperial and national symbols appear in profusion. These messages and images are remarkably consistent across the films produced by the various British film companies which I have covered.

Such a tone was inspired and encouraged by the general chauvinism in the air at the time: this in an age when the term 'imperialist' was a compliment, not an insult. With the notable exception of the protest letter about the Gaumont film, noted above, there seems to have been little criticism of these films at the

time, for they were presumably seen as celebrating the national war effort for Britain and the Empire.

## **STAGED FILMS MADE IN OTHER COUNTRIES**

Throughout the Boer War, the majority of nations and people in the world sided with the Boers, and few supported Britain. Of course the British Empire was loyal (though some pro-Boer views were expressed even there), but on the European Continent the opinion was almost universally in favour of the Boers, and one would have been hard pressed to find anyone to stand up for Britain. In the United States the opinion was at best divided.

Given this generally anti-British opinion (even though other nations did not officially fight for the Boers) one might expect the staged films of the war made outside Britain to be very pro-Boer, just as the British equivalents were anti-Boer. In fact, however, they were in general more balanced and moderate than their British opposite numbers, certainly this being the case with those films made in France by Pathé, and the Edison titles made in the USA, though the single example we shall encounter from the Netherlands was certainly very pro Boer.

These differences in tone seem to be linked to differences in the type of film produced. While the Pathé and Edison companies mainly produced fakes (acted battlefield incidents), and these had a balanced tone, many of the British-made staged films and the single Netherlands film were symbolic representations, which had a propaganda message. In short, the faked battlefield incident mode does seem to be less associated with propaganda than the symbolic scene. As some explanation for this difference, one might say that a fake film was always trying to stay within the bounds of the vaguely possible, albeit depicting one-off chauvinistic incidents, whereas in a symbolic film there were no limits to the nationalistic excesses.

In what follows I will describe these non British-produced films in more detail, covering the films in question country by country, and then company by company.

### **France: the Pathé fakes**

Most of the fake films of the Boer war made in France were produced by the well established Pathé company. Pathé made at least eleven fakes of the Boer War, which were listed in the company's catalogue: eight at first, probably in the Autumn of 1899, and then another three sometime after January 1900.<sup>72</sup> [Fig. 8: Pathé's British catalogue]

Pathé must have shot some of its fakes as early as October or November 1899 because at least two of them were on sale through a British distributor, Fuerst brothers, by late November.<sup>73</sup> This makes Pathé one of the first companies to produce Boer fakes. By the end of the year the Fuerst company was distributing four of the films, which they described as 'Episodes of the War in the Transvaal' (the word 'episodes' indicating that these were story

films, fakes, and not actualities from the front).<sup>74</sup> And by this time and probably earlier, five of the titles were on sale in France.<sup>75</sup>

Pathé made a second batch of three Boer War fakes some time after the end of January. That they were made later than the others with a production break between is suggested by the different catalogue numbering system that they employ.<sup>76</sup> Also, one of the films, and probably two, were representations of the Battle of Spion Kop which took place 24 January 1900, so obviously the films were made after that.

Unfortunately we know all too little about the production of these Pathé fakes. As some indication of this, we don't even know who the director was, though there are suggestions that one or both of the Pathé stalwarts, Ferdinand Zecca or Lucien Nonguet, might have been involved.<sup>77</sup> There are a few further details: a writer in early 1900 noted that the first Boer fakes, presumably meaning the Pathé ones, were taken outside Paris using 'supers' from a Paris theatre.<sup>78</sup> Another writer stated that some Boer War fakes came from a Paris factory, 'which had in its employment for some weeks a small Boer commando and a detachment of British troops, all of them Frenchmen'.<sup>79</sup> This is as much as we know about the personnel. But where exactly in Paris were they made? I believe it was in Buttes Chaumont park in the northeast of Paris. Some doubts have been expressed by historians about this location, so I will try to explain my evidence fully. In mid November 1899 the periodical *South Africa* reported:

'The persons who happened to be in the Buttes-Chaumont Park the other afternoon were astonished to see a group of English soldiers occupying the top of a knoll. The men were ranged as if expecting an attack, some of them placed as advance sentinels, others taking advantage of the cover afforded by trees, and the remainder ranged in firing order along the crest of the slight eminence. Presently a "commando" of Boers surged out from below, opened fire on the English, and proceeded to storm the hill. For a moment the spectators were inclined to wonder whether the English and Dutch residents in Paris had decided to settle their differences by mortal combat. In any case, what was afoot was sufficiently mysterious until the truth was explained.'<sup>80</sup>

This 'truth', *South Africa* continued, was that the editor of 'a Paris illustrated paper' had decided that because 'genuine photographs of this kind would naturally be difficult to obtain', he had,

'...hit on the idea of dressing up a number of theatrical "supers" as English and Boers, of making them go through a series of military operations, and of having photographs taken of the scenes thus contrived'.<sup>81</sup>

The article twice uses the word 'photographs', and a phrase, 'Kodak reproductions', and claims that these scenes were done for 'a Paris illustrated paper'. Yet despite this indication of still photographs, I am nevertheless

inclined to think that this might be a garbled reference to production of the Pathé films, for the following reasons. For a start, I have as yet not found such faked photographs reproduced in any periodical of late 1899.<sup>82</sup> Secondly, in this era the two media, stills and film, were often conflated (films were often called ‘animated photographs’). Thirdly, the description of the action is consistent with one of the Pathé fake films (possibly *Boers Take Up the Offensive*, or *Capture of a Gun by the Boers*), as mentioned in synopses below. Finally, the fact that they were taken at Buttes Chaumont is significant, for my other sources suggest that fake films were made in this park.<sup>83</sup>

On the latter point: Another contemporary reference to film fakes being made in Buttes-Chaumont park comes in a fictional account from February 1900, which derides the ‘actors’ playing their ‘bad pantomime’ of the South African War in this park.<sup>84</sup> In addition, several later sources also state that Boer War fakes were made in this park. A newspaper article of June 1902 about film faking notes that Buttes-Chaumont had been used as the location for several fake films, including one about Boers attacking a hill in the Transvaal.<sup>85</sup> About the same date, a French correspondent to a British photographic journal stated that films of the Boer war,

‘...were all, or most of them, taken at Paris, France, at the Park “des Buttes Chaumonts,” where some Apaches (as they are called in that quarter), were successfully trained to play the enemy in the bushes and mountains.’<sup>86</sup>

A few years later still, one of the pioneers of the French film industry, Victorin Jasset, noted in passing that, ‘The neighbourhood of Buttes-Chaumont still recalls the stampede of old nags ridden by the defeated British army fleeing from the victorious Boers’.<sup>87</sup> While it is possible that these sources were all basing their statements on hearsay, I somehow doubt it.

But there is one problem with concluding that Pathé filmed scenes in Buttes-Chaumont, which is that the company was not located in that part of Paris. Pathé’s headquarters was in Vincennes and one might think they could have filmed in park areas around there more conveniently, notably in the Bois de Vincennes.<sup>88</sup> Buttes-Chaumont on the other hand was near to where the rival company, Gaumont had its offices (and its first studio and lab). Could the stories of filming be referring to Gaumont? Unlikely, for there is no evidence that Gaumont made any fakes of the Boer War, nor indeed that other Paris-based film companies did so, while there is irrefutable catalogue evidence that Pathé produced such fakes.

My conclusion is that it was indeed Pathé’s staff who were filming Boer fakes in Buttes-Chaumont. Why they should travel to film there, just next to their rivals, is anybody’s guess. Perhaps it was partly a question of permission to film, and the authorities of this park would allow it while others wouldn’t? There might have been another reason too. Buttes-Chaumont park was established partly in the site of a former quarry, and images of it show that it retains a rocky, somewhat wild and hilly appearance. [Fig. 7] The Bois de Vincennes on the other hand is a more ‘placid’ garden, in the English

landscape manner, with gently rolling hills and lakes. The people at Pathé might have thought that Buttes-Chaumont's rocks more closely matched what they knew of South Africa. The surviving films (or frames from them) do suggest that some scenes were filmed in rocky surroundings, and the synopses mention hills.<sup>89</sup> What's more, the trip from Pathé's offices in Vincennes to Buttes-Chaumont is hardly far: a mere five kilometres north.<sup>90</sup>

While Boer War fakes were made in several different countries, it seems there was a prejudice in Britain that most were made in France, and presented an anti-British point of view. A poem of August 1900 by Ward Muir, 'The khaki-covered camera', expresses this feeling. Its subject is some filmmakers who've 'rented a secluded park not far from gay Patee', as a place to make Boer War fakes.<sup>91</sup> Muir writes:

'Their methods, though dramatic, are a little bit erratic,  
For they can't resist the joy of making British soldiers flee !'

Muir continues by lampooning the sheer mendacity of such films: 'As a fabrication-mill it is the greatest thing', he writes, adding that the cinematograph is capable of 'Two hundred lies a minute!...' The implication is that such films presented a distorted and biased view of Britain's effort in the war, and were pro-Boer. Interestingly, though, as far as the Pathé films were concerned, this perception was wrong, for, unpredictably, these films did not present a generally anti-British sentiment, and were fairly balanced. A close reading of the synopses suggests that about half of the eleven titles represent what are in some sense British victories. Take the sixth episode, *Boer Position Taken Near Mafeking*. The catalogue sums this up as follows (my translation):

'The Boers have set up a battery on a hill near Mafeking. This is giving the British severe trouble, so the latter send a unit out of the besieged town, and after an artillery duel and very lively gun fire, seize the position; the Boers withdraw, taking their wounded and their artillery pieces.'

Or in film number 11, *Explosion of a Mine*, the British protagonist manages to wipe out his Boer enemies, and *A Skirmish Near Glencoe* has the British defeating at least a dozen Boer fighters. On the other hand, film number 3, *Capture of a Gun by the Boers*, has the reverse outcome:

'A British artillery battery set on a hillock is captured during an attack by a Boer unit, after fierce fighting by both sides. An artillery piece falls into the hands of the Boers who take it away.'

This balance is maintained across the whole series of films, with both British and Boer successes/defeats being portrayed. Some titles are neither victories nor defeats for either side: for example, in the first two spy films, the Boer spy ends up being executed but gains glory in death, a very ambiguous outcome. What is also noticeable is the fairly measured tone in these films (or in the summaries, at least). There are none of the suggestions of treachery and atrocities that one finds in the British fakes, none of the propaganda. Yet this

was at a time when most French people were fervently pro-Boer, and when there was a widespread anti-British feeling in France. In other words, Pathé took a surprisingly impartial approach.

This rather 'measured' attitude is reflected in the catalogue wording. Significantly, the Pathé catalogue headed its listing of these films, 'Épisodes relatifs à la guerre du Transvaal, scènes d'actualités'. That is, 'Episodes about the Transvaal war: scenes of current events'. This is admirably precise language, which is telling us that while these are 'episodes', or stories (not genuine filmed events), nevertheless they are meant to depict 'current events' in some fairly truthful manner.

In some cases Pathé even seemed to go out of its way to portray British military successes. A couple of examples of this occur in surviving films.<sup>92</sup> Film number 9 is *Episode During the Battle of Spion Kop*. The battle of Spion Kop was possibly the worst British defeat of the war, with over 1300 casualties. Yet the Pathé film shows a British success, with the Tommies managing to place their artillery on the summit of a hill. In actual fact this did not happen, and the British abandoned the hill under fire. So in presenting this British fiasco in any kind of positive light, shows that Pathé were not being as pro-Boer as one might expect.

Another film also is extant, and again is not pro-Boer. Interestingly this was not listed in the Pathé catalogue (neither in the 'Transvaal War' section nor elsewhere). It portrays the surrender of an officer, probably meant to represent General Cronjé. The real Cronjé surrendered with his men on 27 February 1900, a major victory for the British and a very humiliating moment for the Boer side.<sup>93</sup> Why would Pathé choose to portray this moment of British triumph? I suggest that the film was not made for general sale (and not in France) and this might explain why it did not appear in Pathé's catalogue, for perhaps it was for restricted circulation only.<sup>94</sup> It would certainly have enjoyed its greatest popularity in Britain, and maybe it was made primarily for the British market, which was very important to Pathé at this time.

The importance of international markets could help to explain the characteristic which I have discussed above: that Pathé made its films in a relatively dispassionate rather than propagandistic style. By rejecting a tone of Boer triumphalism, the company was ensuring a wider distribution for these scenes, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world. By depicting the British winning in several films, and keeping a generally 'cool' tone, this would help to ensure that the films could be sold in Britain and in English-speaking territories as well as elsewhere, and not antagonise any audiences.

There are a couple of small differences between synopses of the Pathé fakes in the British and French catalogue which would have helped make the films more appropriate to the different national audiences. Such catalogue descriptions were important, for they affected the meanings of films. An English summary of film 5 states that it ends with 'a glorious victory' for the English. On the other hand, for film number 8, the French summary

concludes, 'Finally the British are driven off with serious losses', a comment which is not in the British synopsis.

### **Box:**

#### **The Pathé Boer War fakes: 'Episodes of the Transvaal War'**

##### **Notes:**

This series is also known as 'Episodes of the War in the Transvaal', and in the original French as 'Épisodes relatifs à la guerre du Transvaal: scènes d'actualités'. Film numbers which I use here, 1 to 11, are the same as those assigned by Bousquet. Pathé's original catalogue numbers are given in square brackets: the first is the British catalogue number, the second is the French. The first film title I give is from the British Pathé catalogue of 1903, followed by any alternative titles, including the French originals. \*An asterisk means the film is extant.

The synopses are mainly my translations of Bousquet's French summaries, or, where available, original English language summaries (with source indicated). If an English language summary adds any important details to the translated French catalogue version, or vice versa, I add this information in round brackets.

##### **The films:**

1. [521/550] *Capture of a Boer Spy / Arrest of a Boer Spy / Arrestation d'un Espion Boër* (65 ft, 20m) – An English Column are resting (in their tents) near Mafeking after an attack upon the Boers. (Guards watch over the camp.) Suddenly a patrol of British soldiers advances towards the camp and are stopped by a guard. Among them is a spy who, when brought up and searched before the officers, is found to be in possession of some plans; he is taken to the front of the camp, an officer rises and commands a company of men to take him off for execution; the men fall into line and leave with the officer. (BJP 5.1.00)
2. [522/551] *Execution of the same / Son Exécution / The Execution of the Boer Spy / The Shooting of the Boer Spy by the English* (50 ft, 15m) – On arriving at the place of execution the spy (stands bravely before the English guns and) is immediately shot; he dies heroically, defying the enemies of his country. (BJP 5.1.00)<sup>95</sup>
3. [523/552] *Capture of a Gun by the Boers / Attaque d'une Batterie Anglaise par les Boers; Prise d'un Canon* (65 ft, 20m) – A British artillery battery set on a hillock is captured during an attack by a Boer unit after fierce fighting by both sides. An artillery piece falls into the hands of the Boers who take it away.
- \*4. [524/553] *A Skirmish at Glencoe and Repulse of the Boers / A Skirmish near Glencoe / Une Escarmouche près de Glencoë* (65 ft, 20m) – A detachment of Boers, trying to pass the English outposts, is surprised by a strong English detachment, who, reinforced by two cannons, repulse the Boers, leaving twelve of the enemy (about 15, says the French version) slain on the field.<sup>96</sup> (BJP 5.1.00)
5. [525/554] *Assault on a Hill at Glencoe / Assaut d'une Colline près de Glencoë* (65 ft, 20m) – A Boer unit comes to take up a position at Dundee Hill; but an English battalion preceded it and occupies the hill, and another battalion has got around the Boers and cuts off their retreat. Desperate, the Boers attack, but their efforts are in vain; and those who aren't shot are taken prisoner. (An English summary states:

‘a view of the English Battery attacked by the Boers, resulting in a glorious victory for the former’. PD 01.12.99)

6. [526/555] *Boer Position Taken Near Mafeking / Prise d'une Position Boër près de Mafeking* (50 ft, 15m) – The Boers have set up a battery on a hill near Mafeking. This is giving the British severe trouble, so the latter send a unit out of the besieged town, and after an artillery duel and very lively gun fire, seize the position; the Boers withdraw, taking their wounded and their artillery pieces.
7. [527/556] *Capture of Guns on the Tugela by the Boers, one bursting / Les Boërs s'emparent d'un Canon Anglais / Explosion d'un Canon* (65 ft, 20m) – This takes place during a battle at the Tugela river. After some heavy gunfire, the Boers manage to dislodge the British from their positions, seizing their artillery pieces, one of which explodes, though without causing much injury to the victorious Boers.
8. [528/557] *Episode During the Battle of Modder River / Episodes of the Modder River Battles / Épisode de la Bataille de Modder-River* (50 ft, 15m) – The Boers seize some English cannon, one of which explodes without, however, doing much damage among the victorious Boers. (The battle is so fierce, and the gunfire so heavy that) the Boer women load the guns and pass them on to the Burghers. Severe fighting and heavy losses. (Finally the British are driven off with serious losses.) (BJP 5.1.00) [There seems to be some repetition here, between films 7 and 8.]
- \*9. [529] *Episode During the Battle of Spion Kop / Épisode de la Bataille de Spion-Kop* (65 ft, 20m) – The British, understanding the importance of this strategic point, decide to place their artillery on the summit of the hill. After great efforts they succeed in placing and unlimbering their big guns on one of the main hilltops.
10. [530] *Boers Take Up the Offensive / Les Boërs Prennent l'Offensive* (65 ft, 20m) – The Boers try to drive off the British and a bloody battle begins. The gunfire rages while a large number of men and artillery pieces move around on the slopes of the mountain.
11. [538] *Explosion of a Mine / Une Explosion* (65 ft, 20m) 538 – To avenge the death of his commander an English soldier lights a box of explosives and so wipes out the advance parties of enemy [Boer] troops.
- \* [12. A print of a film, apparently also by Pathé, portraying the surrender of a Boer officer, has been discovered, though it is not listed in the Pathé catalogue. See my main text.]

Sources: Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des Années 1896 à 1914: Vol 1, 1896-1906* (Bures sur Yvette: Henri Bousquet, 1996), p.848-49 and p.858. Bousquet's information on these Boer films comes largely from the French Pathé catalogues of March 1902 and August 1904, plus the British Pathé catalogue of 1903, p.61. The latter dates from May 1903, says Bousquet, and is reproduced on the microfilm, *Early Rare British Filmmakers' Catalogues, 1896-1913*. Further details come from 'Up-to-date films', PD 1 Dec 1899, p.144; and Fuerst's list, BJP Suppl., 5 Jan 1900, p.8.

Such variations were sometime relayed to audiences. I have come across a couple of anecdotes in which the sense of some of these Pathé films was changed through varying their descriptions (both examples come from British sources in 1900). In the first of these, a certain 'Parisian photographer' was reported to have engaged some 'supers' (i.e. extras), then costumed them,



and made a Boer War film with the necessary action, smoke etc. He described the film either as 'The Boers driving back the British' or 'the British beating off the Boers', varying this description, 'according to the pro- or anti-Boer sympathies of his audience'.<sup>97</sup>

Another piece of mis-description was also reported at this time, with films of 'Boers' being cheered in Paris, when it seems they were actually shots of New Zealanders!<sup>98</sup> Presumably the showman was responsible for this subterfuge. As we have seen for other wars, re-titling was the quickest and easiest means of 'faking', thereby making films more saleable than they might otherwise be. The only requirement was an audience which was sufficiently ignorant not to know the difference between the look of Boer, British or New Zealand troops.

### **Other French fakes**

It would be true to say that Pathé almost monopolised the field of Boer fake production in France. The only non-Pathé examples that I have found are based on vague and unreliable reports (as is so common in early film history). Nonetheless they are sufficiently interesting to deserve mentioning. One of these is of especial interest because, if true, it would be the first fake of the Boer War made anywhere, produced only days after the start of hostilities. It was allegedly a fake of virtually the first incident of the war, when the Boers attacked a British armoured train en route to Mafeking on 12 October 1899. The fake of this event was reported in only one source that I have managed to find: in a British music hall journal at the end of October. This stated that within a week of the attack, copies of a 'correct reproduction' in animated photographs of the incident 'were on sale in Paris and found their way over here', and 'have already been shown in the provinces'.<sup>99</sup> I have found no more references to such a film, and no catalogue descriptions matching these details, so perhaps the 'reproduction' was only a lantern slide, or this anecdote may have been nothing but rumour.

The same applies to another alleged example of film fakery from France. This comes from the recollections of famous French western star, Joë Hamman. Hamman remembered filming a fake Boer war film close to Fontvieille in Provence (in the massif, a landscape presumed to match the kopjes of South Africa). The production featured about sixty workers from nearby Arles to play the troops. Specifically Hamman remembered that, in order to increase the realism of the scene, they placed dead horses on the 'battlefield' from an Arles abattoir.<sup>100</sup>

### **The Netherlands: Nöggerath's film**

The populations of the Netherlands and Belgium were fervently pro-Boer at this time, and their media (stage shows, etc) dealt with the conflict with matching passion. I will deal with this subject, and with film exhibition, in the next chapter. But as for film production, it seems that, somewhat surprisingly, only one acted film about the Boer War was actually produced in these countries. The details are somewhat sketchy, though as much as can be discovered has been unearthed by the late Geoffrey Donaldson, and the following is a summary of information from Donaldson's various sources.<sup>101</sup>

The film in question was made by Franz Anton Nöggerath (1859-1908), who owned a music hall, Flora Variété Theatre in Amstelstraat, Amsterdam. After films had been shown there from 1896 to 1897, he and his son Franz Anton Junior (1880-1947) decided to take up cinematography themselves. By 1899 they had begun production, and in November of that year were said to be making Boer War fakes. This was claimed in a brief note published in a magazine, which stated that Transvaal pictures were being staged for the bioscope in a studio on the roof of Nöggerath's Flora theatre. It added, interestingly, 'Mr Nöggerath certainly thinks that the world wants to be deceived.'<sup>102</sup> (Here, as elsewhere at this time, the assumption is that war is faked or restaged on film in order to deceive rather than merely to illustrate).

Further evidence of this fake film production comes from L.J. Jordaan, one of the earliest and most respected Dutch film critics (born 1885). He recalled in a book published in 1958 that, together with his father and grand-father, he saw a film about the Boer War at the time.<sup>103</sup> He described how a scene depicting bearded Boers, with guns at their hips and seated on horses, excited him, 'even though the background looked suspiciously like the Kalfjeslaan'. (The Kalfjeslaan was an avenue on the outskirts of Amsterdam, which at the turn of the century was still rural).

Based on these details therefore, the films were shot in two locations: on the theatre roof and just outside Amsterdam. It seems that the roof material was mainly shots of an actor portraying Paul Kruger (possibly Barend Barendse).<sup>104</sup> The exteriors were presumably scenes to give the impression that the action was taking place in distant South Africa. The resulting films, or some of them, were premiered at the Flora on 10 November, so that they must have been shot at the latest about the beginning of the month. This is very early, less than a month after the outbreak of hostilities, and means that Nöggerath's film fakes were some of the first to be produced during the Boer War.

The films were presented in the context of a stage show (such a combination of film and live performance became a trend in Holland), the theme of which was basically a glorification of President Kruger. A newspaper review on 11 November described the mixed-media nature of this show in the Flora. After a live act which ended with the flourishing of the Transvaal and Dutch flags, the films followed. The critic wrote:

'We waved with our hats, sang along and called back the Schmidt trio [one of the live acts]. The same again with the bioscope, which showed pleasant pictures from the Transvaal: Paul Kruger in four different attitudes, once with his head against the blue sky.'<sup>105</sup>

While these films were shown, couplets about the Transvaal were declaimed by actors, Mr and Mrs Paulus. Then followed more live material on stage in the form of an 'Apotheosis' in which three wounded English soldiers, supported by Red Cross nurses, were lying on the ground in the foreground. Around them were grouped lifelike Boers, while an Angel appeared to

descend from Heaven and offered Paul Kruger a laurel wreath. Kruger shook hands with a wounded Boer.

It is not clear if the exterior-shot films were shown in these Flora performances as well as the four Kruger shots, but there were apparently outdoor scenes in a possibly longer version which was presented on 24 December in the Paleis voor Volksvlijt (also in Amsterdam). The films here were part of a live play about Kruger, called *Oom Paul, of de Vrijheidsoorlog* (Uncle Paul, or the War of Independence), written by Alex Benno, which again featured actor Barend Barendse as Kruger. A press ad states that the films shown during the production were arranged by Nöggerath.<sup>106</sup>

This is as much as we know about the Nöggerath fake films of the Boer War.<sup>107</sup> The films are interesting historically partly because of the mixed-media context, whereby they were presented within the live performance of a stage show. They are also notable in offering parallels with British Boer War fakes, which also made use of the tableau format, with its heavy use of symbolism and veneration of national heroes. The difference, of course, is that here the theme was a glorification of President Kruger – in marked contrast to the vilification the President was receiving in the British media. In this sense, the Nöggerath films provide a small mirror image of the British fakes, each presenting its own extreme position on the Kruger question, and demonstrating again that film propaganda – and propaganda from two opposing viewpoints – was born within the very first years of cinema.

### **The United States: Edison's New Jersey fakes**

There were two American producers of Boer War fakes: the Edison and the Lubin companies, while Vitagraph merely distributed some titles. Edison had followed Lubin into this area of staging war re-enactments from 1898, and by the time of the Boer War were well rehearsed in the genre. Their production of Boer fakes is well documented, far more so than Lubin's.

In the Spring of 1900 Edison made seven Boer War fakes, in two batches, all shot in the Orange Mountains in New Jersey.<sup>108</sup> [Fig. 9] About 200 men were employed as performers, about half of them playing Boers and the other half British troops.<sup>109</sup> The production process was not without upsets, with the disaffected actors demanding a pay rise at one stage, and worse was to come. On 11 April director James H. White was filming the first few subjects, including *Boers Bringing in British Prisoners* and *Charge of Boer Cavalry*, but while filming *Capture of Boer Battery*, the cannon fired prematurely and two men including White were injured, the director being badly lacerated and burned.<sup>110</sup> But, despite his mishap, a few days later he was back to complete the series, joined now by Mason Mitchell, an actor and veteran of the Spanish-American War, to help organize the battle scenes.

The three films just mentioned were advertised and described at the end of April, headlined 'Realistic Boer Pictures', and this source added that four further Boer War films were now ready.<sup>111</sup> Two weeks later these additional four titles (presumably the films which Mitchell had worked on after the accident) were advertised in the *New York Clipper*.<sup>112</sup>

All of the films were copyrighted, and so paper print versions survive.<sup>113</sup> The films are interesting both in terms of content and style. Each title is shot from a single position, and shows various incidents, as opposing groups of troops battle and chase one another across the hilly landscape. To anyone who knows anything about the Boer War, the lack of authenticity is striking. The 'Boers' are wearing uniforms, said to be khaki, but which look more like the uniforms worn by northern soldiers in the US Civil War ! (They came from a theatrical costumier).<sup>114</sup> In reality Boer fighters rarely wore uniforms of any kind, being typical guerrillas, riding the family horse and fighting in the clothes in which they farmed. One detail Edison's men did get right: the 'Boers' were provided with false beards (which kept falling off, according to one article of the time), and as photographs taken during the war prove, many Boers really did have beards, especially the older men.

Edison's portrayal of Boer tactics is as laughable as the uniforms. Whereas in the real war the Boers used up-to-date rifles (Kruger had cannily ordered thousands of Mausers before the war) in the Edison films they are armed with swords. In *Charge of Boer Cavalry* they wave these weapons in the air as they charge up a slope, and are also seen brandishing them in *Boers Bringing in British Prisoners*. As in other early fakes, the guns emit huge volumes of gun-smoke (e.g. in *English Lancers Charging at Modder River*): this in an era when smokeless powder was becoming the norm.

But apart from this lack of the correct details, in other respects the action is not unrealistic. David Levy writes that these films are 'remarkable for the choice of angle and camera positions', with unusually early use of movement in depth, as performers come past close to camera – giving the scenes a certain realistic quality. He finds, too, some restraint in acting (apart from an occasional grin which breaks through), and he concludes that the films,

'...were clearly the deliberate result of an equally deliberate analysis. Whoever did them possessed a fine sense, not only of the features of the newsreel look, but also of how to achieve a credible stylized facsimile.'<sup>115</sup>

I think that Levy rather overstates his case, but the movement in depth is indeed more typical of early actualities than dramas (which tended to place actors on a stage at a fixed distance from the camera) and thus this shooting style does signal actuality. Another noteworthy point about these Edison fakes is that they are more measured in tone than the British fakes – in this respect more like the Pathé series – for while most of the Edison films show the Boers winning, some are more neutral, and one title, *Capture of Boer Battery*, actually has the British troops (Highlanders) defeating the Boers. ('They sweep all before them, leaving the guns smoking and deserted as they pursue the flying Boers', states the catalogue.)

Whoever wins, there is no attempt to demonise one or the other for fighting unfairly or treacherously (as in the British fakes): one side simply wins and the other loses. The only noticeable bias, and this very marginal, comes in the

catalogue in the form of comments that, for example, the British prisoners look 'very dejected', or that a film of English Lancers being repulsed is 'very stirring'. This relatively dispassionate approach may well have been informed by the fact that the American public was divided in its attitude to this war, and Edison's producers were reflecting this varied and non-polarised opinion. This would also be a sensible strategy in order to appeal to all world markets, both the pro-Boer and the pro-British, and though I cannot establish how widely these fake films were distributed outside the USA, one of them, *Capture of Boer Battery*, may well have been screened in the UK (see second **Box** below). This scene had the British winning, and the anecdote suggests that exhibitors would pick and choose these films so as to show only those which would appeal to their spectators (who obviously wouldn't want to see the Boers winning).

### **Box:**

#### **Edison fake films of the Boer War**

Titles, descriptions and footages are from an Edison ad, headed: 'New Boer Pictures', *NY Clipper*, 12 May 1900, p.260.<sup>116</sup>

*Charge of Boer Cavalry* (50ft.) Shows a wild charge of mounted Boers up a steep hill.

The action of the picture is spirited, and photographically, it is an excellent film. The opening scene shows a bleak hillside with the Boer cavalry in the distance, galloping rapidly to the front. They cross the crest of the ridge just as the film ends. [Two versions of this were copyrighted.]

*Capture of Boer Battery* (100ft.) By the Gordon Highlanders. In the foreground are two Creusot guns, manned by the Dutch burghers. Smoke effects are fine. The highlanders are seen in the distance, approaching rapidly, easily distinguished by their kilts and bare legs. They sweep all before them, leaving the guns smoking and deserted as they pursue the flying Boers. [What seems like a second take of this was copyrighted as *Capture of Boer Battery by the British*.]

*Boers Bringing in British Prisoners* (75ft.) Boers are on horseback, and pass over the kop in slow marching order with their prisoners, who trudge along on foot, looking very dejected.

*English Lancers Charging at Modder River* (75ft.) This scene shows the British Infantry and cavalry attacking the Boers and being repulsed. Very stirring.

*Boer Commissary Train Trekking* (25ft.) Shows a Boer supply wagon train escorted by cavalry marching down a mountain road.

*Red Cross Ambulance on the Battle Field* (100ft.) Shows an ambulance drawn by two spirited horses galloping across the field, escorted by Red Cross nurses, who pick up the dead and wounded of both Boer and British, and carry them off.

*Battle of Mafeking* (75ft.) This scene shows the Boers attacking the British; and after surrounding and killing the greatest part of them, they capture the remainder.

## Box:

### Recollection of a fake film of the Boer War

From: Edmund Cousins, *Filmland in Ferment*, 1932.<sup>117</sup>

In this passage Edmund Cousins recalls seeing a Boer War fake in the summer of 1900 when he was a child, along with a fake of the Boxer uprising (also claimed as authentic). It seems from his description that the Boer film may have been one of the Edison fakes, *Capture of Boer Battery*. (This is the film, mentioned above, which has the British Highlanders vanquishing the Boers). He notes that it depicted the fighting in South Africa, and had apparently been shot in an area of parkland. He writes:

*'...one helmeted and accoutred British scout after another walked incautiously up a grassy slope, only to be shot or clubbed by a handful of Boers in slouch hats and black synthetic beards, who popped over the crest like jack-in-the-box. At last a force of British troops, which could hardly have been a man under eight strong, stormed the position at the point of the bayonet amid the fervent patriotic cheers of the audience; and when the gas jets in the hall were turned up they shone on faces transfigured by a great and glorifying experience. "One of those soldiers was killed twice," complained my brother, aged twelve. "I knew him by his short legs."*

There are a number of points here which lead me to think that this might be referring to the aforementioned Edison film. The size of the force roughly matches what one sees in the Edison films; the 'black synthetic beards' of the Boers are akin to those false beards alluded to above; and the 'short legs' of one of the British attackers would have been especially noticeable, as these were Scots troops, 'easily distinguished by their kilts and bare legs', as the Edison catalogue put it.

### Lubin: the Pitrot film

We know far less about Lubin's productions on the Boer War than Edison's, but the company was certainly capable of this kind of work. Charles Musser notes that Lubin's film productions had reached a considerable level of sophistication by 1899, and the company had a studio in which it made acted films, notably re-creations of war incidents and boxing matches, Musser tells us.

When the Boer War was in full swing, at about the same time as the rival Edison company was making its war fakes, the Lubin company apparently decided that they must have something of this kind too. My suspicion is that they opted for a dual-track strategy, and bought in some films while also shooting their own specially-made tableaux of the war. Lubin certainly released some kind of Boer War subjects, as he advertised these in an American entertainment weekly. One Lubin ad appeared on 21 April 1900 for something called 'Boer War Film', a 450 foot production.<sup>118</sup> Lubin published another ad in mid May, stating that 'new Boer War films now ready'.<sup>119</sup> [Fig. 10]

So clearly Lubin had some kind of Boer films to release, but until recently the evidence that the company made acted films about the war has been slim. However I have now found a brief reference which suggests that at least one made-up film on this subject was indeed produced. My evidence comes from an intriguing short letter which is quoted in a British music-hall periodical in mid 1900. Dated 2 June, the letter was sent to the periodical by a certain Richard Pitrot, then in Philadelphia. Pitrot was evidently an actor, and probably British. He informed the readership that he had just come back from the Lubin 'factory' in the city, where he had:

'...posed for Mr. Lubin as the Queen, as General Roberts, Paul Kruger, Salisbury, Gladstone, and McKinley. Mr. Lubin received telegraphic orders from all over the country for these pictures, which are certainly among the most clever ever produced.'<sup>120</sup>

This is the only information I have on these films, but one can deduce a few probabilities from this letter. The cast of characters, including two Boer War-related figures, Roberts and Kruger, proves that this refers to a Boer War subject or subjects. The fact that there was such an array of characters, both male and female, all played by this male actor, suggests that the film or films being made were quite 'broad', in a music hall or pantomime tradition. I suspect that these various political figures might have featured in the manner of the previously mentioned British symbolic film by Barnes, *A Prize Fight...Between John Bull and President Kruger*. Pitrot calls these Lubin films in which he'd appeared, 'most clever', and this word 'clever' suggests to me that this/these might have been trick films.

When were these Lubin pantomime film(s) released? I have mentioned some Lubin press ads for the so-called 'Boer War Film', but I doubt that these refer to the Pitrot film, partly because the ads are too early: Pitrot states on 2 June that he had 'just come from a visit to the Lubin factory', which implies that he had been before the cameras only a few days earlier, say in May. The films therefore would not have been ready in April or even, probably, by mid May, whereas the 'Boer War Film' was advertised on 21 April. Furthermore the latter was very long at 450 ft., longer than any standard pantomime subject. My suspicion therefore is that the 'Boer War Film' was something else, probably a medley of existing Boer War films, foreign-made actualities in the main, bought in from other producers. But at the end of June Lubin advertised a new title, 'South African War Subjects', which might have included Pitrot's pantomime film (if indeed this film was ever advertised).<sup>121</sup>

Given the intensive research which has been done on early American cinema, it might seem somewhat surprising that we know so little about Lubin's Boer War films. Perhaps one reason for this lack of information is that these productions were being filmed at a time of patent disputes with Edison, leading to a general air of secrecy. Probably Lubin himself would have kept rather quiet about what he was doing, and, for example, wouldn't have wanted a reporter coming to do a story on his film 'factory'; so we are lucky indeed that an actor, Pitrot, managed to sneak this brief account of his work out of the studio and into the British press. Another possible reason that Lubin's Boer

War fakes have been neglected is that they may have been destroyed in a studio fire.<sup>122</sup>

Apparently, the only other American company which claimed to make Boer War fakes was Vitagraph. While I believe that these were bought-in productions made by other companies, not Vitagraph, I append the list in any case (see **Box**), as an interesting addition to this subject of non-British Boer War films.

**Box:**

**Vitagraph's five fake Boer War films**

(from Vitagraph's 'New Boer War films', 1900)

In Vitagraph's *List of New Films* of 1900, a section of titles is headed, 'New Boer War films'. While over thirty of these are actualities, including some from South Africa (not filmed by Vitagraph, I might add, but bought in), five are listed as 'faked or pre-arranged war subjects'.<sup>123</sup> The catalogue states that these views 'were specially posed for at an open-air military tournament in England by British infantry and cavalrymen – the most realistic and exciting war pictures of the age'. While it is just possible that Vitagraph did film at a tournament in England, it would be an ambitious undertaking for a start-up company based in the USA. Another claim came from Terry Ramsaye, who stated that Vitagraph made some Boer War fakes on Long Island.<sup>124</sup> Much more likely than either, I'd suggest, is that Vitagraph simply bought these films in from another company or companies, and sure enough, some of the details given do match known productions from other companies.<sup>125</sup> Among these five films, some seem pro and some seem anti British, which is similar to the balanced, even-handed approach that we find in the Edison corpus.

- 235. *Repulse of the Boers at Magersfontein by the Royal Dublin Fusiliers* – showing charge of the Irish Regiments and the Ambulance Corps in action. 75 and 100 ft.
- 236. *Capture of a Boer Maxim Gun by a Skirmish Party of Gen Roberts' Division*. 75 ft.
- 237. *Boers Surprising and Capturing a British Picket*. 40 ft.
- 238. *Attack on the Square*. South African Savages' Mode of Warfare. Furious Charge by Boer Cavalry. 75 ft.
- 239. *The British Cavalryman's Last Stand*. A thrilling scene of modern warfare – an entire regiment of men and horses annihilated. 125 ft.

**CONCLUSION**

These American productions bring us to an end of this account of staged films about the Boer War. One remarkable development in this regard was the large number of such films which were made to represent this war, compared to other wars of the period. During the Spanish-American War less than a



score of staged films were made (the Edison company were responsible for the largest tranche). But during the Boer War there was truly a rash of titles. Coming from Edison and Pathé as well as from the British makers Paul and M&K, the eventual total of staged Boer films was at least twice that of the Spanish-American War. I suspect that one reason for this large output was that several of the firms made entire series on this theme: part of a strategy perhaps to reduce per footage costs. Another reason is that the war continued for a long time (from 1899 to 1902) and, as we have seen from the previous chapter, after about October of 1900 no genuine films were being shot at the front in South Africa (cameramen possibly being barred by the War Office), so there was a gap in the market for films of any kind about the conflict.

A significant point to be made about the acted films of this war is the striking difference between the British and the non-British examples. The former were almost all very imperialistic in tone, while the latter were much more fair and even-handed in their depiction of the two sides in the conflict. Due to their comic-book chauvinism the British films are more intriguing as a viewing experience and historically. From today's perspective these British Boer War films have a double significance. Firstly, in a narrow sense, they are interesting as early experiments in propaganda: a means to demonise an enemy and glorify one's own side. But secondly, and more generally, they may be seen as pioneering exercises in presenting a 'point of view' on film. I will elaborate on this in my concluding chapter, but I will merely raise the idea at this stage that these films were some of the first to put over opinions and beliefs in such a forceful and consistent manner, sometimes employing rich symbolism. Using film to state a point of view was something of a new idea at this time, but an idea which would inform and inspire filmmakers in future.

It seems that the staged films of this war were also an inspiration in another sense, which brings me to a final point. I would suggest that the films which I have discussed in this chapter may be seen as stepping stones in the development of film style and genre. War faking, by utilising a narrative in acted films, may have helped to push producers towards the story form, i.e. narrative, as a dominant film genre. Certainly a move towards making story films was under way soon after the end of the Boer War, and some connection to these staged war films seems quite likely, given that such staged films constitute a major proportion of acted narratives up to about 1901. I will discuss this further in Chapter 13 in connection with James Williamson's work, and also in my Conclusion.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> One author's statement of the numbers of these Boer War fakes sounds exaggerated, but may not be: '...the makers of the kinematographs, being the most obliging people in the world, turn out desperate encounters by the dozen'. V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of "Living Picture" Making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Claude Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, no. 21, 11 Dec 1933, p.3-26.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Grottle Strelbel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage', in *Film before Griffith*, edited by J. L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.264-271; this is an amended version of her 'Primitive Propaganda: the Boer War Films', *Sight and Sound* 46, no.1, Winter 1976-77, p.45-47.

<sup>4</sup> He states this in passing, after mentioning the cinematograph's beneficial roles in medical demonstration, etc. *Annuaire générale de la Photographie*, v.9, 1900, p.13.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Edel, *The Life of Henry James* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), vol 2, p.381; TLS 6 Sep 1996, p.16.

<sup>6</sup> Warwick catalogue, Apr/May 1901.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Grottle Strelbel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage'.

<sup>8</sup> *The Showman* 20 Sep 1901, p.21. This transition suggests that an early form of dissolve was used.

<sup>9</sup> Hepworth released *Return of Lord Roberts*, which showed the commander entering his carriage at Southampton, and then in London receiving the tribute of the populace. See De Lange filmography, film no.90.

<sup>10</sup> 'The office window', *Daily Chronicle* 22 Apr 1907, p.4, col. 6. This columnist added cynically: 'This writer, watching the reproduction of Lord Robert's [sic] landing on his return from South Africa, would have been more impressed if he had not seen it in the faking.' The producer of the Roberts film is not mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Popple, 'British Popular Cultural Representations of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902', thesis, Univ. of York, forthcoming.

<sup>12</sup> Warwick catalogue, Sep 1900, p.114; and Warwick catalogue, Apr/May 1901, p.125 under 'Miscellaneous'. The catalogue adds: 'From a humorous point of view one of the biggest successes at a principal London music hall ...'

<sup>13</sup> Robert W. Paul, et al, 'Before 1910: Kinematograph Experiences', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, no. 38, 1936, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Paul's first films from South Africa were advertised 6 Jan 1900. For more on this theme, see Ian Christie, 'The Boer War in North London'. Paper read at 'Location, location, location' : the 6th British Silent Cinema Weekend, 3-7 April 2003, at Nottingham.

<sup>15</sup> 'Transvaal War Films', PD Dec 1899, p.144-45.

<sup>16</sup> We only know release dates for seven of the films in 1899, and four in 1900, so the remaining undated two titles may well be the other two of 1899 announced by Paul. The price was at the rate of 75 shillings per 100 ft. (so a 60 ft. film would cost 45s.)

<sup>17</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', *Photographic Chronicle* 14 Aug 1902, p.517-8. The author queried the plausibility of such films (see Chapter 2 on plausibility).

<sup>18</sup> AP 16 Feb 1900, p.122. The writer adds, grudgingly about such 'faked photographs' that, '...we are bound to admit that they are far more successful in their representation of a conventional battle piece than a photograph taken at the seat of war could possibly be'. He also notes that the first Boer fakes were taken outside Paris using 'supers' from a Paris theatre.

<sup>19</sup> This writer states that Paul had been told he looked very like Cronje, the Boer general who surrendered at Paardeberg in 1900, and so Paul produced a film that purported to be taken on the spot, showing the surrender, with himself dressed as Cronje. He showed it at the Alhambra a *fortnight* after the actual event. And as the minimum time for any mail from South Africa to England was then three weeks, there were a lot of trenchant comments in the newspapers and elsewhere about the authenticity of the film! From 'Another Pioneer', *Sunday Dispatch* 17 Feb 1946. So states this writer, but actually (see my previous chapter) Paul's cameraman at the front had actually filmed the real Cronje after his surrender. So this anecdote is probably misinformation.

<sup>20</sup> Denis Gifford, 'Fitz: The Old Man of the Screen', in *All Our Yesterdays*, ed. C. Barr (London: BFI, 1986). There is an unsubstantiated claim that 'Briton vs Boer', an 'allegorical tableau', was made by Birt Acres.

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<sup>21</sup> K LW 4 Apr 1912, p.1285.

<sup>22</sup> Gifford, 1986, op. cit., p.314. Gifford might have got the golf links detail from talking to Fitzhamon, or simply from Paul's statement above. Gifford's description is: 'Two minutes of white heat excitement taking place on the open veldt' (unknown source).

<sup>23</sup> 'Transvaal War Films', PD Dec 1899, p.144-45. 'Reproductions of Incidents of the Boer War', R.W. Paul catalogue, 1902. Held in BFI and Cinémathèque française, Will Day collection, item no.454; and on Early Rare British Film-Makers' Catalogues microfilms, reel 4.

<sup>24</sup> Robert W. Paul, et al, 'Before 1910...' op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> In reply my enquiry, I received a letter from Dr Linda Washington, National Army Museum, 6 May 1992. Dr Washington had made an extensive investigation, but could find 'no mention of him in the *Army List* or Hart's *Army List*, which I have checked between the years 1880 and 1901, so he was not a serving officer in the British Army during this period. The two Robert Ashes who appear in the *Indian Army List* are not the same individual. ... He is not mentioned in any of the campaign histories or the biographies of Rhodes which I have been able to check ...' I also wrote to the Transvaal State Archives, but in a letter back to me, 22 May 1992, they reported that no trace could be found of Ashe.

<sup>26</sup> Ian Christie notes in his Paul newsletter, 'Finding Paul's Films', that leads supplied by John Barnes and Neil Brown helped trace four surviving Paul films in New Zealand, including *A Camp Smithy*. Three Paul films were found by Philip Adcock of Coventry in his attic (they had been acquired by his father many years earlier), including *Attack on a Picquet* (*MACE Newsletter*, no. 8, Nov 2005).

<sup>27</sup> 'Before 1910', op. cit., p.5.

<sup>28</sup> R.W. Paul catalogue, *Animated Photograph Films* (1900); and 'Reproductions of Incidents of the Boer War', R.W. Paul catalogue, 1902.

<sup>29</sup> *Attack on a Picquet* may be seen on the DVD, *R W Paul: The Collected Films 1895-1908* (BFI, 2007), and on the MACE (Nottingham-based archive) website.

<sup>30</sup> The *Photographic Dealer* listing (Dec 1899) offered a variation on this description: 'a most affecting picture, but very beautiful and natural. It depicts the battlefield, with the wounded and dead scattered over it. In the foreground is a nurse, preparing to receive the wounded, while a stretcher-party, attended by a doctor and nurse, are bringing down a wounded Boer, who is tended by a nurse and doctor's orderly. At the same time a British soldier is carried down by his comrades to the other nurses.'

<sup>31</sup> At the Battle of Majuba Hill in the first Anglo-Boer War of 1881 the British were defeated by the Boers. By the 1890s this was viewed by a number of Britons as a day to be avenged. Incidentally, in the IWM print this title reads slightly differently: 'On Majuba day England was defeated'.

<sup>32</sup> The IWM print at this point has a jump cut to a placard with the words 'Kruger the Conqueror', and Kruger stands with one foot on a fallen Lord Roberts.

<sup>33</sup> At this finale the four Tommies line up and there is a tableau. A trade journal printed a lengthy description of this film, noting a vogue for such trick films using 'judicious stops, rejoicing and other devices'. OMLJ June 1900, p.70.

<sup>34</sup> Strelbel states that this film does not survive, but it does, in the IWM.

<sup>35</sup> The most complete list of the fakes is in the form of an M&K ad in *The Showman* 6 Sep 1901, p.xi, though this does not include all of the titles.

<sup>36</sup> The first titles included *The Dispatch [or Despatch] Bearer and Washing the Boer Prisoner*. See PD May 1900, p.115. See also *The Showman* 6 Sep 1901, p.584 which states that M&K are securing a new series of war films. M&K films were sometimes distributed by John Wrench and Son.

<sup>37</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, Patrick Russell and Simon Pople, eds., *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon: Edwardian Britain on Film* (London: BFI, 2004), p.8. Most of the surviving films except *The Clever Correspondent* were shown in the NFT, Oct 1999.

<sup>38</sup> Entry by Gifford on M&K in McKernan/Herbert, *Who's Who*.

<sup>39</sup> See Simon Pople, "'Startling, realistic, pathetic": The Mitchell and Kenyon Boer War Films' in *The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon*, op. cit., p.151-52.

<sup>40</sup> As Pople notes, the elusive de Wet was a common subject for satire at this time. An example of this topic appears in *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday*, 25 August 1900, p.403, in the context of moving pictures: a showman claims that if you look into his mutoscope you'll see a soldier 'surrounding de Wet', the joke being that the film on the reel is a soldier drinking beer (i.e. 'the wet').

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<sup>41</sup> This was stated by the late Mr. W. Dyer, of Farnworth, a travelling fairground actor. See '40 years of films in Bolton', *Bolton Journal and Guardian* 20 Nov 1930 (courtesy NWFa). Brownhill (not Brownhills) is just to the northwest of Blackburn, while Kearsley and Clifton are much further south, being adjacent rail stations on the line from Bolton to Manchester.

<sup>42</sup> John M. East, 'The Birth of the Cinema Trade in Scotland', *Scotland's Magazine*, 69, Dec 1973, p.28.

<sup>43</sup> While the following material might fit more properly in my 'exhibition' section, the cases are so specific to M&K, that I discuss them at this point.

<sup>44</sup> Biographical article about Frederick Edward Weisker, TC 8 Jan 1914, p.85. He recalled the full title as *Poisoning the Well – an Incident in the Boer War*. He states in this article that he bought most of the company's films in London from Paul and from Pathé.

<sup>45</sup> As shown in a frame still in Maryann Gomes, *The Picture House...* (Manchester: North West Film Archive, Manchester Polytechnic, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> 'Norwich', *The Showman* 12 April 1901, p.245.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from John S. Fisher in the *Times* 22 March 1929, p.12c. The letter discusses the importance of travelling fairground showmen in the early days. Fisher adds that another film, *The Jameson Raid*, 'was also shown regularly in these portable shows'.

<sup>48</sup> Films including *The Dispatch Rider* were shown by Brook and Borlands' Viagraph at the Regent Theatre, Salford, 19 Nov 1900. (Information from NWFa). A poster for the 'Bio-Tyrolgraph', 1901, listed films to be selected from nightly ('the latest Boer War films, direct from the front'), including *The Dispatch Rider*, *Chasing the Boers*, and *Shooting a Spy*. The poster for Frederick's Royal Tyroleans was displayed at the 'Moving Performance' conference, Bristol in 1996.

<sup>49</sup> He notes that it showed, 'a handful of Colonial irregulars ambushed by the Boers, the surprise being followed by one hero in the little band cutting his way through in order to save the dispatches he carried'. 'Cinematograph fakes', *Photographic Chronicle*, op. cit.: this article is about the implausibility of some fakes.

<sup>50</sup> Alfred Claude Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', op. cit. Bromhead misremembered its length too, as 120 feet (in fact it was little more than half that). As further evidence of the wide distribution of *The Dispatch Bearer*, and the attention still being paid to it years later, there is a frame still of this film in the Will Day collection, which is reproduced, for example, in *The Pageant of the Century* (London: Odham's Press, 1933), p.71.

<sup>51</sup> 'Glasgow notes: The late Mr. George Green', *The Cinema* (Scottish section) 25 Nov 1915, p.84. This states: 'Mr Green produced the first film on Scottish soil: this was called "The Dispatch Rider," and was produced during the Boer War, the negative being afterwards sold to the Warwick Co.' (Thanks to Tony Fletcher for this reference).

<sup>52</sup> 'A Cinematographic Incident', *BJP Suppl.*, 1 Nov 1901, p.83.

<sup>53</sup> They employed multiple shots in at least one other film of this year. See details of M&K's edited Goudie film (1901) in Vanessa Toulmin, *Electric Edwardians: The Story of the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection* (London: BFI, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> *The Era* 9 August 1902, p.32. Reference from Vanessa Toulmin. Gifford on the other hand writes that it was in June 1902, with the ending of the war, that M&K's library of fifteen faked films was assembled into a special show entitled, 'Hands Off the Flag'. See entry by Gifford on M&K in McKernan/Herbert, *Who's Who*.

<sup>55</sup> Strebel's description of the film comes from *Hepwix Films for the Cinematograph* (London, Hepworth & Co., 1903).

<sup>56</sup> From Strebel, op. cit. In the Hepworth catalogue this is described as an 'animated cartoon', though this term is being used in a metaphoric sense, and this date would have been very (too) early for what would have been sophisticated single-frame animation. The catalogue description in any case suggests live action. This film is cited in *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1937, p.126.

<sup>57</sup> These descriptions are from: *A Selected Catalogue of the Best and Most Interesting 'Hepwix' Films* (London, 1903). p.20-21, which is on Early Rare British Film-Makers' Catalogues microfilms, reel 2.

<sup>58</sup> I will just mention the firm of Bamforth, as the company's catalogue of this period lists a plethora of slide sets about the conflict. These range from straight propaganda in 'Krugers Great Blunder' and 'Marching Through Pretoria' (the latter was 10 slides), to the comic set, 'The Three Boers' (six slides). See James Bamforth, *A Detailed Catalogue of Photographic Lantern Slides - Life Models...* (nd), which lists Boer war slide sets on pp.227-8, 241, 246, 276

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and 286. James Bamforth was, of course, an important early filmmaker as well as lantern slide manufacturer, though Bamforth doesn't seem to have made any actual war films.

<sup>59</sup> 'Twenty-nine years as an exhibitor: the trade's debt of gratitude to the pioneer', KW 17 June 1926, p.57. Blake was the President of the trade body, the C.E.A., and had been in the business almost since it began. Blake didn't know if his friend Hepworth was responsible for writing the poem. The Paul film was forty feet long, he noted.

<sup>60</sup> *The Showman* 27 Sep 1901, p.32: ad for Gaumont Elgé film no.923, *Boer Atrocities*. The length was given as 100 ft. and price 1/- per foot, 'less usual discount'. The same information appears in Gaumont's ad in *The Era* 21 Sep 1901, p.27.

<sup>61</sup> *The Showman* 20 Sep 1901, p.32. The following week the journal claimed that this film was somehow factual: 'During the continuance of the South African war, so much has been heard of the Boer atrocities that a picture bringing the facts home will be of interest'. *The Showman* 27 Sep 1901, p.36.

<sup>62</sup> *The Showman* 27 Sep 1901, p.32.

<sup>63</sup> 'Boer atrocities', OMLJ Nov 1901, p.96. I assume he was a customer as he had received the circular from Gaumont. His letter begins: 'To the Editor. Dear Sir, I lately received by post a circular from one of our leading makers of cinematographic films, containing details of what they call one of their latest films. It is headed "Boer Atrocities," and it reads as follows...'

<sup>64</sup> Elgé catalogue, Jan-June 1903 (issued Oct 1903), p.3: film no. 2B, *Signing Peace at Pretoria*, priced at £4.2s.6.

<sup>65</sup> 'Disgraceful fake pictures', *Moving Picture News* 16 Dec 1911, p.6. This was in the context of fake films of the Italian-Turkish war being exhibited at that time, and was presumably written by Alfred Saunders who had been a lanternist in Britain during the Boer War, and soon afterwards emigrated to the USA, where he founded *Moving Picture News* and was editor until 1913.

<sup>66</sup> The Clee Hills are in Shropshire (the highest hills in the English Midlands), Foxhills is in Surrey to the southwest of London, and Hampstead Heath is in north London. The latter might have been used by London production companies, but I believe (see above) that R.W. Paul filmed in Muswell Hill, and Bromhead would probably have shot his fake war film where he was based in south London.

<sup>67</sup> Article by F. Mottershaw in KLV 10 Apr 1917, p.102. Mottershaw confirms that this film 'was produced during the Boer War'. He notes that SPC's films were sold to several different companies, including Gaumont, Paul, Wrench, etc, as well as foreign companies.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Benfield, *Bijou Kinema : A History of Early Cinema in Yorkshire* (Sheffield: Sheffield City Polytechnic, 1976), p.52.

<sup>69</sup> This claim about *Matches Appeal* should not be dismissed out of hand, and was first made by Melbourne-Cooper in a BBC interview with Ernest Lindgren, Frank Kessler tells me. Tony Fletcher has seen the Hadley Woods claim in the Melbourne-Cooper materials in St Albans Museum, and also a contention that Cooper developed some of Warwick's (including Rosenthal's) Boer war films.

<sup>70</sup> In the case of *Reservist* the soldier finds his family destitute: the message here being similar to that post World War 1, of 'a home fit for heroes'. These films are held in George Eastman House (*Soldier's Return*) and the NFTVA (*Reservist*). See Martin Sopocy, 'A Narrated Cinema: The Pioneer Story Films of James A. Williamson', *Cinema Journal* 8, no. 1, Fall 1978, p.13-15, 23.

<sup>71</sup> The film was formerly known as *Set-To Between John Bull and Paul Kruger* (a 90 foot long print held in the NFTVA) but original copyright frames have since been located in the files of Britain's National Archives. These show that the film was copyrighted on 15 March 1900 under the title I mention by John Sloane Barnes for the Anglo American Exchange, 3 Northumberland Ave., London WC (and 60 Gower St.). Barnes seems to have made no other films.

<sup>72</sup> The eleven films were numbered 521-530 and 538 (538 was possibly shot a little later). For their UK release, the films were priced according to length: 65 ft being £1.12s.6d and 50 ft being £1.5s.0d.

<sup>73</sup> The two films were described in 'Up-to-date films', PD Dec 1899, p.144. A periodical like this dated December would have been printed the previous month, which means that these films would have been ready by November. The two films were: *The Shooting of the Boer Spy by the English*, and an untitled film described as, 'a view of the English Battery attacked by

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the Boers, resulting in a glorious victory for the former' (presumably this is Pathé's Glencoe title).

<sup>74</sup> BJP Suppl., 5 Jan 1900, p.8.

<sup>75</sup> The five films are listed in *Les Inventions et les Industries Nouvelles* no.1, 1 Jan 1900, according to Henri Bousquet, who states that these titles match the first eight films released by Pathé, with some title and number variations. Thus, episode 7 is number 4 in this periodical, entitled *Au Combat de la Tugela*; and episode 4, *Une Escarmouche près de Glencoe* is number 3 in the periodical. (It's not clear from Bousquet which five of the eight films are listed in this periodical). Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des Années 1896 à 1914: Vol 1, 1896-1906* (Bures sur Yvette: Henri Bousquet, 1996).

<sup>76</sup> These three films were numbered 529, 530, and 538 in the catalogue, and these numbers were the same in the British catalogue. The earlier films have different numbers in the British and French Pathé catalogues.

<sup>77</sup> One French cineaste suggested that Zecca had been involved in making a fake of *La Guerre de Boers*. See Henri Diamant-Berger, *Il Était une Fois le Cinéma* (Paris: Jean-Claude Simoën, 1977), p.43. I have an unsourced note that Lucien Nonguet made *La Guerre de Transvaal* – which was shown by the Royal Bioscope in Bordeaux in 1900.

<sup>78</sup> AP 16 Feb 1900, p.122.

<sup>79</sup> 'Cinematograph fakes', *Photographic Chronicle*, op. cit. It is not clear which company he is referring to, though he seems to imply it was Méliès.

<sup>80</sup> 'War photographs to order', *South Africa*, 18 Nov 1899, p.449. The article is quoted in BJP 24 Nov 1899, p.738.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* The paragraph concluded: 'In consequence, Londoners must not be surprised if they shortly obtain, *via* Paris, what purport to be Kodak reproductions of the wounding of General Symons, and other prominent incidents of the war. There seem to have been no mules at the Buttes-Chaumont, or, doubtless, the famous stampede would figure in the series of pictures.' The latter is a reference to an incident in South Africa on 30 October when a British military convoy of mules was stampeded by stones rolled from the road above.

<sup>82</sup> Likely periodicals are: *Le Petit Parisien*, *Le Journal illustré*, *Petit Journal supplément illustré*, *La Vie Illustré*.

<sup>83</sup> I realise that this evidence is not strong, and all we can say for sure is that during or before November 1899, fake photographs or films were reported as being made in Buttes Chaumont park, Paris. And there are other reports of faked *still* photographs being made in Paris. See BJP 16 Mar 1900, p.173. See also: 'Bogus war and other pictures', BJP Suppl. 1 Dec 1899, p.92. A parody about the press commissioning faked stills of the Boer War is 'War pictures', *Review of the Week* 19 May 1900, p.775.

<sup>84</sup> This is a story by Maurice Normand, 'Devant le Cinématographe', in *l'Illustration*, no. 2974, 24 Feb 1900, p.122-123. It is about an Irish girl working in Paris, who sees a film apparently showing her lover, a British soldier, being killed in a battle in South Africa. She bursts into tears, but a man in the audience tells her: 'Don't you realise the soldiers you saw were mere actors? These scenes were not cinematographed in Africa. It was a bad pantomime played in Paris itself, at the Buttes-Chaumont. I can show you the place. Do you really think that photographers would take pictures under hails of bullets and cannon balls?' An English translation of this story appears in *Soldiers of the Queen*, no.80, March 1995; a German version appeared in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 8 July 1900, p.1-3; and see *KINtop*, no. 6, 1997. As Frank Kessler points out in *KINtop*, no. 15, 2006, Normand was suggesting 'that there were two kinds of spectators, 'naïve' ones, who take everything they see as an authentic record, and 'enlightened' ones, who are capable of distinguishing between staged scenes and documentary views.'

<sup>85</sup> In an article about Méliès in *Le Petit Bleu de Paris*, no.35, 23 June 1902.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Albert Levy of Asnières (Seine) in BJP 18 July 1902, p.579. He states that these were 'photographs', but his letter is mainly about cinematography, so I assume this is what he meant.

<sup>87</sup> He added that, when these films were screened, the public believed they were taken on the real battlefield. Victorin Jasset, 'La Mise en Scène Cinématographique', *Ciné Journal*, 21 Oct-25 Nov 1911, reprinted in Marcel Lapière, ed. *Anthologie du Cinéma* (Paris: La Nouvelle Édition, 1946), p.84. In this section of his essays, Jasset was describing the making of fakes in order to save the cost of going to the real location.

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<sup>88</sup> Richard Abel sent me an email conveying his doubts that Pathé would have filmed in Buttes-Chaumont due to this reason of the distance from Vincennes. I suspect that only a close scrutiny of Paris newspapers or archives of the era would establish the truth about filming in the park.

<sup>89</sup> See Roland Cosandey, *Cinéma 1900, Trente Films Dans une Boîte à Chaussures* (Lausanne: Editions Payot, 1996): images on pp.85, 87, 89.

<sup>90</sup> Conveniently there is a rail line between the two places (Bel-Air to Belleville stations), though I am not certain that it was there in 1899.

<sup>91</sup> Ward Muir, 'The khaki-covered camera', *Photogram* Aug 1900, p.237. The poem is about the activities of the so-called 'Kinetograph' company. Incidentally, Muir was later (in the teens and 20s) a published writer on travel and general themes, and an amateur photographer.

<sup>92</sup> In the mid 1990s thirty original 35mm positive prints were found in Switzerland, discovered in a shoebox in a photographic museum in Vevey (originally only fifteen titles were thought to be there). These included three Boer War fakes, apparently made by Pathé. Two of these seem to correspond to films 4 and 5 in my listing, *A Skirmish at Glencoe* and *Episode During the Battle of Spion Kop*. As I discuss in my main text, the third film is not in the Pathé catalogue. They are described in Cosandey, op. cit., p.84-89 as film numbers FB5, FB6, and FB7.

<sup>93</sup> The event was 'resonant', says Cosandey, *ibid*.

<sup>94</sup> Frank Kessler has found that other Pathé films do not feature in the Pathé catalogue, such as films of the Kaiser in the early teen years. Kessler surmises that Pathé may have had a policy of only listing their films in the general catalogue if they were deemed to have a general, international appeal.

<sup>95</sup> This subject was also portrayed in R.W. Paul's film, *Shooting the Spy*.

<sup>96</sup> This subject was also portrayed in R.W. Paul's film, *Battle of Glencoe*.

<sup>97</sup> C.G. Paul, 'Kodak photography in peace and war', *Captain* 3, July 1900, p.291-97. The anecdote doesn't actually mention the production company, but I assume that the mention of a 'Parisian photographer' is a coded reference to Pathé.

<sup>98</sup> AP 11 May 1900, p.361. This article actually uses the term 'pictures', but must surely mean films if these were being cheered by audiences. The previous source (C.G. Paul) mentions a similar example but to do with a lantern lecture, where a slide was shown depicting Australian troops, but who were described as Boers.

<sup>99</sup> 'Animated photographs', *MHTR*, 27 Oct 1899, p.247.

<sup>100</sup> Joë Hamman, *Du Far-West à Montmartre, un Demi-Siècle d'Aventures* (Paris: Editeurs français réunis, 1962).

<sup>101</sup> My principal sources are the following works by Geoffrey Donaldson: 'De eerste Nederlandse speelfilms en de gebroeders Mullens', *Skrien*, no. 28; *Of Joy and Sorrow : A Filmography of Dutch Silent Fiction* (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997), p.53. The late Geoffrey Donaldson was famously generous in providing information to other scholars, and in a long letter to the author, 1 Feb 1993, included almost everything which was to be in his 1997 book and more (and answered other queries).

<sup>102</sup> From the magazine *De Kijker* 15 Nov 1899, headed 'The War on the Roof'. Donaldson sent me this translation: 'For a few days, when the weather is good in the mornings, one can see on the roof of Variété Flora in the Amstelstraat, that Transvaal pictures are being made for the Bioscope. ... Mr Nöggerath certainly thinks that the world wants to be deceived.' Donaldson's catalogue of 1997 gives the original title of the film(s) as *De Oorlog in Transvaal* or *Transvaalbeelden*, or in English, *The War in Transvaal* or *Transvaal Pictures*, though the films were not actually released on the market and may never have had formal titles.

<sup>103</sup> As Donaldson informed me, the book was called *50 Jaar Bioscoopfauteuil*, and the Boer reference, which Jordaan states is one of his first film-related memories, comes in the first chapter.

<sup>104</sup> Donaldson suggests the actor might have been Barend Barendse, because in the weeks between the Flora première of this film and screenings in the Paleis voor Volksvlijt, a play by Alex Benno was presented at the latter venue, as I mention in the main text, in which the title rôle of Kruger was played by Barendse. Thus, notes Donaldson, 'It is possible, even probable, that it was Barend Barendse who appeared as Paul Kruger in Nöggerath's film. However, it should be pointed out that when Benno's play was presented, two other plays about the Boer War were running in Amsterdam, one with Marius Spree as Kruger, the other with Jan Buderman in the same role.'

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<sup>105</sup> A review from *De Telegraaf* 11 November 1899 of a programme then being presented in the Flora.

<sup>106</sup> At about this time advertisements started appearing in the Amsterdam and Rotterdam newspapers announcing the screening of 'Transvaalbeelden' (Transvaal Pictures), but it is not clear whether these are the Nöggerath films or films imported from abroad. But an advertisement in *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 23 December 1899 is for these Nöggerath films: it announced that *De Oorlog in Transvaal* (The War in the Transvaal) was to be shown on 24, 25 and 26 December in the Paleis voor Volksvlucht, screenings arranged by Nöggerath. Donaldson states in his 1997 catalogue that there were 'some outdoor scenes' in this late December version.

<sup>107</sup> After the Boer War Nöggerath continued in the film exhibition business with his family. In 1907 they opened the first major cinema in Amsterdam, the Bioscope-Theater. At about this time another son, Theodor (1882-1961) became a film cameraman, and was active through the teens.

<sup>108</sup> 'The scene was on the rocky side of the eastern slope of the second Orange Mountain, near the Livingstone line.' From 'Injured in sham battle', *Philadelphia Ledger*, 12 April, 1900: quoted in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*, chapter 5, and p.146-8 and 214. Elsewhere it is stated that the filming was done on the farm of Tom Vincent, who also supplied the horses.

<sup>109</sup> The participants were mainly members of a local militia and received \$2 each for the day (after striking for a 75¢ raise!) See 'Fake Pictures', *Phonoscope*, July 1900, p.9. Cited in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon*. The strike was reported in the *Phonoscope* Apr 1900, and briefly in 'American notes', PN 13 Mar 1903, p.163.

<sup>110</sup> 'Injured in sham battle', op. cit. The newspaper added that maybe this accident would lend more realism to the film! The scenes were intended to represent either the Battle of Spion Kop or the Battle of Colenso. At least three of the films involve the cannon: *Capture of Boer Battery*, *English Lancers Charging*, and *Battle of Mafeking*. The accident was later reported in BJP 20 Apr 1900, p.253, though this stated, mistakenly, that it was the two leading actors who were seriously injured by the cannon. The news was also reported in *Phot. Wochenblatt* 15 May 1900, p.160.

<sup>111</sup> Ad for these three films in NY Clipper 28 Apr 1900, p.216 and 5 May 1900, p.240.

<sup>112</sup> NY Clipper 12 May 1900, p.260.

<sup>113</sup> Gartenberg usefully gives copyright dates of these films. The first 3 titles were copyrighted 14 April and the last 4 titles on 28 April. A couple of the earlier titles were made with alternate versions, separately copyrighted. Jon Gartenberg, 'Camera Movement in Edison and Biograph Films, 1900-1906', in *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, ed. R. Holman (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), p.169-180.

<sup>114</sup> Ramsaye states that the costumes for the Edison Boer fakes came from 'the Eaves establishment'. Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1964 [1926]), p.403-404.

<sup>115</sup> David Levy, 'Re-Constituted Newsreels, Re-Enactments and the American Narrative Film', in *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, op. cit., p.250.

<sup>116</sup> This ad appears just below a Lubin ad for Boer War films. More detail about these films is in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures..Filmography*, #800-808. The films were sold at the rate of 15 cents per foot. Thus a 50 ft. film cost \$7.50, 75 ft. was \$ 11.25, and 100 ft. was \$15.00 (the 25 ft. film was a little over this rate, at \$4).

<sup>117</sup> Edmund George Cousins, *Filmiland in Ferment* (London: Denis Archer, 1932), p.32-33. He thought that the film had been shot 'in a typically English corner of parkland', though I would think this could equally have been New Jersey. This reference was sent me by Tony Fletcher.

<sup>118</sup> Lubin ad for 'Boer War Film', *NY Clipper*, 21 Apr 1900, p.192 (cited by AFI).

<sup>119</sup> Lubin ad in NY Clipper 12 May 1900, p.260 (this appears just above the Edison ad for Boer films which I mentioned earlier). The ad states, 'Having made special arrangements with the foreign film manufacturers, we are now prepared to furnish French, English and German subjects at the same price as our films. Send for list.' That Lubin was importing foreign films reinforces my suggestion that the 450 ft. film was a buy-in from abroad, perhaps from Britain.

<sup>120</sup> MHTR 15 June 1900, p.378. Pitrot was also given a tour of the 'factory' (studio) and saw the machinery there, and had some of Lubin's fake Passion Play pictures films projected for him. He was very impressed by the clarity and sharpness of these films. If, as he states, orders were coming in from all over the country, perhaps descriptions in local newspapers might emerge, or even film prints.



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<sup>121</sup> NY Clipper 30 Jun 1900, p.408 (cited by AFI).

<sup>122</sup> 'Lost in Lubin fire', MPW 11 July 1914, p.267. This report mentions several war films lost including of the 'Transvaal War'.

<sup>123</sup> American Vitagraph Co., *List of New Films* (1900), p.4. On Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*, reel 4. The catalogue states of these five films that such non-genuine subjects will always be, 'announced as such' by Vitagraph; i.e. the company would not be deceptive in labelling a fake as an actuality. In the early era, film distributors handled films from many different makers, often failing to identify who actually made them, or making misleading claims about this (sometimes even claiming them as their own). And Smith later made false claims of having filmed at the Boer war.

<sup>124</sup> Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights*, op. cit., p.404.

<sup>125</sup> The Vitagraph double subject, #235 *Repulse of the Boers*, could be two Edison titles, *English Lancers...* and *Red Cross Ambulance...*, which are the same lengths; #236 *Capture...*, could be R.W. Paul's *Capture of a Maxim*; #237 *Boers Surprising and Capturing a British Picket*, could be Paul's *Attack on a Picquet*, which is the same length of 40'; #238, *Attack...* might be Edison's *Battle of Mafeking*, which is the same length.

**Chapter 11**  
**THE BOER WAR**  
**III. Different audiences; different attitudes**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Boer War was the most controversial conflict in the period we are covering, indeed probably in the entire generation preceding World War 1. It divided world opinion more or less on linguistic lines, the Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking world against the rest. Because of these sharp divisions of opinion, the films of the Boer War are especially interesting to study from a reception point of view. While we have instances of audiences reacting passionately to films of earlier wars (most notably to the Spanish-American War), here we have the first example of a war where films elicited equally heated reactions – and sometimes they were truly heated – from either side of this fissure in world opinion.

In this chapter I will examine these audience responses, using evidence gathered from a variety of sources including memoirs and official documents. Through a country-by-country treatment, I will show the varied ways in which the various films of this war were received in different contexts. While in Britain, Boer War film exhibitions were often occasions for deep manifestations of patriotism, by contrast in several other countries where anti-British and pro-Boer feelings were rife, the films were received quite differently. Indeed, in Ireland, Belgium and elsewhere there were extreme audience reactions, sometimes followed by official intervention. Such reactions are significant for media history, as they show a growing concern among Government authorities about the capacity of film to move audiences emotionally, especially in time of war or political controversy.

As in earlier wars of this period, ‘related films’ assumed a particular importance in film exhibitions as a means to represent the Boer War, given that actual battlefield footage was not available. Because the war in South Africa lasted so long – some two and a half years – there were many opportunities to film scenes such as the commanders and troops involved in the conflict (what one might call the ‘home front’ of the war). A number of war ‘celebrities’ – commanders and leaders – were filmed as the ‘stars’ of the moment: the British ones principally being Generals Roberts, Kitchener and Buller, and the Boer equivalents being President Kruger and Generals such as De Wet. I shall cover this celebrity theme in an Appendix, while the troop films I deal with below.

**Other media**

During the Boer War the public saw the war reflected in all their usual newspapers and magazines, as well as in illustrated war periodicals and books.<sup>1</sup> [Fig. 2] The war proved to be a strong stimulus for other visual media

too, including advertising.<sup>2</sup> [Fig. 1] The conflict was represented in the British music hall, with numerous patriotic songs and other references to the war from performers. Several popular panorama shows by Hamilton's and the Poole family depicted such scenes as the Battle of the Modder River and the Victory of General Roberts.<sup>3</sup> There were lantern lectures: for example, Frederic Villiers gave a series of lectures with his war slides entitled, 'Kruger and Khaki'; and in January 1900 a popular lecturer, Mr. E. Esdaile, gave a lecture on the war, describing events up to the very day of the lecture.<sup>4</sup> Many slides about the war were on sale, including complete sets, and life model dramas. [Fig. 4]

For some years afterwards, the Boer War remained a popular reference point in popular culture, including in performance media. Among the more impressive events were large-scale live shows staged in America in 1904 and 1905 to depict the war in action-oriented set-pieces. Appearing at big venues such as the Chicago Coliseum, these shows included horsemen, and, most amazingly, starred some of the real Boer generals who had fought in the war.<sup>5</sup> [Fig. 3]

While most media depictions in Britain concentrated on the heroism of the British side and their positive achievements, some treatments of the war dealt with the Boer side in a none too flattering way, especially the Boer leaders and their Generals. In other countries it was the reverse. These sentiments were sometimes expressed in quite a boisterous fashion, especially in the music halls and on the fairgrounds. Thus the war was depicted and often celebrated in virtually all the visual media. The newest medium, cinema, was to be no exception, for, as a poem of the time put it, 'the khaki-covered camera is the latest thing'.<sup>6</sup>

## **EXHIBITING BOER WAR FILMS IN BRITAIN**

### **Related films: Soldier heroes of the Empire**

Most of the 'related films' of the Boer War are films of British troops and commanders, with few taken from the Boer side. The very obvious reason for this is that the war zone was in distant South Africa, making filming of Boer fighters inherently more difficult; and there were fewer filmmaking resources based in that part of the world, whereas in Britain and a few other countries filmmaking was flourishing.

The Boer War was a major commitment for Britain in terms of resources and troops. The commitment increased as the war continued, and after many regulars were sent out, a call for volunteers followed the news of failure at the front in December 1899 ('black week').<sup>7</sup> The scenes of departure were often filmed, and copies of such films survive in archives in the UK and further afield. However, few historians have paid much attention to this phenomenon, with the exception of Elizabeth Strelbel and Vanessa Toulmin. Strelbel writes:

'One is struck by the proliferation of films of troop movements – embarking at Southampton, disembarking at Capetown, marching out

to the front. To us, a stationary camera fixed on a line of helmeted troops striding single file up a gang plank appears to have little interest at first glance. But for the Victorian public this subject matter held a deep attraction. The succession of the various colonial regiments underscored the solidarity of the Empire. The uniforms, generals, the very physical bearing of the men served as an expression of Imperial confidence. Often the camera was positioned close enough to the troops to achieve true portraits, and the Victorian public flocked to the theatres hoping to catch a glimpse of a friend or loved one who had just left for South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Vanessa Toulmin has put these observations on a more precise footing, delineating what is in effect an aesthetics of Boer War related films, from which I base much of the structure of what follows.<sup>9</sup> Toulmin identifies a number of 'genres' of these kind of films, including: Troops in exercises and at manoeuvres, tableaux of army life, soldiers departing and returning (and the 'celebrities' – famous leaders and commanders – which I cover in an Appendix).

### **Departures and returns**

Even as long as a month before the war had broken out, troops were being sent out to South Africa, and were filmed departing.<sup>10</sup> When the Guards regiments set off there was massive interest from the public.<sup>11</sup> A film was taken of these men, the Coldstream Guards (and Scots Guards) departing on the troopship *Nubia* on 21 October from Southampton.<sup>12</sup> Several such films survive in the NFTVA, enabling us to assess their qualities and to appreciate how they might have appealed to audiences. Some, such as the *Nubia* departure, just mentioned, were wide shots of the ships taken from afar. *The Roslin Castle Leaving for South Africa* (Warwick) was of this style too, though filmed from above. It was 'most enthusiastically received' by audiences, claims the catalogue.<sup>13</sup>

Other films, however, were filmed from closer and at the level of the troops, so giving audiences a better view of the men. In the NFTVA various such shots of troops marching down streets at the time of the Boer War survive. One example is *Gordon Highlanders Leave for the Boer War* (1899).<sup>14</sup> Biograph's William Dickson always grasped the expressive potential of the medium close-up and though his embarkation films do not survive, reproductions of some of the frames were published in a magazine, showing, for example, the development of a smile on the face of a 'Tommy' as 'an interesting study in expression'.<sup>15</sup> [Fig. 6 and 7] This phrase is interesting in showing that this close up aspect was seen as significant at the time. Perhaps these closer views would have enabled the audience to feel some kinship with the men departing for war.

When soldiers were filmed in the streets marching past camera, the images of the men's faces might appear even closer up than when embarking on ships. A spectator from this time recalled seeing one of these departure films and the close up effect was quite marked. He noted: '...as the soldiers marched

towards you, they became bigger and bigger, until you were forced to look away at some far-away part of the picture'.<sup>16</sup>

There were even more films of soldiers returning than of them departing, and one popular regiment filmed in this way was the Navel Brigade, which, with their artillery hastily adapted from naval guns, had managed to defend the besieged town of Ladysmith from the Boers until General Buller and troops finally reached them. A film by the Hepworth company showed the Brigade returning to England on 24 April 1900, and survives in the NFTVA.<sup>17</sup> Hepworth also filmed these men marching through London on 7 May 1900, with the crowds giving the troops an 'enthusiastic reception', and this was shown the same evening in the capital.<sup>18</sup> Two Warwick films of the London parade survive in the NFTVA: *The Heroes of Ladysmith Marching Through London* (125ft.), and *Review of the HMS Powerful Naval Brigade* (96ft.), both shot from elevated positions.

### **Filming the C.I.V.**

One regiment which became the object of particular interest during the Boer War was the City Imperial Volunteers. This was a regiment made up of over 1500 volunteers from the City of London, including some 200 brokers, jobbers and clerks from the Stock Exchange.<sup>19</sup> The embarkation of the force on 13 January 1900 was filmed by some five separate companies: Hepworth, Paul, Warwick, Acres and Wolff.<sup>20</sup> A couple of versions of this survive in the NFTVA: *Embarkation of C.I.V. for South Africa* has the men marching along the gangway onto the ship, wearing their distinctive hats (the brim on one side pushed up). The Hepworth version also survives and shows the C.I.V. passing quite close to camera.<sup>21</sup>

The C.I.V. were filmed sketchily during their service in South Africa, but were most extensively covered when they came back to England.<sup>22</sup> The regiment returned from service in South Africa in October 1900, and, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of the month marched from Paddington across London to a heroes' welcome at St. Paul's cathedral and the Guildhall.<sup>23</sup> The return was filmed by Biograph, Butcher, Hepworth, Warwick and Williamson, and several versions survive in the NFTVA, of the C.I.V. in Southampton and marching through London. One NFTVA film, *City Imperial Volunteers Return: Leaving Southampton by Train* (Hepworth) shows the decorated train with the letters 'CIV' on the front as it comes past camera, men leaning out of windows.<sup>24</sup>

Both Butcher's and Warwick's cameramen took not just one but several shots of the London march, which, at a time when film stock was expensive, indicates how important this event was seen to be.<sup>25</sup> Warwick filmed at 2 PM and, despite the operators being hampered in getting through crowds with the exposed negatives, the films were shown at the Empire at 9 PM. The next day Warwick dispatched 40 complete copies to exhibitors in the provinces.<sup>26</sup>

### **Mitchell and Kenyon**

Films of troops were not to everyone's taste, and one music hall critic in mid 1900 expressed himself tired of films of soldiers in street processions, adding that it would be nice to have some pictures not referring to war.<sup>27</sup> He was not

to have his wish, and a large number of such films were still to come. One of the major production companies responsible was Mitchell and Kenyon. Many of these procession films were made in 1901 and 1902, at a time when no filming was being done at the front, so such films, along with the staged Boer War films, filled a gap.

The Mitchell and Kenyon film collection includes some twenty films of this kind, featuring ten volunteer regiments, but many more were made which don't survive. In fact, of the 120 towns and cities surveyed for the M&K filmography in the period between 1900 and 1902, every exhibition associated with this company listed a Boer War themed title (many titles being advertised in local newspapers). These war-related films from M&K and other companies, as Toulmin has noted, 'dominate the film programmes in cities and towns throughout the United Kingdom'.<sup>28</sup> For example, in Bradford in July 1902, film of the Bradford Artillery in camp at Morecambe was shown, plus other local scenes, but 'the most popular item of all was the return of the Active Service Volunteers from South Africa, which was given as a grand finale'.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Box:**

##### **M&K's local actualities related to the Boer War**

1st Volunteer Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment - Blackburn Rifle Volunteers (1900)

Royal Scots Regiment at Edinburgh Castle (1901)

Parade of the Bolton Artillery Volunteers (1901)

Manchester's Welcome to the Imperial Yeomanry (1901)

Return of the Brave Manchester Volunteers (1901)

Return of the East Lancashire Regiment at Preston (1902)

On the March with the Bradford Artillery at Bunker Brow Settle (1902)

Regiments Returned from Boer War to Victoria Barracks, Cork (1902)

The Return of the Warwickshire Volunteers (1902)

The Return of the Lancaster Volunteers (1902)

All Saints Church with Parade of the Northamptonshire Regiment (1902)

#### **Miscellaneous Related Films**

At the time of the Boer War, several general military films were used as some kind of representation of the Boer War. For example, a scene from a live show, 'Savage South Africa', showed the 'savages' routed by a combination of fire from maxim guns and follow-up cavalry attacks.<sup>30</sup>

Another example of the popularity of general military films at this time, was 'Our Navy', a series of films about life in the British navy, exhibited by Alfred West's company. This show was especially popular in the west of England. In Exeter, for example, in the first half of 1900, West's was the cinematograph show which attracted the highest audience figures and the most complimentary press reviews. A similar show of general military films, R. W. Paul's 'Army Life', opened in Exeter in February 1901.<sup>31</sup>

As mentioned above, views of the Boers were rarer than of Britain's forces. Among the few available in Britain were two scenes of Boer prisoners being brought to Ahmadnagar Fort, India, by train, filmed by F.B. Stewart.<sup>32</sup> The catalogue notes of the prisoners in these shots that some were 'looking very dilapidated, and having no shoes upon their feet'. This was scarcely neutral footage, as it depicted a defeated foe; the scenes could therefore have functioned as soft propaganda when shown in a pro-British context (though might have evoked sympathy elsewhere). Some background shots of the war zone were also available. Already, at the war's beginning, Warwick had 'some 80 South African negatives', mainly scenic views, mainly taken on two filming trips before the war.<sup>33</sup>

### **Box:**

#### **Working-class enthusiasm for war?**

Richard Price in an influential book published in 1972 argues that the Boer War was mainly supported by the middle class, while the working class was largely apathetic about the conflict, and about imperialism in general.<sup>34</sup> Price would have received some backing for his views at the time, from the socialist commentator, Maddison, who noted of British workers: 'When war was proclaimed it caused none of those sensations which the yellow press tried to work up, and even to-day there is an absence of anything approaching excitement.'<sup>35</sup> But Maddison was clearly biased, and the majority of sources that historians have unearthed since Price suggest that the working class was very supportive of the war.

The social historian John Mackenzie states – in what is effectively a pointed dig at Price: 'The attempt to pin the jingoist expressions of imperialism on specific social classes, in particular the lower middle class, will not do'.<sup>36</sup> Mackenzie finds that even a socialist of the time had to admit that the workers were for war: H.M. Hyndman, founder of the left wing body the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), described in his memoirs the patriotic war fervour among the working classes, with the poorest districts more elaborately hung with patriotic decorations than even the wealthy West End of London.<sup>37</sup> The Independent Labour Party (ILP) were equally disappointed by the behaviour of the working-class. A Woolwich journal wrote about 'rampant' workers in the run-up to war; a labour journal noted a 'war fever' in Keightley. Even Keir Hardie concluded that '...the war is the most popular war ever waged by England', and noted with shock that jingoistic mobs of working men were violently disrupting anti-war meetings.<sup>38</sup>

And not all left wingers were anti-war. Though the ILP opposed the war, the Fabians and SDF were divided. Indeed, the Fabian writer, Robert Blatchford – editor of *The Clarion* and author of *Merrie England* – supported the conflict, becoming quite a jingo, to the surprise of some followers, as he had been anti-imperialist and of course socialist before the war.<sup>39</sup>

#### **War films and war fever**

As I show in the **Box** above, there has been much historical debate about working class support for the Boer War. But whatever the precise class

composition of war supporters, the population as a whole was for it. A contemporary political journalist concluded in early 1900 that most English people were pro-war, whether living in towns, cities or the country.<sup>40</sup> Public demonstrations of this enthusiasm occurred on several occasions. Soon after the outbreak of hostilities when the Guards started for South Africa, large cheering crowds lined their route through London and to Waterloo station: so many people that the troops could scarcely make their way through.<sup>41</sup>

Even more tumultuous scenes were experienced in mid-May after British forces relieved Baden-Powell's besieged garrison in Mafeking. News of the relief reached London on the evening of 18 May, and the city was quickly transformed: cheering crowds appeared on the streets, flags were waving everywhere, people singing 'Rule Britannia' and 'God save the Queen'.<sup>42</sup> These unprecedented scenes of crowd celebration gave birth to a new word in the English language, 'maffick', a verb meaning to 'exult riotously' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*). And such mafficking was not only in London: it took place widely, even in Scotland and as far afield as Nova Scotia.<sup>43</sup> [Fig. 5]

War fever was also very apparent in places of entertainment, and Vanessa Toulmin finds that the working class population was highly interested.<sup>44</sup> Evidence suggests that only two months into the war patriotic excesses were not unusual in music halls, and one periodical reported the positive effect of the war on attendance at entertainments including the music hall.<sup>45</sup>

Boer War films were increasingly being screened through the Winter of 1899 to 1900, though initially there was sometimes a lack of appropriate material, so showmen often used lantern slide images of Generals and the like to show between films.<sup>46</sup> More war films became available by early 1900 and were shown all over Britain. Perhaps the height of enthusiasm for Boer War films was in the period of greatest British success in the war, between about March and June 1900. There are many examples of this fervour for war films, and I have put a number of the examples together into a chronology in the box below.

There seems to have been very little dissent from this relentless patriotic celebration of the war in moving images. The only example I have seen of any real criticism comes, not with regard to films of British heroes being cheered, but rather to images of Boers being scorned. One visitor to a Charing Cross theatre noted that a film of Boer prisoners was: '...greeted with a tremendous storm of yells, hoots, jeers, hisses etc., from the smug counter-jumpers. The office boys, the yahoos, and the brainless bar-crawlers who form the vast majority of the audience.'

He called this jeering of the humbled enemy despicable.<sup>47</sup> This episode is interesting not only for the irritation of the writer at the audience's cruel scorn for helpless prisoners, but also for the indications he provides about the kind of people who were yelling in this manner. From his description ('smug counter-jumpers', 'office boys') these sound to be more lower middle-class than working-class. Perhaps Price (see above) was partly correct in his analysis to the extent that these young office workers were more extreme in



their jingoist attitudes to the war than the working-class? It seems in any case that more middle-class people were being attracted to film shows by war films. One entertainment journal noted that, '...war pictures have done much towards making the eighteen-carat folks [richer people] acquainted with the music-hall' (and perhaps the rowdy young men were being attracted as well as the eighteen-carat folks).<sup>48</sup>

**Box:**

**Reception of Boer War films in Britain, March to June 1900: a selection of the enthusiasm displayed**

In Birmingham at the beginning of March (just after the relief of Ladysmith) the Curzon Hall was twice filled with audiences, 'patriotic and imperial', singing God save the Queen, 'and throughout cheered every scene and every animated photograph of the generals and of war episodes'.<sup>49</sup> On 7 April a music hall journal reported about film shows:

*'The fact is, there is such a demand for war subjects that those landscapes and seascapes which once rejoiced us are crowded out. We now have portraits of our Generals galore, and it seems that the public cannot have too much of them.'*<sup>50</sup>

In early April an entertainment paper noted the 'bottled-up patriotism' of the audience which was released when war-related films were screened at the Alhambra, as well as a series about military life at Aldershot, 'Soldiers of the Queen'. The reporter stated:

*'To attempt to describe the effect of either on the patriotic feelings of a sympathetic audience were folly; let the reader arrive at a conclusion for himself according to the acuteness of his imagination.'*<sup>51</sup>

In early May a lantern journal reported that the only word which could express the applause at films of Boer War was 'enthusiastic'.<sup>52</sup> A week later a review of the programme at the Cambridge music hall noted that any films about the South African War were now popular with audiences.<sup>53</sup> A French writer, who seems to have been in London during the war recalled the 'nightly outpouring of emotion' at London's halls, with images of war leaders projected in music halls. And when a picture of the Queen appeared on the screen, 'everyone stood up, from the dress circle to the stalls, and all together sang the national anthem'.<sup>54</sup>

The filmmaker, turned laboratory man, G.A. Smith was asked about this time if there was a big demand for South African war films, and replied that:

*'...his hands were so full he hardly knew where to turn. For every film with any connection with the war the demand was enormous. President Kruger getting out of his carriage, scenes in Johannesburg, scenes of embarking and disembarking troops, of manoeuvres of cavalry and infantry, could not be developed fast enough.'*<sup>55</sup>

By May and June the Boer War was adopted into the very names of film exhibitions: A show called 'New khakigraph war pictures' was featured at Heckmondwike, and W. Clark's 'Boerograph' was exhibiting at Wigan fair.<sup>56</sup>

### **Exhibition practice**

Some quite sophisticated exhibition practices emerged for these Boer War films. Sound effects were generated in some shows, with shots fired, etc.<sup>57</sup> The *Showman* suggested in early 1901 that film shows were greatly improved in this way, with sound effects such as ‘the banging of a drum to represent the firing of a big gun, or stamping of feet to represent soldiers marching...’<sup>58</sup> Later in the year there was even a complaint from one critic about ‘the excessive burning of powder’ in creating these sound effects of shots, which ‘renders the atmosphere of the Hall almost unbearable’. Nevertheless the large audience seemed to like it, for ‘frequent applause...greeted the representation of the many stirring scenes’.<sup>59</sup>

Another quite innovative aspect of some Boer War shows in various parts of the country, was their programming of a number of films together to tell a complete history of the war (sometimes matching for length the equivalent programmes during the Spanish-American War). The films were often interspersed with lantern slides, including images of the heroes of the war, Generals etc. The Tee brothers in the south of England were regularly giving extensive shows about the war from early 1900, with mainly actuality films, one or two fakes, and slides including war celebrities. Entitled, ‘Pictorial History of Transvaal War’ (then by May renamed, ‘With the Flag in South Africa’), the show included 60 slides and several films.<sup>60</sup>

At the other end of the country in Scotland, Walker’s show in April was similarly called, ‘The Fight for the Flag in South Africa’, the ads stating, ‘The cinematograms will be interspersed with photographs and other views of heroes and scenes at the front’.<sup>61</sup> [Fig. 8] Meanwhile in Yorkshire the Bamforths also presented a history of the war in ‘biograph’ and lantern images, narrated by a lecturer, and again including images of soldiers and Generals.<sup>62</sup> A number of venues in Britain also offered shorter programmes of films about the war.<sup>63</sup> Boer War films were even introduced into a play, ‘Captain Leigh, V.C.’ at the Fulham Grand Theatre.<sup>64</sup>

### **Declining interest in war films?**

While no-one doubts the buoyancy of Boer War film exhibitions in the first half of 1900, there is some question about when audience interest declined. Richard Brown, in an important article on the effect of the war on cinema, sees the shift happening during the summer of 1900, and suggests that the loss of interest in war films by the public was ‘both rapid and complete’.<sup>65</sup> He cites several forms of evidence for this, such as quotations in the trade press saying as much, price reductions by British film manufacturers in late 1900, and declining numbers of ads for war films in the trade press.<sup>66</sup> While in general I find this evidence convincing, I think the situation might have been a little more patchy, and there are indications that in some cases interest in Boer War films was maintained almost throughout the war (perhaps helped by those price reductions on films).

After the conventional phase of the war ended in June 1900, some reports do suggest a decline. In September a writer in *The Showman* claimed that, ‘The interest in the Boer War has very largely died out, although perhaps even

now, such a show, if well got up, might have a fair run'.<sup>67</sup> By October a fairground reporter mentioned that, '...the general public have had a surfeit of war pictures...', and he mentioned a film about the Alps and a fiction subject as what people really wanted.<sup>68</sup> By November this trend seemed to be confirmed, and a visitor to Hull fair noted, 'war pictures are getting stale', and added that what locals craved were comic films: 'Lord Roberts is still popular, so is Kitchener, but the rustics like fun'.<sup>69</sup>

However, other reports seem to give a different story. In September, a Manchester venue was featuring a selection of films of the war, said to be, 'one of the most popular items in the programme'.<sup>70</sup> Two months later at the Hippodrome in London, Boxer and Boer War films, 'were the great feature, and round after round of applause greeted each subject as it was put on'.<sup>71</sup> Boer images were regularly being mixed with Boxer Uprising footage by this stage, and this second conflict might be one reason for the continuing interest in war films. [Fig. 9]

Screenings of war-related films continued into 1901. A reporter at the Albert Hall, Leeds in February noted that 'the usual war pictures' were screened as part of the film section of the programme.<sup>72</sup> This word 'usual' suggests that these films were thought of as somewhat uninspiring by this stage, yet the following month at the Olympia, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a journal stated: 'The large audience was fairly thrilled at the vivid and realistic scenes depicted' – referring to films of the China and Boer conflicts.<sup>73</sup> I have found programmes featuring Boer War films well into 1902.<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps one explanation for the continued interest was that soldiers were returning from the front and were curious to see the film versions of where they had been. In some cases they even came to view themselves on screen. The 'Fighting Fifth' Infantry saw themselves portrayed in a film show in Huddersfield, while one of Dickson's Naval Brigade companions from the front was recognised several times on screen.<sup>75</sup> Children were known to call out 'Dada' on seeing films of soldiers on screen, while soldiers themselves, it was said, on spotting their old pals on screen could hardly resist calling out, 'Hello, Bill!'<sup>76</sup> Locally-shot films of returning regiments were also popular, and M&K were making many of these through 1901 and 1902 (see list earlier in this chapter).

This continuing interest in Boer War films is also supported by the case of A.D. Thomas, a successful war film exhibitor. By the end of 1901 Thomas had 14 or 15 film shows running, and had been making large profits.<sup>77</sup> But the popularity of his shows started to decline due, he stated, to the '...falling off of the interest of the public in the war', and he was declared bankrupt in about mid 1902.<sup>78</sup> The interesting question is, when did this 'falling off' of interest occur? Thomas himself put it much later than one might expect. He stated at his bankruptcy hearing that, 'towards the end of 1901 the shows began to fall off owing to the approaching end of the Boer war'.<sup>79</sup> In another report of his troubles, he put the decline even later, stating that the business fell off suddenly in January last (i.e. January 1902).<sup>80</sup>

However, as I suggested at the start of this section, the fact that some exhibitors continued to make a living from war films for a surprisingly long time, does not necessarily mean that such films were in great demand *overall*, merely that they had a kind of niche market. This market was kept going thanks to continuing interest in the war with the return of, and filming of, local regiments and other ex-soldiers, and by screening Boxer Uprising films too.

## EXHIBITING BOER WAR FILMS OUTSIDE BRITAIN

Some strong emotions were felt about this war internationally, with great opposition to Britain's role and massive support for the Boers in some countries. Indeed, what amounted to 'Boer fever' broke out from Russia to Quebec, from Scandinavia to Ireland. Thousands signed pro-Boer petitions: one German petition alone was signed by almost a million people. Thousands joined pro-Boer organizations; statues were erected and streets renamed for the Boers.<sup>81</sup> Volunteers, coming from most western countries went to fight on the Boer side in South Africa.<sup>82</sup> The only support for Britain outside its shores came from the Empire and Anglo-Saxon countries, but even there opinion was not undivided, and the American public was split.<sup>83</sup> Large-scale coverage was given to the war in the press of many nations, and here again the main sentiment was anti-British. Sarcastic, even scurrilous, cartoons appeared in French and other Continental satirical journals, leading to heated diplomatic exchanges with Britain.<sup>84</sup>

### Ireland

At the time of the Boer War Ireland was still part of Great Britain, though already in a ferment about its future relationship with the imperial neighbour. The war polarized Irish politics, with disagreements between nationalists who wanted independence and loyalists who wanted to stay part of Britain.<sup>85</sup> The antagonism spread to the actual battlefield, with some Irishmen volunteering to fight for the Boers, while many others fought in British regiments.<sup>86</sup> This controversy may have been a formative experience for Irish nationalism, argues one scholar, shifting its direction, and effectively being a precursor of the 1916 uprising.<sup>87</sup>

An important aspect of the controversy – and little discussed by historians – was its screen representation. This came in two forms: pro- and anti-British. The latter achieved prominence through the pro-Boer *Irish Independent* newspaper, which projected lantern pictures in the windows of its offices for a while, showing telegrams from the front and images of the rival leaders in the war. News hungry crowds gathered until the police asked the newspaper to end the displays, a rare example of British censorship during the war (apart from censorship at the front in South Africa).<sup>88</sup>

Elsewhere in Ireland, pro-British travelling showmen used slides to back the British side, which stoked the anger of the nationalists. One anecdote was related by a lantern lecturer who toured in Ireland during the war with 'a picture show' about the conflict. He seems to have been British, for the show was certainly presented from that perspective. One of his allegations was that

the Boers had fired artillery at buildings flying the Red Cross flag. To make his point, he showed an image of a military hospital and then the same hospital after supposedly being shelled by the Boers. One night during this part of the show, an infuriated pro-Boer shouted that the showman was a liar. The showman came back with a sharp reply, but the spectator's reaction indicates the depth of anti-British feeling residing in much of the Irish population.<sup>89</sup>

Poole's Myriorama exhibitions seem to have been similarly pro-British in tone, and so encountered pockets of resentment in Ireland. During a myriorama show of 'Hoisting the British flag at Pretoria', an outraged voice from the gallery was heard to say, 'Hoist the blasted thing down again'.<sup>90</sup> The reaction was even stronger when Poole's were performing as an act at a theatre in Limerick in the Autumn of 1901, the behaviour of the anti-British locals in the gallery being described in the *Era*, as 'most reprehensible'. The report recounted the heated incidents which occurred both during Poole's performance, and in ensuing acts:

'Pictures of the war, and descriptions of British victories, have been received with deafening booing, and it need hardly be said that in such circumstances the comfort and enjoyment of the general body of the audience has been greatly interfered with. A climax was reached recently, when some rotten eggs and a mixture of lime and flour were thrown on the stage, the latter missile being directed at the artiste who, in his exhibition of "People we know," was impersonating Lord Roberts. The management has announced that for the remainder of the engagement the gallery will be closed. Well-conducted citizens will now be able to enjoy in comfort an excellent entertainment.'<sup>91</sup>

From this we may infer that it was the poorer (gallery) spectators who were most anti-British: perhaps no surprise. This is not the only example of an outraged reaction which greeted Boer War films if presented from a British perspective. One showman was touring Ireland during the war with a film show (which happened to be part of a circus). He recalled the reaction in the north of Ireland:

'I shall not forget in a hurry our reception in Derry. When I bought one of the first copies of the Queen's visit to Dublin, and portrayed it on the screen, which hung in the centre of the ring, my sheet, which was a new one for the occasion, was riddled with holes in very little time.'<sup>92</sup>

Most of these incidents affected touring showmen who were bringing British films and British attitudes into Ireland. But when the war was presented in locally-run cinematograph shows there seems to have been less of a problem. In August 1900 a group of films about the war was shown in Kilkenny, including a view of the embarkation of troops, and a couple of scenes in South Africa, and – featured most prominently in the advertising – was Warwick's film of President Kruger leaving the Volksraad. However, while this film would have pleased the pro-Boers, the other titles might not have been so welcome, and on other dates in Kilkenny films of Britain and the Queen were also shown.<sup>93</sup> However, I have seen no record of audience incidents on these

occasions – perhaps because the proprietors were based in these communities and were not British itinerant showmen, so were both trusted more by their audiences, and in turn knew their audiences' sympathies.

The most detailed anecdote about audiences and Boer War films in Ireland concerns a certain unnamed showman who had booked a hall for the exhibition of films in a small town during the war. He announced on playbills that the latest war films would be shown, but found that a strong pro-Boer feeling existed among the local inhabitants. The anecdote continues:

'Of course, such pictures as he had were entirely in opposition to the opinions of his patrons, but the wily showman was equal to the occasion. He quickly arranged several faked scenes depicting unfortunate Boer prisoners being maltreated by brutal English soldiers, and other pictures of a similar character, and so realistic were they that a certain Irish newspaper, whose name it would be unfair to divulge, actually printed an article demanding that a Government inquiry should immediately be held to discover and punish the perpetrators of these foul outrages!'<sup>94</sup>

I should state straight away that this is only an anecdote, and I have found no corroboration for it, and have not found the alleged article in the Irish newspaper. But the story is interesting, for if true it would be one of the strongest examples of the production of anti-British film propaganda yet discovered for this war. I suspect though that, even if there were a grain of truth in the story, the mentioned films were unlikely to have been shot by the showman in question, and were more likely to have been existing films of Boer prisoners (perhaps the same ones hooted by the British youths mentioned above).

## **Belgium**

The Boers were of Dutch ancestry, so it is only natural that they should find strong support in the Flemish 'low countries' of Belgium and the Netherlands. Both nations were passionate for the cause, and the public's expression of feelings was especially open in Belgium. The British military attaché to both countries later recalled that the children in Brussels shouted at him, 'Vivent les Boers.'<sup>95</sup>

Anti-British cartoons were appearing at this time, including obscene cartoons of Queen Victoria and then (after Victoria died) of King Edward VII. The letter book of the British embassy in Belgium records a number of complaints about these images, and other anti-British activity which was going on too. An attempt to shoot Edward VII at the Gare du Nord, Brussels, seemed part of the same anti-British atmosphere, especially when the assassin, Sipido, was later acquitted.<sup>96</sup>

As far as cinema was concerned, the most noticeable instance of anti-British feeling was at a music hall in Brussels, which was advertising films ('animated photographs') supposedly taken at the seat of war in South Africa. But these proved to be films of other troops entirely, mis-titled to make a pro-Boer point.

The British journal *Amateur Photographer* relayed a description of the programme at the hall, from someone (referred to as 'our friend') who had witnessed the show:

'Various references to perfidious Albion in the course of the entertainment showed how strong was the sympathy of the audience with the Boers, and excitement reached a high pitch when an animated picture was shown purporting to represent the valiant Boers leaving Pretoria for the front. Everyone in the hall applauded this picture vociferously, with the exception of a few staunch Britishers, of whom our friend was one. Possibly his silence was due as much to amazement as to patriotic scruples, for he immediately recognised the picture as one which had been taken three years ago, not in Pretoria, but in one of the familiar London thoroughfares. It really represented the New Zealand contingent of troops which formed part of the memorable Diamond Jubilee procession. The incident shows how, among ignorant folk, old pictures can be palmed off as new.'<sup>97</sup>

This is remarkable enough as an example of mis-titling – palming off old pictures as new, as the writer puts it – but it is equally remarkable for the official reaction that this show (or another like it) set in train. It seems to have provoked real alarm in British government circles, and an official Foreign Office file about this episode indicates that concern went all the way up to the Prime Minister (the Marquis of Salisbury). The main cause of alarm was that there might have been disrespect to the Queen.

It seems that a colleague had told the British ambassador in Brussels, Sir F. Plunkett, that a film of the Queen's jubilee procession had evoked 'hostile manifestations' in a Brussels music hall (presumably the venue described by the *Amateur Photographer's* man). If true, this would amount to disrespect to the Queen, a serious matter, so it merited an investigation.<sup>98</sup> The ambassador discussed this with the Burgomaster (Bourgmestre) of Brussels, Emile de Mot, and the police were then called upon to investigate the music hall, the Scala, in the lower town of Brussels.<sup>99</sup> Some time later, on 13 Apr 1900, the Burgomaster wrote to Plunkett, enclosing a police report which he had presumably commissioned, from the '3me Division de Police'.<sup>100</sup> The report is given in full in the **Box** below, and in Fig. 12, but I summarise here.

The investigation had found that two films about the Boers had been shown in the Scala until a couple of weeks earlier (31 March): 'Departure of a Boer Commando from Pretoria' and 'Boer Artillery at the Frontier'. But, and this was the main reassurance for the British officials, according to information received by the investigating police, no film of Queen Victoria's jubilee procession had been projected that season.<sup>101</sup>

So it seemed that, as far as disrespect to the Queen was concerned, it was all a fuss about nothing. As a result, Plunkett wrote on the 14<sup>th</sup> to the Marquis of Salisbury to say that while there had been some concern that a 'cinematograph representation of the Queen's Jubilee procession' had evoked

hostile manifestations, an investigation tended to prove that 'no disrespect had been shown'.<sup>102</sup> (Transcribed as 2<sup>nd</sup> **Box** below).

I would suggest, however, that, because the actual projections of the films in question had ceased well before the investigation, this police report did not necessarily get at the truth of what had really happened. To judge from the *Amateur Photographer's* eye witness report quoted above, a part of the jubilee procession had indeed been shown (albeit not a part with the Queen in) and this was represented to be one of the two Boer titles mentioned in the police report. The troops therefore in this film of the jubilee procession, who were presumably British or colonial, were being presented as Boers – and wildly cheered by Belgians! A bizarre situation indeed, but perhaps not something which would have concerned the British officials. The report had also noted that anti-British reaction was currently being provoked by two other items: a film of Chamberlain (the British Colonial Secretary) and an actor's impersonation of him. But seemingly, this too did not concern the British authorities. It was the Queen alone who required protection.

**Box:**

**Police report. Brussels, 13 April 1900**

3<sup>me</sup> Division de Police

Le cinématographe de la Scala n'a pas fonctionné depuis le 31 mars dernier, jour où la première d'une piécette a été donnée au dit théâtre.

Les projections dont il est question ne comprenaient cette saison, en tant que vues animées se rapportant à la question transvaalienne qu'un "départ d'un commando boer de Pretoria" et une "artillerie boer à la frontière"; ses vues représentaient uniquement des mouvements de troupes; elles ont été données sans incident d'après mes renseignements et ne comportent rien d'anormal.

Quant au cortège, il s'agit de vues du passage de S M la Reine Victoria et de son escorte à Londres, lors du Jubilé; cette dernière projection n'étant plus d'actualité n'a pas été produite cette saison, d'après les renseignements recueillis.

Toutefois le dit cinématographe dont le fonctionnement reprendra le 16 et a donné cette année le portrait de M. Chamberlain et l'apparition de ce portrait soulevait parfois des sifflets dans le public.

Depuis un [sic] quinzaine de jours il y a eu outre à la Scala un artiste qui se grime de manière à imiter des personnages les plus en vue. Il se fait entre autres les têtes de MM Kruger et Chamberlain; le public applaudit la première et siffle le second.

Il n'a pas été et il n'est pas donné à la Scala, que nous ayons relevé, d'exhibition irrévérencieuse envers la famille royale anglaise et le public ne s'y est pas livré jusqu'à présent d'après mes renseignements à d'autres manifestations que celles rapportées plus haut.

Bruxelles le 13.4.1.

**Rough translation:**

The cinematograph at the Scala hasn't been working since 31 March, as a play has been on since then. The films in question were on the Transvaal issue and were 'Departure of a Boer Commando from Pretoria' and 'Boer Artillery at the Frontier'.



These views only depicted the movement of troops, and were shown without incident according to my information and there was nothing untoward. As for the procession, that was a film of Queen Victoria and her escort in London during the jubilee; and no longer being current, this was not shown this season, according to information received. When the film projections re-started on the 16<sup>th</sup>, a portrait of Chamberlain was shown and sometimes the appearance of this portrait brought forth whistling from the public. For a fortnight an artist who imitates current personalities has appeared at the Scala. He does among others the heads of Kruger and Chamberlain: the audience applauds the first and whistles the second. There haven't been and there are not now that we can determine exhibitions at the Scala irreverent to the British royal family, and according to my information there haven't been demonstrations by the public other than those mentioned above.

### **Box:**

#### **Letter**

Letter from the British ambassador in Brussels, Sir F. Plunkett, to the Marquis of Salisbury, British Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, 14 April 1900.

My Lord,

A colleague having told me that a cinematograph representation of the Queen's Jubilee procession had evoked hostile manifestations at a music hall in the lower town, I spoke about this to the Burgomaster.

I have this morning received from him the letter, copy of which is enclosed, and which tends to prove that no disrespect had been shown to Her Majesty The Queen.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect, My Lord, Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servant,

[signed] F. Plunkett

### **The Netherlands**

The population of the Netherlands had similar attitudes as obtained in Belgium about the Boer issue, though I have found no evidence of British complaints about Dutch music hall audiences. It seems that the people were in general a little more measured in their responses than their neighbours, and a British official made the comparison: 'The Dutch were not so vocal in their feeling, but it was very deep and strong'.<sup>103</sup> Or in the words of film historian Geoffrey Donaldson: '...during the Boer War Holland was definitely pro-Boer ... but perhaps without being violently anti-British'.<sup>104</sup> If the Dutch were a little less extreme in their reaction to the war than the Belgians, no nation was more supportive of the Boers in their struggle for independence, this being one of the very rare moments of nationalistic fervour in Dutch history.

Audiences for the performing arts in Holland were firmly anti-British at this stage, and these were uncomfortable times for British music hall artistes.<sup>105</sup>

This support for the Boers appeared in cinematic form very early in the war and in an interesting manner, for it came in the form of films or other images allegedly depicting the Boers in South Africa. Several so-called 'Transvaal' films were advertised in a newspaper, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, between

October and November 1899, for shows at the 'Circus Arena' (Amsterdam?). The proceeds would go to benefit 'the Red Cross, for the wounded in the Transvaal'.<sup>106</sup> The following Boer War titles were listed for the various dates (my translations):

1. Transvaal Boers on their way to the border
2. Attack on a commando of Transvaal Boers who have formed a square
3. Transvaal Boers battle with the Matabele
4. Dutch Volunteer Corps (Dr. Coster's commando)
5. Departure of Transvaal Boers from Pretoria
6. Oath to (of?) President Kruger
7. Views from the Transvaal<sup>107</sup>

I doubt that any of these were actually films of the Boers in South Africa, because the first film was advertised from 17 October, and as this was less than a week after the beginning of the war, it is not possible that it could have been filmed in the interior of South Africa and shipped back to Europe in this time. I suspect rather that the seven titles were a mixture of re-titled films of other events, plus lantern slides of the Boers. Some of the titles bear similarities to known films, notably from Warwick's series, *Savage South Africa*, filmed in about August. From that series, title (2) could be *Savage Attack and Repulse*, which shows a military square formed to repel African warriors, while title (3) could be *Lobengula's Army*, which depicted the Matabele and other Africans.<sup>108</sup> Title (5) is the same one reported above as having been shown in the Brussels music hall, and as we have seen, this might have been a re-labelled shot of troops marching through London during the jubilee. The other titles could well have been lantern slides, notably nos. 4, 6 and 7. Even though the heading 'Kinematograph' appears in the ad, so long as a few of the titles were films, I guess the audience wouldn't have been disappointed if others were mere slides. (And advertised in the programme too were some non-Boer War films, including a film about the Dreyfus affair, by Méliès).

Another such film allegedly of Boers was advertised a few days before the outbreak of war in the southern Dutch city of Nijmegen. A newspaper description noted that it depicted Boers on their 'spirited horses', and in this way 'demonstrated the great boldness of the opponents who will be matched against the United Kingdom'.<sup>109</sup> I suspect that this again could have been the film reported above as having been shown in the Brussels music hall, perhaps being the re-titled shot of troops marching through London.

From the final months of 1899 onward, films actually shot in South Africa (though scarcely any of the Boers) became available, and proved very popular on screen in Holland, helping to satisfy audiences' interest in the war. Karel Dibbets has made a special study of this subject, and has found that many films of this kind were shown in numerous towns. The Boer War was the main event for travelling exhibitors (only matched in popularity by films of the crowning of Queen Wilhelmina and the Dreyfus affaire). Dibbets writes:

'In 1900, jeering audiences saw films of the defeat of a Highland regiment near Tugela, they applauded the victory over the English army at Spion Kop, the attack on an English armoured train, the blowing up of a railway bridge in Natal, the battle at the Modder River, the siege of Ladysmith, the bombardment of Mafeking, the death of General Symons, and so on.'<sup>110</sup>

Several of these sound like Warwick titles, and presumably some of the others (for example the Symons title) were lantern slides. Later on in the war, in early 1902, Dibbets notes that 'pictures of a raid on Bloemfontein' were popular in Utrecht, though again one assumes that this was either a lantern slide or re-titled film of something else. By this time too, Paul Kruger had become what Dibbets calls 'the first hero of the white screen in Holland', through the several films of him by then available, especially on his travels in Europe, which I cover in an Appendix on Boer War 'celebrities'.

### **France**

With the possible exception of Belgium, anti-British feeling during the Boer War reached its height in France. This was partly due to traditional animosity to the rival across the Channel, made more biting through the events in Fachoda in 1898 (where British forces in Sudan had reasserted British hegemony in that part of Africa). All kinds of pro-Boer souvenirs were on sale in France – music sheets of 'La Marche des Boers', etc [Fig. 10] – and there were numerous satirical cartoons: some being so offensive (to Queen Victoria and then Edward VII) that the British ambassador was recalled temporarily.<sup>111</sup> [Fig. 11]

Also, British people were apparently picked on, for according to the outraged Paris correspondent of one British paper early in 1900, English residents in Paris had been 'chaffed and jibed at since the war broke out'.<sup>112</sup> Parisians wore Boer hats to celebrate Britain's difficulties.<sup>113</sup> The French media gloried in Boer victories, and one British newspaper was especially resentful of this, and suggested that half a dozen Englishmen with horsewhips go over to Paris and punish the media malefactors.<sup>114</sup>

The anti-British fervour was especially intense in the music halls, and from quite early in the war it became rather unpleasant for both British performers and members of the audience. 'At places of entertainment in Paris', said a resident of twenty-six years' standing in the city, 'Englishmen are hooted, and English performers are hissed by the scum of the boulevards. I have never experienced such treatment before'.<sup>115</sup> This contempt for things British extended to representations in films, for the British uniform was 'hissed and howled at when ... reproduced on the films of the cinematograph'.<sup>116</sup>

A climax of anti-British feeling was reached at the Olympia music hall in Paris as war films were projected, for, as one reporter noted, '...when the English soldiers appear the whistling and hissing by the audience sounds like escaping steam from a large engine', while when images of Boers were shown, these French spectators '... forget themselves enough to applaud and yell with delight'. This reporter added as a kind of warning, 'If you are foolish

enough to applaud English soldiers it would be made so uncomfortable for you that you would gladly leave the theatre'.<sup>117</sup> The films being shown, though, were not genuine ones from South Africa, according to this writer, and were of American soldiers ('Rough Riders') from the Spanish-American War, presumably fakes. These films, he noted, '...are used and passed off as Boers, and their appearance is a signal for cheers'.

The French regions too were gripped by the pro-Boer ferment. In Perpignan in 1901 Boer War films were very popular, the image of Kitchener being whistled, that of Kruger cheered.<sup>118</sup> Along the coast in Marseille, the pro-Boer passion was such that one of the first cinemas to open in the city was called 'le cinema des Boërs', which, it is claimed, showed almost entirely films about the Transvaal war, with a lecturer dressed as a Boer fighter.<sup>119</sup>

### Germany

Germany was as strongly pro-Boer as other Continental countries, though as I shall explain below, official controls kept something of a cap on more extreme manifestations of anti-British feeling. Certainly British defeats were celebrated in Germany: for example, when Lord Methuen was captured by the Boers in 1902.<sup>120</sup> Several pro-Boer live events about the war took place.<sup>121</sup> As with France, part of the reason Germany gloried in any British reverse was envy, for at that time (though not for much longer) Britain was still the world's leading power.<sup>122</sup> These feelings were expressed in the media, and nowhere more clearly and vituperatively than in illustrated journals, such as *Kladderadatsch* and *Simplicissimus*. For both these journals, even before the war, the major international villain was Britain, and this editorial line peaked during the Boer War, the conflict being portrayed as a struggle of power-mad imperialists versus simple peasants. *Kladderadatsch* in particular idealized 'the little Boer nation'.<sup>123</sup>

From the start of the war exhibitors were keen to obtain films about the events. Only a few days after hostilities began, a Berlin film man, Adolf Lubszynski, was making enquiries that he urgently wanted films on the Transvaal war.<sup>124</sup> Further south, in the city of Munich, an even bigger demand for Boer War films was burgeoning. For some reason Munich was particularly pro-Boer, with no fewer than 27 societies formed to support the independence struggle from 1900 to 1902, and several places in the city were named in honour of the Boers.<sup>125</sup> Munich's keen interest in the fight in South Africa was also expressed in film venues. In early December 1899 'living photographs' were shown in the Blumen-Säle in Munich, including two up-to-date new pictures, 'The landing of an English warship in Cape Town' and 'The Boers commence the battle'. It is uncertain what this latter film could be, though perhaps a fake, but it was this second title in particular which galvanized the audience, as one newspaper reported: 'Above all it was these freedom fighters, courageous unto death, who elicited really enthusiastic applause, while at the same time the orchestra brought the vivid Transvaal hymn to the performance'.<sup>126</sup>

Perhaps this emotional reaction set official bells ringing, but whatever the reason, by the following year the police were ready to stifle overtly anti-British

feeling. Copies of a very inflammatory issue of *Simplicissimus* were confiscated by the police in Munich around April 1900, perhaps at the instigation of English visitors to the city.<sup>127</sup> Just before this, in March, the same thing had happened with regard to film shows, in one of the most remarkable episodes of its kind.

Biograph films of the Boer War were being shown at the Deutschen Theater and there were apparently different audience reactions from the balcony and from the stalls.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps the pro-British reaction was coming (as with the cartoons) from British visitors to Munich, while the locals would have supported the Boers. In any case, on 22 March the management of the theatre issued a notice to say that pictures of the Boer War, including shots of commanders, had been banned by the police, arguing that these images were leading to noisy demonstrations and endangering public peace and order.<sup>129</sup> As Martin Loiperdinger has shown in his essay on this episode of censorship, the audience's expressions of disapproval (and approval) were unwanted by the political authorities because the German government professed neutrality in the war. As far as one knows, this was a unique instance of banning, and presumably films about the Boer War continued to be shown in other parts of Germany, the war being, after all, one of the main news events of the day.<sup>130</sup>

### **Russia**

One might not expect that Russia and its people would have taken much notice of the Boer War, being so far from the scene of hostilities and with no interests to speak of in Africa. But perhaps because of the long history of rivalry and military conflict with Britain, Russians became very interested in this war. During the first months, when the Boers were enjoying successes, a pro-Boer craze swept Russia, with church collections for the South African republics and gifts sent; some Russians even travelled to fight with the Boers.<sup>131</sup>

Films and lantern slides of the conflict were shown in Russia, and, though I cannot establish how widely, I have found a number of specific cases. The Polish Krzeminski brothers travelled through Poland and Russia showing films in rented venues, Boer War subjects forming an important part of their programme.<sup>132</sup> Lantern images of the war were showing in St. Petersburg very late in the war, in March 1902.<sup>133</sup> [Fig. 13]

St. Petersburg too was the site of one of the most interesting examples I have found of screenings about the war. It is reminiscent of the Belgian case, in that it involves a British protest about the exhibition of anti-British films. The only information I have about this comes in the form of a letter written to the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir Charles Scott, in late 1901 (which I located in Scott's papers).<sup>134</sup> The letter was from 'a lady who has been resident in Russia for some years', as the covering text states, though it doesn't give her name. I guess that she was probably British. The letter reads as follows:

'At the present moment, at one of the good theatres of St. Petersburg, a series of living photographs of the war are being exhibited, with plenty of banging and a few living actors to give additional realism to

the scenes. As the combats, massacres of the wounded, tortures inflicted on prisoners, acts of basest cowardice etc, were arranged in a circus for the camera; even knowing that the fullest scope has been given to the diseased imaginations of the rabidest Anglophobes, even then, it is impossible for you faintly to conceive the part the English are represented as playing. The spectacle is doing splendid business, and is regarded as a true picture of what is really taking place in the Transvaal. XXX [indicating a missing signature],<sup>135</sup>

It is difficult to guess what these films were. Perhaps some were re-titled actualities? But the scenes she describes as ‘massacres of the wounded, tortures inflicted on prisoners’ do not correspond to known titles, though they bear some similarity to the alleged films of British brutality in Ireland (see above). Perhaps they were re-titled fakes (though I can’t point to any specific possibilities) or lantern slides? Or, as she states that the films ‘were arranged in a circus for the camera’, maybe these really were filmed specially in such a setting, in Russia or elsewhere. In any case, this surely stands as one of the most extreme examples of Boer War films – either pro- or anti-British – being used as propaganda. It is possible that the British embassy made further enquiries about this, for the allegation that British troops were committing atrocities was a serious one; but only further archival research will establish this.

## USA

Attitudes to the Boer War were ambivalent in the United States, and there were arguments for both sides. These arguments were discussed in editorial columns; and a historical analysis of seven newspapers across America has found that, while initially editors were sympathetic to the Boers’ independence struggle, they later switched sides.<sup>136</sup>

This ambivalence was reflected in coverage on the screen, with items about the war tending to be neutral rather than partisan. One journalist enthused merely about seeing the hostilities at all: ‘we are promised... pictures of actual, gruesome war’.<sup>137</sup> Lantern shows about the war were generally balanced too: the title of one – *South Africa; Scenes from the "Dark Continent" and the British-Boer War* – suggests something more like a travelogue, rather than a report on a controversial war.<sup>138</sup> A report on Biograph films of the Boer War at Keith’s Theater in New York was headed ‘Biograph is the real star’, as if the war-based content of the films was almost unimportant and the medium itself was what mattered.<sup>139</sup> In any case, it seems that Boer War films were shown quite widely in the USA.<sup>140</sup> [Fig. 14]

A rare instance of Boer War films stirring up controversy in the US comes from Lyman Howe’s shows. In January 1900 Howe screened a programme of films in Troy, New York including three new acquisitions related to the Boer War, and these proved especially popular. The audience, it seems, ‘went wild and cheered the Dutch fellows to the echo’, as the local paper put it. But it is not clear what these films could have been. As they showed the Boers winning, it is likely they were fakes, probably the Pathé ones, which were available early in the war. But by later in the year (see next paragraph) Howe

was showing British actualities, mainly depicting British troops, so this cheering for the Boers ('Dutch') is a mystery. Anyway, it is unlikely that Howe would have encouraged such cheering, as he was, in general, pro-British.<sup>141</sup>

By the Autumn, Howe featured a section of ten films about the Boer War (one of six sections in his programme), all probably imported from Warwick. Most of these were of British troops; a couple showed Boer prisoners, including *Boer Prisoners Under Escort* (definitely Warwick). Only one was not an actuality: *A Reproduction of Major Wilson's Last Stand*. The films were sequenced into a clear narrative from troops departing England; this time no particular audience response is recorded.<sup>142</sup>

### Canada

Most Canadians of English extraction supported Britain's cause in South Africa, and the only sustained opposition came from French Canadians.<sup>143</sup> There was certainly great interest in the Boer War in the country from near the beginning of the war, partly because a contingent of about a thousand Canadian troops was being sent to fight. Coverage of the war in film exhibitions began with so-called 'patriotic concerts', held to bolster patriotism and to raise funds for the war effort. In Toronto a series of military patriotic concerts were held at Massey Hall on Saturday evenings from 4 November 1899.<sup>144</sup> For the fifth concert on 2 December several moving pictures were shown, including of the Canadian contingent marching through the streets of Quebec City.<sup>145</sup>

These kind of shows continued the following year, and an exhibition of moving pictures was given at the Drill Hall, Winnipeg entitled, 'Canada's brave sons off to the war' to benefit the Canadian Patriotic Fund: this included shots of parades and the departure of the second Canadian contingent, as well as war scenes in South Africa. [Fig. 15] The programme of films as listed is interesting, formally: the films were exhibited in four tranches, with a dozen views in each, including Boer War related films in each. But – and this is the curious feature – these war films were dotted among the general interest (i.e. non war) films, rather than making up a group and a sustained narrative of the war.<sup>146</sup> This is in marked contrast to the practice which had been developing in other war shows in Britain and the US in which the war films would be bunched together to create a narrative of the war. However, in other respects these pageant shows were quite significant cinematic events, for, in appealing to wealthier citizens, they brought certain respectable and artistic qualities to the early Canadian experience of cinema.<sup>147</sup>

The war was the theme of numerous illustrated lectures in Canada, and as in the UK, the experience of the 'local' troops (the Canadian regiments in this case) was of great interest. In November 1900 a Mr. Hamilton showed a 'series of pictures' (lantern slides or films) depicting the story of the Canadian contingent from the time they left Quebec until they reached Pretoria. A reporter stated admiringly that Hamilton gave a simple, straightforward recounting of facts and incidents, showing 'how much the Canadians had been honoured in the campaign and how well they had merited the honour'.<sup>148</sup>

## **Australasia**

On 28 October 1899 the first contingent of troops marched through the streets of Sydney before departing for the Boer War. The few hundred men were dwarfed by the 200,000 crowd of people who lined the route, despite pouring rain, cheering wildly.<sup>149</sup> I have not established if cameramen filmed this, but some other Australian contingents were filmed, and a few such films survive, notably Lumière shots of soldiers in Brisbane prior to departure.<sup>150</sup>

The cinema in Australia was very advanced in this early period, and film shows were taking place in various locations, presumably including Boer War subjects by the end of 1899 or early the following year. The first actual programme of such films which I have seen consisted of 12 films related to the war, screened by J.C. Williamson (as the 'Anglo-American bio-tableau') in March 1900 in Melbourne. In October, based on his correspondent experience at the front, Banjo Paterson commenced a lecture tour using, for illustration, as many as 50 short films of the war by British producers.<sup>151</sup> About the same time a similar illustrated lecture using Boer War films (and a selection of entertainment films too) was given by E. H. Stevenson of the London Bioscope Co. at the Mechanics' Institute in North Hill, and then in the Town Hall of Hobart, Tasmania.<sup>152</sup>

Several posters survive for shows at the Theatre Royal in Hobart well into 1901, which give a snapshot of how these war films were exhibited to some audiences in Australia, by J.C. Williamson's bio-tableau company and the Biograph company.<sup>153</sup> The general impression one has of the war on screen in Australia is that the shows were often quite extensive, including a large number of films to create a story of the war. The titles of the names of the programmes – 'With Roberts to Pretoria' or 'In South Africa with the troops by Biograph' – are reminiscent of the illustrated books which were being published about the war as hostilities came to an end.

By contrast with Australia I have found little information about screenings in New Zealand, apart from a brief mention of three Boer War films shown in an Opera House in 1900.<sup>154</sup> But I have reason to believe that war films were shown very extensively. This is suggested from one very intriguing snippet in a theatrical periodical in mid 1906, which states that moving picture shows were beginning to boom again in the country, '... in a way reminiscent of the Boer war period'. It then adds the fascinating information that at the time of the war, 'there were thirty-five picture shows running through the colony, and out of that number only two survive'.<sup>155</sup> This information leads to two important (provisional) conclusions: firstly that the Boer War seems to have helped create a truly impressive boom in the cinema in New Zealand; and secondly that this was followed by a slump in some of the period to 1906.

## **Other countries**

It is a mark of how far the cinema had spread globally and of how important was the Boer War as a subject for films that in addition to the major markets which I have mentioned, films of the war also turned up in smaller or economically less prosperous countries. In each of the following cases there is a special factor which makes the screening unique. Switzerland first: in April



1900 two 'new' Boer War films were advertised, namely 'The Battle at Spion-Kop' and 'General Cronje surrenders his sword to Lord Roberts'.<sup>156</sup> The latter was probably the Pathé subject portraying the surrender of an officer (mentioned in my chapter 10), and is an intriguing choice of implicitly pro-British film for this neutral country. A screening in Rijeka, Croatia offers another interesting feature, for it represents the most violent reaction to Boer War films that I have yet found. The brief anecdote simply states that after a showing of these films, fights broke out between British sailors and Croats.<sup>157</sup>

Further afield, a showman in Singapore in 1901 was giving bioscope shows and found that a film about the Boer War, showing Lord Roberts' triumphant entry into Pretoria, proved a wonderful draw: 'People who had merely heard or read some vague reports about the war were thrilled beyond description when they saw the famous figures of the Boer War in action'.<sup>158</sup> As this suggests, films about the war were seen quite late in some territories: in Argentina it was as late as April 1902 (no further details); while in Italy the war was the subject for screen-related satire early in 1903, when a cartoon depicted a lantern slide in which Joseph Chamberlain was being kicked by a Boer.<sup>159</sup>

## **CONCLUSION: The power of film**

In this chapter I have shown that screenings of Boer War films were often marked by strident expressions of audience emotion and opinion. And this was very diverse opinion, for as I stated at the start of the chapter, the Boer War was a hugely controversial war internationally. Clearly, there was a strong contrast in how Boer War films were received in Britain and its Empire and how they were seen in most of the rest of the world. The contrast was quite simply between anti-Boers and pro-Boers, the two sides being as much divided and opposed as were the rival armies on the veldt in South Africa.

Yet in terms of their roused emotions there were great similarities between these two film publics. Audiences for Boer War films throughout the world had a strong emotional reaction as they were shown moving images associated with this controversial event and news story. The screen image in a darkened hall seemed to have the power to stir and reinforce the passions as no other medium could. On the British and Empire side this emotional force was increased through ambitious programming. Audiences saw a panoply of films of troops parading or departing for war, perhaps together with films from the front and fakes too; such programmes with rousing titles such as 'The Fight for the Flag in South Africa' were sometimes accompanied by emotion-raising music and sound effects. The reactions of audiences to these films, as my examples above indicate, were often passionate: as strong as those of American audiences during the Spanish-American War.

Meanwhile, in the pro-Boer parts of the world, the reaction was at times just as heated if not more so. Audiences in Ireland, France and Belgium, Holland and Germany, in Russia and Croatia – sometimes even in America – shouted for the Boers (even if the screen Boers weren't genuine), and booed the

British troops and their leaders. The emotion, in other words, was equal and opposite to that in Britain.

However, there was one fundamental difference between the two situations. In most of the British Empire the authorities were quite content when spectators cheered their troops and booed the enemy. By contrast, in Continental countries which were not at war with Britain, excessive passion for the Boers might not be entirely welcomed by the authorities. Most of these countries, after all, were ostensibly neutral in the war, and tolerance for public insult to British prestige might be seen as a provocation to the then leading power in the world. Certainly, in two countries, a perceived contempt for Britain by film audiences was taken seriously by the authorities: in Germany the offending films were banned in one city when they led to partisan reaction; and in Belgium the police were called in to investigate British complaints of filmic insults to the Queen.

On the other hand, in the cases of Russia and France, political relations with Britain were already at a low ebb, and so, when in Russia faked films were shown of British forces committing atrocities, or in France audiences hissed the British army on screen, these things did not apparently bother the host governments. Ireland was a special case: with a population divided in its loyalties, anti-British films might have helped to air or spread nationalist opinion, and the local (British) authorities did suppress the films on at least one occasion.

After this experience with Boer War films, a lesson for all governments was there to be learned: that film could be a powerful medium to stir up and reinforce emotions, whether nationalist, imperialist or otherwise. And patriotic emotions could be politically useful: in British music halls the public feelings roused by films and live acts about the Boer War probably helped reinforce support for the war. Equally, though, emotions could be dangerous if roused too powerfully or in the wrong context – as the German authorities, mentioned above, had decided. These examples suggest that some governments had taken some account of their publics' strong reaction to Boer War films, though it is not clear how much real notice was taken. But in the years up to the First World War, the proliferation of the moving image and evidence of its evident hold on audiences, brought back the idea, first suggested during the Boer War, that films could rouse strong political emotions. Governments by this stage had started to take note.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> These included (of the ones I have seen in whole or part): *War Bits* (1899), *Under the Union Jack* (1899-1900), *The Spear* (1900), *Illustrated War Special* (1899-1900), *Black and White Budget* (1899-1900), *The King* (1900), all of which were published in London, plus, *Battle Smoke* (1900), published in Sydney. By May of 1900, four books had already appeared about the conflict. (According to *The Spear* 2 May 1900, p.690).

<sup>2</sup> For the first time, apparently for any war, advertisers appropriated images of both famous and ordinary soldiers fighting in South Africa to promote and sell products, with Lord Roberts for example being used by Ogden's to sell their particular brand of cigarettes. Glenn R. Wilkinson, "To the Front": British Newspaper advertising and the Boer War, in John Gooch, ed., *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 203-12. Children's toys also depicted the conflict. See Simon Popple, 'But the khaki-covered camera is the latest thing'. The Boer War Cinema and Visual Culture in Britain', Paper from the Dec 2000 Stockholm conference, 'Moving Images: Technologies, transitions, historiographies'.

<sup>3</sup> Information from Vanessa Toulmin. A diorama of the Boer War, 'Deeds that won the Empire', by Hamilton Excursions appeared in Burnley, and the *Era* called it 'very interesting and enjoyable'. *Era* 20 Oct 1900, p.22. Pooles' 'new war myriorama' was entitled 'Boer v. Briton', and appeared in Belfast for two weeks. *Showman* 5 Jan 1901, p.3.

<sup>4</sup> 'War news by magic lantern', *Times* 25 dec 1899, p.2. Courtesy Frank Kessler.

<sup>5</sup> Cronje, for example, was to be seen at the St Louis fair re-enacting the events at Paardeberg.

<sup>6</sup> Ward Muir, *The Photogram*, July 1900. This poem, about the current craze for war-related images, songs and souvenirs, implies with this line about 'the khaki-covered camera', that films were in a sense the 'acme' of this glorification. Another line in the poem about film states, 'For it's positively quite the up-to-datest thing!'

<sup>7</sup> Peter Warwick and S. B. Spies, *The South African War : The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Harlow: Longman, 1980), p. 59. 'The week which extended from 10 December to 17 December, 1899, was the blackest one known during our generation, and the most disastrous for British arms during the century', wrote Sir Arthur Conan Doyle afterwards.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Grottle Strebel, 'Imperialist Iconography of Anglo-Boer War Film Footage', in J. L. Fell, ed., *Film before Griffith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p.267.

<sup>9</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, 'Militarism in the Edwardian Age', chapter 8 of *Electric Edwardians: The Story of the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection*, ed. V. Toulmin (London: BFI, 2006), p.239-279.

<sup>10</sup> One departure of troops was filmed 16 Sep (Saturday) at Southampton. See 'The irrepressible cinematograph', *BJP* 22 Sep 1899, p.596. Incidentally, many still photos of troops departures and of celebrity commanders were taken by the well-known photographer, 'Gregory'.

<sup>11</sup> From a *Daily Mail* report quoted in Peter Warwick and S. B. Spies, *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p.58.

<sup>12</sup> Then the Rifle Brigade (on the 'German') were filmed departing from Southampton on 28 Oct. All released by Fuerst, it seems. 'War films', *PD* Nov 1899, p.120. Another copy of the departure of the 'Nubia' was recently found. See *Mace Newsletter*, Nov 2005. A French film man later claimed he had filmed troops in Southampton departing for S. Africa. See Raoul Grimoin-Sanson, *Le Film de Ma Vie* (Evreux: Impr. Ch. Hérissé, 1926) approx p.90.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Barnes, 1899 volume. See also *The Magnet* 9 Dec 1899, p.2. It was shown at the Empire, Edinburgh by Gibbons Bio Tableaux.

<sup>14</sup> Held in the NFTVA and also in the Scottish film Archive. Several troop marching shots by Hepworth survive in the NFTVA.

<sup>15</sup> 'Cinematograph and Biograph Pictures', *Today*, supplement, 23 Nov 1899, p.3. Quoted in Strebel. See also Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise : The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897-1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999): film no.231 *Embarkation of the "Fighting Fifth"*. Filmed 18 September 1899 at Southampton, and comprising at least three shots showing the embarkation of the 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers for Natal on the steamship 'Gaul'.

<sup>16</sup> David R. Martin, *A Scotsman's Wanderings* (Dumfries: Dinwiddie and Co., 1976), p.7. This film was shown in the Buchanan Memorial Church in (Glasgow?) Scotland on a makeshift screen in front of the pulpit, the first film Martin (then aged about 6) and others had seen. I wonder if the film could be: *The Return of Lord Lovat's Scouts from South Africa*, which is described as: 'This fine body of Highland Gillies, in their national costume, march straight up

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to the camera accompanied by enthusiastic friends.' W. Gibbons, 75 ft. *Era* 17 Nov 1900, p.30. (It is not listed in Barnes.)

<sup>17</sup> As *HMS Powerful Arrives in Portsmouth Harbour Bringing Home the Heroes of Ladysmith* (54ft.)

<sup>18</sup> The film was screened at the Hippodrome, so probably was made for Gibbons who regularly exhibited there. PD May 1900, p.100.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Schneer notes that 1,550 men joined the C.I.V. Being from the metropolis this regiment naturally interested the national press, and film companies, which were mainly based in London. (Indeed, R.W. Paul even had two close relatives in the C.I.V.)

<sup>20</sup> Though possibly the latter two were only distributing others' versions.

<sup>21</sup> The first could be a R.W. Paul film. Paul shot and released a film of: *Embarkation of the City Imperial Volunteers for South Africa*. Listed in Barnes, 1900 volume. The Hepworth version is 27 ft. and the closer aspect allows, as discussed above, greater identification with the men.

<sup>22</sup> There was a film shown of the C.I.V.'s marching on Johannesburg as part of the programme at the Royal Aquarium. *News of the World* 12 Aug 1900.

<sup>23</sup> The press covered this in microscopic detail, with pages devoted to every stage and incident on this metropolitan procession. The *Standard* 30 Oct 1900 had very detailed descriptions of each stage of the C.I.V.'s march through London, and the *Sphere* 3 Nov 1900 had a series of photos of the procession.

<sup>24</sup> The NFTVA's London films include one (unknown producer) with them coming through decorated streets in London, carrying a captured Boer flag.

<sup>25</sup> *Showman* Dec 1900, p.72 notes that Warwick, Butcher and Hepworth each secured four films of the march through London. Butcher took films of this procession from the roof of Gloucester Gate Lodge, Hyde Park and sold the results as 4 separate films, total of over 230 ft. See BJP 9 Nov 1900, p.716.

<sup>26</sup> 'A chat with Charles Urban', *Era* 1 Dec 1900, p.22. Warwick's film could be had in one length of 475 ft.

<sup>27</sup> 'Merry-go-round', *The Entr'acte* 7 July 1900, p.4.

<sup>28</sup> Toulmin op. cit. Toulmin observes that many films featured the yeomanry and the even more popular local volunteers.

<sup>29</sup> *Bradford Daily Argus* 29 Jul 1902. Reference from NFA (National Fairground Archive). Show of M&K films given by the New Century Animated Picture Company at the St George's Hall.

<sup>30</sup> This would seem to be a kind of conflation between Britain's success against the lightly-armed Africans at Omdurman, and the situation now facing Britain in South Africa. The series was filmed from a live show by Frank Fillis. One episode survives as *Savage South Africa: Savage Attack and Repulse* 1899 (Warwick catalogue number 5374). Incidentally, Fillis went back to South Africa with part of his show in 1902. *Showman* 24 Jan 1902, p.309.

<sup>31</sup> West's show arrived at the Victoria Hall in May. Alex Rankin, 'The History of Cinema Exhibition in Exeter 1895 - 1918'. PhD, U. Exeter, 2001, chapter 2. R.W. Paul's series of twenty films on 'Army Life' had been produced in 1900 (during the Boer War).

<sup>32</sup> Catalogue suppl. No.1 to Warwick's April 1901 catalogue: film numbers 6191, 6192. F.B. Stewart was a stills photographer, based in the British garrison town of Poona in western India, who made a series of scenic films for Warwick in addition to these Boer War titles. Fort Ahmadnagar was north-east of Poona.

<sup>33</sup> A Warwick ad in *The Era* 14 Oct 1899, p.28 states that the company had 80 views of the country, obtained on two filming trips before the war. An article adds: 'Already some 80 South African negatives have been received by the Warwick Trading Co., including three new ones last week...' From 'Special Warwick Films', PD, Dec, 1899, p.146.

<sup>34</sup> Price notes, for example, 'Thus, it is evident that the ethos of imperialism which surrounded the Boer War had little impact on the working class.' Or again, 'This does not mean that the young labourer was opposed to the war, it rather means that he did not respond in the conventionally patriotic manner; the young clerk with his middle-class pretensions and status, did.' Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge, 1972), p.241 etc. Some modern scholars offer Price limited support. M.D. Blanch concludes that the real jingoes were the lower middle class, and that after the mid-1900 victories it was this middle class which

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maintained the fervour for war. However, Blanch is only comparing degrees of enthusiasm, not suggesting that workers failed to celebrate the war at all. See essay by M.D. Blanch, 'British Society and the War' in Warwick and Spies, *The South African War : The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*. p.217, see also p.235. In any case Blanch stresses the high enlistment for the war and that the Conservative vote went up in the 1900 election.

<sup>35</sup> F. Maddison, 'Why British Workmen Condemn the War', *North American Review* 170, April 1900, p.518-519. He added that it was the British defeats in December which led to a quickening interest in the war, but that these disappointments also meant that, '...all traces of jingoism, which feeds on ignorance, have passed away'. Maddison blamed business interests for fomenting the war.

<sup>36</sup> John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 63 and 66. Elsewhere Mackenzie with equal point writes that despite all evidence to the contrary some historians insist that the working classes were uninterested in the British Empire. John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). p.108. Part of the reason for this support for the war, some historians believe, was that some politicians, who were determined on war, stoked up public opinion: 'British public opinion, diligently nurtured by Chamberlain and Milner during the preceding months, responded with open enthusiasm to the coming of war.' Warwick and Spies, *The South African War : The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p.58.

<sup>37</sup> Hyndman wrote, with regret: 'And among those who were most eager for the war and most jubilant at the slightest success were the wage-earners themselves in the very poorest localities'.

<sup>38</sup> Deian Hopkin, 'Socialism and Imperialism: The ILP Press and the Boer War', in *Impacts and Influences : Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century*, ed., James Curran, et. al. (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 20-21. The homes of opponents of the war were sometimes attacked by vengeful jingo crowds: Kingsley Martin recalled that their house had its windows broken because his father had spoken out against the war. Cited in J. B. Priestley, *The Edwardians* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 43.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Ward, 'Socialist responses to the Boer War', seminar at Inst. Historical Research, 15 Jan 1993.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Porritt, 'British Public Opinion and the Boer War', *The Outlook* 64, 17 Mar 1900, p.623-26. Porritt (1860-1921), was a political historian and journalist.

<sup>41</sup> This was on 22 October. Quoted in Warwick and Spies, *The South African War : The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p.58. Warwick gives a vivid account from the *Daily Mail*.

<sup>42</sup> *Daily Mail* 19 May report, quoted in *Ibid.*, p.59.

<sup>43</sup> See essay by John M. Mackenzie in Simon James Potter, ed. *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain : Reporting the British Empire, c.1857-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p.28-9. Mackenzie cites this evidence to refute Price's contention of lack of working-class enthusiasm for the war. Incidentally, the idea of mafficking is sent up in Saki's story, 'Reginald's peace poem'.

<sup>44</sup> In response to Price's conclusions, Toulmin states: 'Working-class indifference to the conflict is certainly not apparent when one examines the impact of the war on popular leisure arenas frequented by the working class, such as the fairground and the music hall.' Vanessa Toulmin, *Electric Edwardians: The Story of the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection* (London: BFI, 2006), p.244.

<sup>45</sup> The satirical weekly, *Punch*, published a send-up of an ad for a variety theatre which had achieved success due to, 'No patriotic songs... No representation of the horrors of the battlefield. No imitation shells. No real gunpowder... You will not have to do the greater part of the singing, after paying for admission, and also contributing to a fund.' This satire suggests that these kind of excesses (patriotic songs, etc) were happening regularly by December. *Punch* 13 Dec 1899, p.286. Re attendance, see *Black and White Budget* 17 Mar 1900, p.5.

This source adds that when there was a British victory the custom increased, and vice versa.

<sup>46</sup> For example, during January 1900 (and again in May) the Rev. Thomas Jarret toured the East Anglia region lecturing on the war, and illustrated his talk with films as well as 'gigantic limelight views' of the leading men, soldiers, battles and places on both sides. Stephen Peart, *The Picture House in East Anglia* (Lavenham: Terrence Dalton, 1980), p.13. The May event was publicised by the town crier.

- <sup>47</sup> Quotation supplied to me by Nick Hiley from a letter in *The Outlook*, July 1900. This film could have been Warwick's *Boer Prisoners Under Escort*, or it is just possible that it was M&K's *Washing Boer Prisoners*, a comic, in which case these youths' reaction would have been more understandable.
- <sup>48</sup> 'Merry-go-round', *The Entr'acte* 18 Aug 1900, p.5. This source notes that young women were attracted to the war films but once there find 'other metal' more attractive. It is not clear what this means: does it mean money? (i.e. suggesting they are prostitutes?)
- <sup>49</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* 2 March 1900, quoted in M.D. Blanch, 'Nation, Empire and the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914' (Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1975), p. 325. Ads for these films didn't indicate that they were fakes: e.g. programmes for Empire Palace, Mar 1900 and Tivoli, Sep 1901.
- <sup>50</sup> 'Merry-go-round', *The Entr'acte* 7 Apr 1900, p.5. It concluded, 'But we see those grand bits of tumbling ocean no longer'.
- <sup>51</sup> *The Cigarette* 11 Apr 1900, p.10.
- <sup>52</sup> *BJP Lantern Record* 4 May 1900, p.33.
- <sup>53</sup> *The Entr'acte* 12 May 1900, p.7.
- <sup>54</sup> My translation from Gustave Téry, 'L'enthousiasme populaire au cinématographe', *Ciné Journal*, 14 Oct 1911, p.17. Originally in *Le Journal*.
- <sup>55</sup> V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of 'Living Picture' Making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488.
- <sup>56</sup> *Khakigraph*: Era 15 May 1900, p.18, col.3. *Boerograph*: Era 2 June 1900, p.19, col.3.
- <sup>57</sup> T.C. Hepworth, 'Music and "effects" in cinematography', *Showman* 6 September 1901, p.574-5. This long article discusses appropriate and inappropriate music and effects for Boer War films, including gunfire.
- <sup>58</sup> *Showman* 5 Jan 1901, p.14. The fact that both these effects mentioned were evidently for war films attests to the continuing importance of war films into 1901 as I argue below.
- <sup>59</sup> 'Pictures at the St James Hall', *Manchester Evening News*, 18 Jun 1901, p.5. Reference from NFA. This was a report of a show at the St. James's Hall by the Edison Animated Photo Company. The critic added that this smoke was unrealistic, as the British forces used smokeless powder.
- <sup>60</sup> A programme for a film show by the Tee brothers at Young Men's Christian Institute 27 Feb 1900 (misprinted 1899), from Tony Fletcher. *Southern Weekly News*, 19 May 1900. Cutting in Tee collection, Brighton PL.
- <sup>61</sup> This poster is for a show in Banff, 5 April 1900, to be accompanied by pipe and drum by the Gordon Highlanders.
- <sup>62</sup> *Holmfirth Express* 17 March 1900. This show at the Drill Hall, Holmfirth told the story from the Jameson raid onwards, and garnered big cheers for images of the leaders in the besieged towns and for General Roberts and the Queen. Courtesy R. Brown.
- <sup>63</sup> For example, in East Anglia in January 1900 a show of war films included views of the embarkation of Sir Redvers Buller and of the troop-ship, Roslin Castle (both of which brought forth rounds of cheering). The scenes also included Colonial troops and cavalry on the march, the digging of trenches, passing of an armoured train, savages attacking a square, Lord Roberts embarking for South Africa and the reviewing of the troops by the Queen. See Stephen Peart, *The Picture House in East Anglia*, p.12. Sometimes actuality and fake views of the war were shown in the same programme, as printed in a handbill for the Literary Institute, Wingate, which also included one Boxer title. Held at the Bill Douglas Centre.
- <sup>64</sup> PN 22 June 1900, p.386. The journal commented on the relative novelty of this film/stage combination.
- <sup>65</sup> Richard Brown, 'War on the Home Front: The Anglo-Boer War and the Growth of Rental in Britain. An Economic Perspective', *Film History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2004, p.28-36.
- <sup>66</sup> Warwick reduced the price of its films on 3 December. AP 7 Dec 1900, p.457.
- <sup>67</sup> Val Royle, 'To attract the public', *Showman*, Sep 1900, p.17.
- <sup>68</sup> 'The showman world', *Showman* 12 Oct 1901, p.22.
- <sup>69</sup> *Showman* Nov 1900, p.53.
- <sup>70</sup> *Showman* Sep 1900, p.3. This was Harry H. Hamilton Co.'s visiting show.
- <sup>71</sup> *Showman* Nov 1900, np.
- <sup>72</sup> The films were screened in Leeds by Hy. Hibbert's show, including a film of the funeral of Queen Victoria. The verdict of the audience, the report stated enigmatically, 'was one to be proud of'. *The Magnet* 16 Feb 1901, p.4.

- <sup>73</sup> *The Magnet* 9 Mar 1901, p.5. The films were shown by the North American Photo Co. Incidentally, all the music halls in Birmingham advertised the latest pictures of the Boer and China wars. Blanch, 'Nation, Empire and the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914', p. 324.
- <sup>74</sup> Even in early 1902 a programme at Prince of Wales hall, Kentish Town in London still had a lot of South African war films. *Showman* 14 Feb 1902, p.356. And in May, at Biddall's bioscope show in Reading, at least one item was featured about the war: 'pictures illustrating Lord Methuen's great fight and capture...' (referring to the capture of this British commander by the Boers two months earlier): it is not clear what kind of film it was, or perhaps it was a lantern slide only? 'Showmen's notes, *MHTR* 9 May 1902, p.301. This item notes that cinematographs were the main attractions at the fairs.
- <sup>75</sup> *Showman* Dec 1900, p.59; Gutsche, p.47.
- <sup>76</sup> *Photographic Chronicle* 1 Aug 1901, p.61.
- <sup>77</sup> '£900 being cleared in three weeks at Newcastle', states 'Showmen's notes', *MHTR* 28 Nov 1902, p.357.
- <sup>78</sup> *BJP* 1 Aug 1902, p.616. Thomas added that his failure was also due to 'the counter attraction of the pantomimes', though it is not clear if he means staged pantomimes or film versions, such as the Méliès scenes. Incidentally, his full name was Arthur Duncan Thomas.
- <sup>79</sup> *BJP* 21 Nov 1902, p.956. He had originally toured with films of the Spanish-American War.
- <sup>80</sup> *The Times* 26 Oct 1902, p.4. The report added that after this decline, '...instead of continuing to make a large profit he sustained a loss'. He had heavy expenses and had to sell some equipment, and by April 1902 crisis hit and his projection machines were being seized all over the country in lieu of payment for rent. He repeated that this decline in his business leading to bankruptcy was 'caused by the public interest in the Boer War and in war pictures generally having ceased'. The state of the fairground market for films may be indicated from the number of film ads in the *Showmen's Yearbook*. Issues for 1900 and 1902 (I have not seen 1901) show a good number of film ads, but the 1903 volume has considerably fewer, suggesting that a decline in the film business perhaps occurred during 1902. Issues of the *Showmen's Yearbook* are held at the NFA.
- <sup>81</sup> David E. Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.275: though privately European governments and the US government supported a British victory. There was phenomenal public hostility to Britain during the war, in Germany, France and Russia. See Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought : Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (London: Cape, 1992), p.272, 293, 342. The French and Germans were very anti-British: the Germans thought the Boers were making a heroic struggle; the French wanted to get their own back after Fachoda. See Warwick and Spies, *The South African War : The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p.311-12. See also Donal Lowry, ed. *The South African War Reappraised Studies in Imperialism (Manchester, England)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p.215-221 re the pro-Boers on the Continent, in USA, etc.
- <sup>82</sup> Kenneth Griffith, *Thank God We Kept the Flag Flying : The Siege and Relief of Ladysmith, 1899-1900* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), p.42 and 54: there were Germans, Irish, Americans, even British volunteers. See also Lowry, ed. *The South African War Reappraised*, p.212-15 on foreign contingents fighting in the Boer War.
- <sup>83</sup> Warwick and Spies, *The South African War : The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p.320. Public figures (Roosevelt and Mark Twain, for example) ultimately thought that Britain should be supported
- <sup>84</sup> On this anti-British material, see Lowry, ed. *The South African War Reappraised*, p.207-11. On anti-British views in Paris, see *MHTR* 2 May 1902.
- <sup>85</sup> There were disagreements among the various nationalists themselves, and in the dramatic world too. See Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism, 1890-1916* (Clarendon, 2002), p.51-5
- <sup>86</sup> Terence Denman, "'The Red Livery of Shame": the Campaign against Army Recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914', *Irish Historical Studies* 29, 1994-95, p.208-33. After the war the anti-recruitment campaign gathered pace.
- <sup>87</sup> Donal P. McCracken, *Forgotten Protest : Ireland and the Anglo-Boer War* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2003), p.45.
- <sup>88</sup> Donal P. McCracken, *ibid.* See also essays by Lowry in Simon James Potter, ed. *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain : Reporting the British Empire, c.1857-1921*

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(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004): p.16, 132-3 and 159. Lowry states that Ireland was the only part of the UK where police clamped down on a newspaper due to its pro-Boer stance.

<sup>89</sup> The pro-Boer shouted, 'It's a so-and-so lie' to which the lecturer suavely retorted, 'it was a so-and-so shell'. T.W. Kingston, 'The patter of a raconteur', *KLW* 3 Dec 1908, p.771.

Presumably 'picture show' in this context meant slides only.

<sup>90</sup> From a brochure, *Pooles 1837-1937: 100 Years of Showmanship* (1937), p.8. BFI Special Collections. This also mentions a similar reaction in Ireland to a lantern slide of the Prince of Wales in India, which had to be disguised to make it more acceptable to spectators.

<sup>91</sup> 'Music hall gossip', *Era* 5 Oct 1901, p.20. *The Era* was, of course, a British periodical, so might have been exaggerating somewhat. As we shall see, a similar closure followed such outbursts in a German theatre.

<sup>92</sup> Letter from an old showman, Dr. Thomas Howard, in *Cinematograph Exhibitor's Mail* 29 Apr 1914, p.227. Possibly this same incident is being referred to – a screen shot at in Ireland during the screening of a film of Queen Victoria during the Boer War – in the brochure, *Pooles 1837-1937: 100 Years of Showmanship*, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> *Kilkenny Journal* 4 Aug 1900. This is one of various newspaper cuttings found by Tony Fletcher in this newspaper. On the 17 Feb a Boer War film show was advertised by a Dublin lecturer, Mr. Mason. The paper later announced shows for 16 and 27 November of war films, and also several films of Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Art of the Showman', *BJP* 14 Oct 1904, p.894. The article opens by citing a writer in the current number of *The Easy Chair* magazine (and quoting his phrase 'the camera cannot lie'), and it is possible that this Boer War anecdote is from the same magazine.

<sup>95</sup> Charles à Court Repington, *Vestigia* (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1919), p.244.

<sup>96</sup> PRO, London. FO 123/406: Belgian embassy letter book, Feb to April 1900, including complaints about cartoons and a play. FO 125/13: 1899 to 1901 letters, Belgium.

<sup>97</sup> 'Notes and comments', *AP* 11 May 1900, p.361. This article noted that Anglophobia was as rampant in Belgium at that time as it was in France and some other Continental countries. The article also refers to the illustrator Harry Furniss, who suggested that some of the worst attacks on England by foreign nations during the war were by caricaturists, comparing these scurrilous drawings to explosives aimed at England.

<sup>98</sup> As I have mentioned above, scurrilous cartoons about the monarch had already set alarm bells ringing.

<sup>99</sup> Presumably this was the Théâtre de la Scala (1887-1930), which is now the UGC-De Brouckère.

<sup>100</sup> Official file headed, 'Hostile manifestations in a Brussels music hall', in FO 10/734, #100. And see FO 123/406. It is not certain that the film show referred to in the *AP* article of 11 May is the Scala, but I think it highly likely.

<sup>101</sup> The two titles mentioned are probably mis-described films of some other events (perhaps, as we shall see, one was of the jubilee procession). They may have been shown in October 1899 at 'Circus Arena' (see the following section) as, respectively, no.6 'Vertrek Transv. Boeren uit Pretoria'; and no.1 'De Transvaalsche Boeren op weg naar de grens'.

<sup>102</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> Plunkett wrote to thank the Bourgmaster for the report.

<sup>103</sup> Charles à Court Repington, *Vestigia*, p.244.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from film historian Geoffrey Donaldson to the author, 1 Feb 1993. In the same letter Donaldson noted that he had never come across anything indicating that the British ambassador complained that anti-British films were being shown in Holland.

<sup>105</sup> On feeling against English music hall artistes in Holland and Germany, see *MHTR* 3 May 1901 and 7 Mar 1902 respectively.

<sup>106</sup> I have copies of four ads from the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, for 17 Oct, 27 Oct, 1 Nov, 22 Nov. Courtesy of NFM research department.

<sup>107</sup> The original titles are: 1. De Transvaalsche Boeren op weg naar de grens. 2. Aanval op een commando Transvaalsche Boeren, die sich in een carré hebben opgesteld. 3. Gevecht der Transvaalsche Boeren tegen Matabellen [or met de Matabelen]. 4. Nederl Vrijwilligers-Corps. (Commando Dr. Coster). 5. Vertrek Transv. Boeren uit Pretoria. 6. Eedsaflegging Pres. Kruger. 7. Gezichten uit Transvaal. These are the titles listed for each of the dates: 17 Oct: titles #1, 2, 3. 27 Oct: same 3 titles, featured more prominently this time. 1 Nov: title #1. 22 Nov: titles #1, 4, 5, 6, 7. The Boer War was called the 'war in the Transvaal' in Holland at the time.

<sup>108</sup> See title descriptions of *Savage South Africa* in Barnes, 1899 volume, p.265.



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<sup>109</sup> Frank Van der Maden, 'Mobiele Filmexploitatie in Nederland, 1895-1913... de Ontwikkeling Te Nijmegen', Thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1981, p.38: from a newspaper ad, 7 Oct 1899.

<sup>110</sup> Letter to me from Karel Dibbets, 4 Jan 1993. One awaits his publication on this theme with interest.

<sup>111</sup> Nigel Gosling, *Paris, 1900-1914 : The Miraculous Years* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), p.13.

<sup>112</sup> Reported in BJP 19 Jan 1900, p.43: this quoted 'the Paris correspondent of a contemporary' (i.e. a contemporary periodical).

<sup>113</sup> Nigel Gosling, *Paris 1900-1914*, op. cit., p.13.

<sup>114</sup> It was the *Birmingham Daily Mail* which stated 28 Nov 1899: '...it is a wonder that half a dozen stalwart Englishmen, armed with good horsewhips, do not go over to Paris and administer a severe castigation to the vulgar cowards... what the Parisian lacks in physical stamina, he makes up for in vulgar abuse of his enemy... Like a dog he barks loudest in his own kennel'. The pro-Boer attitude persisted in France even after the end of the war, and during Edward VII's ice-breaking visit in 1903 a few groups were still shouting, 'Vivent les Boers!' Vincent Cronin, *Paris on the Eve 1900-1914* (London: Collins, 1989), p.63.

<sup>115</sup> 'Shot and Shell', *Pearson's Illustrated War News* 9 Dec 1899, p.11.

<sup>116</sup> And, added this report, poor 'Tommy', being just a film image, 'hearing nothing and seeing nothing... could not throw off his belt and jacket and shout, "'Arf a mo'" to his insulters'. BJP 19 Jan 1900, p.43, op. cit.

<sup>117</sup> NY Clipper, 10 March 1900, p.27. Quoted in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*, p.586.

<sup>118</sup> René Noell, 'Histoire du Spectacle Cinématographique à Perpignan de 1896 à 1944', *Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, numéro spécial, 1er trimestre 1973, p.22.

<sup>119</sup> 'Historique du cinéma à Marseille' by 'The Old', *L'Officiel de la Fédération cinématographique du Midi de la France* Jan 1914, p.8. This states: 'le bonisseur était costumé en vaillant soldat de Kruger'. Of the cinema's location, it notes: 'Il était installé à côté du Modern actuel, au lieu et place de l'auditorium Pathé-Phono'. This all seems somewhat dubious. If this really was a cinema as such, it would presumably have opened during the cinema building boom beginning c.1906; but if this late could it really have been showing only Boer War films? One example where there was no anti-Britishness was at a circus in Limoges, in the late Summer of 1900, where the audience heard both Boer and British anthems as films were shown to an audience including Britons. See Pierre Berneau and Jeanne Berneau, *Le Spectacle Cinématographique à Limoges, de 1896 à 1945* (Paris: AFRHC, 1992), p.32.

<sup>120</sup> Ulrich Kröll, *Die Internationale Buren-Agitation, 1899-1902* (Münster: Verlag Regensberg, 1973), p.53-55.

<sup>121</sup> There were live shows about the Boer War, and panorama paintings by Karl Gocksch, who advertised these in April 1900 as 'War in Africa, Cronje's Arrest, Lord Robert's Entry in Bloemfontain, as well as all notable battles'. See *Der Komet* no.787, 21 April 1900, p. 27. Near the end of 1900 at the Concerthaus, Hamburg, a group of 18 German ex-volunteers from South Africa, described the war and showed some images – probably lantern slides – with most of the proceeds to go to families in the Transvaal. Ad in *Hamburger Fremden-Blatt* 1 and 4 Dec 1900 (both courtesy Deac Rossell).

<sup>122</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, *Satire and Society in Wilhemine Germany: Kladderadatsch and Simplicissimus, 1890-1914* (U. Press of Kentucky, 1984), p.129-131. Though these two periodicals were in general even more contemptuous of Slavs and Russians than Britons.

<sup>123</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, *Satire and Society in Wilhemine Germany*, p.129-131.

<sup>124</sup> *Der Komet* no.773, 13 Jan 1900: reproduces a letter from Lubszynski of 18 Oct 1899 requesting these war films.

<sup>125</sup> Ulrich Kröll, *Die Internationale Buren-Agitation, 1899-1902*, p.53-55.

<sup>126</sup> *Neues Münchener Tagblatt*, no. 341, 8 Dec 1899. Found by Martin Loiperdinger who kindly sent me the reference. This venue was advertised as the 'Feinstes Variété-Theater Münchens'.

<sup>127</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, *Satire and Society in Wilhemine Germany*, p.129-131.

<sup>128</sup> These incidents are covered in detail in Martin Loiperdinger, 'Biograph-Bilder Vom Burenkrieg – Münchner Polizezensur Hört Aufs Publikum', *KINtop*, no. 14-15, 2006, p.66-75.

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<sup>129</sup> *Der Artist* 1 Apr 1900. *Le Temps* reported that the police in Munich had just announced this ban on Boer war films on a poster in the city, this being due to belief that there would be anti-English demonstrations by the public. *Le Temps* 26 Mar 1900, p.1, col.6. In Germany at that time the authorities had the power to prohibit offending pictures or films. In fact the theatre was also showing some risqué films with semi-nude performers, and the authorities tolerated these, though not the Boer War films.

<sup>130</sup> Films of the Boer War were screened as the genre of 'optical news'. Joseph Garncarz, 'Filmprogramm im Variété: die "Optische Berichterstattung"', in Uli Jung and Martin Loiperdinger, eds., *Geschichte des Dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland. Band 1: Kaisereich, 1895-1918* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005).

<sup>131</sup> Apollon Davidson and I. Filatova, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1998).

<sup>132</sup> Malgorzata Hendrykowska, 'Film Journeys of the Krzeminski Brothers, 1900-1908', *Film History* 6, no. 2, Summer 1994, p.206-218.

<sup>133</sup> Ad from *Petersburg Gazette* [Петербургская газета], no. 81, 24 or 26 March 1902, p. 1. Courtesy of Yashit Yangirov.

<sup>134</sup> Sir Charles Scott (1838-1934) was the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, 1898-1904.

<sup>135</sup> I have amended the punctuation slightly, but otherwise the text is exactly as it appeared in Sir Charles Scott papers, vol.9, p.78-78b. British Library, Add. MSS. 52302. This file copy is just an extract from the letter, which is undated but is filed between letters of August 1901 and one of 24 January 1902, so is probably from late 1901.

<sup>136</sup> One reason was that Britain had supported the USA in the Spanish-American War, but the main reason for favouring the British was 'social Darwinism': that Britain was, as the *New York Times* put it, 'fighting for the speed and advance of civilisation'. From 'The British advance', *New York Times* 16 Jan 1900. Similarly the *New Orleans Picayune* 6 Nov 1899 wrote that the Boers must perish in face of the 'superior colonizing genius of the English race'. Both quoted in Marvin Olasky, 'Social Darwinism on the Editorial Page: American Newspapers and the Boer War', *Journalism Quarterly* 65, Summer 1988, p.420-24. Among the public there was considerable sympathy for the Boers, a people it was felt who bore some similarities to the Americans themselves, in bravely pioneering a vast land.

<sup>137</sup> Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film, a Critical History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p.13.

<sup>138</sup> James Martin Miller, *South Africa; Scenes from the "Dark Continent" and the British-Boer War* [etc] (Chicago: Stereopticon & film exchange, 1900).

<sup>139</sup> 'Biograph is the real star', *New York Telegraph* 7 Mar 1900.

<sup>140</sup> For example, at the 'Cineograph Theatre' which opened in San Francisco in 1899, the signs on the front stated: 'Scenes from the British Boer War, Transvaal war. Admission 10 c.' See picture on p.124 in Carl Hertz, *A Modern Mystery Merchant: The Trials, Tricks and Travels of Carl Hertz, the Famous American Illusionist* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924). The picture is of Hertz' brother in law, A.W. Furst's cinema, the Cineograph Theatre. Hertz claims that this was the first in the world for films only. See also Musser, *Emergence*, p.272-3.

<sup>141</sup> Musser and Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, p.101 (and see p.133 on Howe's pro-British attitude). This source suggests they were probably British films. Some of the Edison fakes showed the Boers winning, but were produced too late to have been shown in January. See Blanch, 'Nation, Empire and the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914', op. cit., p.116.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p.106, 108. There were also a couple of Boer war films at the start of the programme, as a 'tease' to the main Boer section.

<sup>143</sup> David E. Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). p.237. Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Montreal: McGill U.P., 1993): this stresses that the response was not monolithic even among 'English' Canadians. See also website re Canadians in the Boer War: <http://www.civilization.ca/cwm/boer>.

<sup>144</sup> Robert W. Gutteridge, *Magic Moments: First 20 Years of Moving Pictures in Toronto (1894-1914)* (Whitby, Ont.: Gutteridge-Pratley Publications, 2000), p.80-81.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*. Also films were shown of their embarkation on the steamer 'Sardinian', the embarkation of one of the famous British regiments at Southampton, and a mountain battery, with mules: a total of 500 feet. Incidentally, for the concert the previous week, on 25 November, cinematograph views had been announced of Britain's forces, land and sea, in review, but they didn't materialise.

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<sup>146</sup> Though at the end is a group of films showing Canadian regiments in Canada before departure. This show of 'moving pictures by the biograph' took place 2 to 7 April 1900 at 3:30 and 8:30 pm daily. A handwritten note on the programme states that it 'took place in Victoria', which might mean that it was also put on in Victoria, B.C. From CIHM/ICMH microfiche series, no. 17542.

<sup>147</sup> The pageants' construction, although similar to certain types of variety performances, produced a new formula for 'artistic' cinema: at least this was the argument of Marta Braun, Charlie Keil and Charles Tepperman in a paper, 'Patriotic Pageants in Toronto' proposed for the Domitor conference at Udine 2000, but not finally delivered.

<sup>148</sup> 'Our Boys in Africa', in *Montreal Daily Star*, 23 novembre 1900. Quoted in Germain Lacasse, 'Le bonimenteur et le cinéma oral : Le cinéma "muet" entre tradition et modernité.' Université de Montréal, PhD, 1996. Chapitre 3 : 'Le montreur de lanterne magique'. This show included images of the troops in mid-ocean.

<sup>149</sup> Noted in W. J. Lines, *Taming the Great South Land* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).

<sup>150</sup> In the NFSA are shots taken on 28 Oct 1899 of the First Queensland Contingent parading in the streets at Brisbane. Then on 31 Oct they are seen loading horses on their ship.

<sup>151</sup> James Sabine, ed. *A Century of Australian Cinema* (Melbourne, 1995), p.22.

<sup>152</sup> *North Hill Free Press* 16 Oct 1900. A poster for Stevenson's show, 23 & 24 Nov 1900 is in the State Library of Tasmania.

<sup>153</sup> J.C. Williamson's bio-tableau company gave a show 6 Dec 1900, including a segment entitled, 'With Roberts to Pretoria', and was back the next year from 29 Jun 1901 with more 'animated pictures' from the Boer War. The Biograph Company was there from 16 Mar 1901 with a series entitled, 'In South Africa with the troops by Biograph'.

<sup>154</sup> This was in the Royal Wanganui Opera House. See <http://www.royaloperahouse.co.nz>

<sup>155</sup> 'Our New Zealand letter', *The Theatre* (Sydney) 1 June 1906, p.21. The two shows which survived, it noted, were called Montgomery's and Macdermott's.

<sup>156</sup> *Der Komet* no.786, 14 April 1900, p. 23. This was by the Schweizer Phonoscop- und Automaten-Werke A. G., Zürich.

<sup>157</sup> Francè Brenk and Fedja Sturm, *Aperçu de l'Histoire du Cinéma Yougoslave* (Ljubljana: Académie de l'art dramatique, 1961), p.8.

<sup>158</sup> This statement is from A. Esoofally, who became a pioneer film showman in India. Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.8-9.

<sup>159</sup> Vicente Gesualdo, 'Prehistoria del Cine en Buenos Aires', *Lyra* 20, 1962, p.186-88. // *Papagallo*, no.4, 25 Jan 1903: the caption says Chamberlain is getting the laurels of the Transvaal; one can see the lantern projector clearly.

**Chapter 12**  
**THE BOXER UPRISING (1900)**  
**I. Filming with the Allied Armies**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Summary**

In the early Summer of 1900, as the Boer War was coming to what seemed to be its conclusion, a conflict was raging at the other end of the world in China. The 'Boxers' (so called by westerners because of their apparent partiality for martial arts) aimed to destroy everything deemed foreign in their land, and to this end were killing missionaries and Christians; they finally took control of Peking and besieged the foreign Legations in the city. This series of events became known as the 'Boxer Rebellion' or 'Boxer Uprising', and like most wars and conflicts it was a big news story, covered by journalists, war artists, photographers and film cameramen alike.<sup>1</sup>

The central event of the Uprising, the siege, began with little warning and ended only a few weeks later, so most cameramen only managed to cover the aftermath rather than the event itself, including expeditions which were mounted by an alliance of nations to root out the remnants of the Boxers. The several cameramen (from Britain, France, Japan and the United States) who filmed in the conflict zone tended to be connected to these military forces; especially so in the case of C. Fred Ackerman, who was attached to both the American and German forces. Only one of the cameramen, Joseph Rosenthal, managed to pursue a more independent line, and filmed scenes of Chinese daily life as well as of the foreign troops and the aftermath of war. But with this notable exception, most of the coverage of the crisis in moving pictures had a pro-western perspective.

### **Chinese resentment and its causes**

Though the Boxer Uprising was essentially an anti-Western movement, its causes were more complex than that. Drought and pressure on the food supply in northern China had led to the deaths of millions in the 1890s, and historians stress that this famine lay behind much of the unrest and the Uprising.<sup>2</sup> A journalist of the time noted that 'want and peace cannot dwell together', but he added that the people themselves sought other explanations for their misfortunes, principally the 'commercial encroachments' which were coming from the west, putting many traditional workers out of business.<sup>3</sup>

A turning point came with China's defeat by Japan in a war over Korea in 1894-5 which crystallized Chinese perceptions of their national humiliation at the hands of foreign powers (see **Box** at end of next chapter). The defeat also emboldened other powers to intervene further, and in the next few years Britain, France, Russia, Japan, and Germany all forced concessions from the enfeebled China to grant new trading privileges, harbours, railway rights and

areas for foreign settlements.<sup>4</sup> China in the 1890s, as one historian put it, ‘...was fast falling into the position of Turkey – a sick empire with jealous vultures waiting to divide the carcass’.<sup>5</sup> This encroachment by outside nations contributed to widespread resentment of foreigners.

To ordinary Chinese, the most immediate symbols of these invading western forces who were humiliating their nation were missionaries.<sup>6</sup> These foreign visitors created their own brand of provocations: they built tall and looming churches, and their followers were discouraged from taking part in traditional Chinese religious practices, thus sowing discord in communities. Attacks on missions occurred through the 1890s as the Boxers called for the ousting or killing of the foreigners, and the movement reached a crescendo in 1899 and 1900 (probably with the connivance of government officials) with attacks on Chinese Christians and missionaries, hundreds of whom were slaughtered.

### **The foreigners respond**

An international force was rapidly organised to protect foreigners and foreign interests, this being one of the first examples of nations (eight of them) uniting together for military action.<sup>7</sup> In mid June this force captured the coastal forts of Taku after a bombardment, and this action meant that the allies were now in open war against China herself, not just the Boxers.<sup>8</sup> Only days later, inland in Peking the Boxers took control of the city (I will use the spelling ‘Pekin’ throughout as used in the 1900 era. The modern transliteration is ‘Beijing’). They rapidly managed to surround and lay siege to the Legation quarter, the principal foreign-inhabited part of the capital. This became the most celebrated episode of the conflict, as hundreds of nationals of several countries were besieged in the Legation buildings, along with thousands of Chinese Christians. Over the next couple of months those trapped inside the walls fought off furious assaults by Boxers and the Chinese government forces.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile the allies were working their way inland. Firstly they stormed and captured the strategic town of Tientsin (sometimes spelled ‘Tien Tsin’ at this time, and these days called ‘Tianjin’) in mid-July, and then after a rapid advance further inland, on 14 August battled the Chinese forces in Peking, entering the city and relieving the Legation quarter.

In the succeeding months the allied forces, under Field Marshall Alfred von Waldersee, consolidated their hold on Peking and surrounding territory, executing numerous Boxers and conducting punitive expeditions through the country (many of which amounted to little more than plunder). The foreign powers also negotiated agreements for the future protection of foreigners and for a huge indemnity to be paid to themselves. After the brief uprising, China had been brought back under the heel of the outside world.

### **News and visual reporting**

Of all the wars in this 1900 era, the Boxer Uprising was the most international in terms of the number of countries’ forces which took part, and this attracted journalists from various nations to go to China. However, few managed to arrive in time, for events developed with great speed. Though the crisis had been building from early 1900, the more serious Boxer actions did not start till early June, and the major news story – the siege of the legations – began in

the middle of that month. Therefore there was not much advance warning of the main actions, and in an era when intercontinental travel took weeks rather than hours, some media reporters missed the siege, and arrived only for the aftermath, and certainly this was the case with the film cameramen.

Yet a number of reporters did manage to make it onto the scene by June, and in the case of some of the representatives of American papers this was because they were already covering the war in the nearby Philippines, and so had much less distance to travel. Oscar King Davis reporting for *Harper's Weekly* and Frederic Palmer of the *New York World* arrived in China in June, in time to see the fighting preceding the taking of Tientsin.<sup>10</sup> Sydney Adamson from *Leslie's Weekly*, arrived soon afterwards. In addition, at least another fifteen reporters were on the scene for some time during the insurrection and its aftermath, the best known of whom were Ernest Morrison for *The Times*, George Lynch for the *Daily Express* and *Sphere*, Andrew Paterson for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and Pierre Loti for the French press.<sup>11</sup> Some of these writers also drew pictures or took photographs, and there were some specialised artists present too, notably the talented Fred Whiting, working for *The Graphic*.<sup>12</sup> Several photographers – amateurs, professionals and soldiers – took pictures of the events. The soldier-photographers included Capt. C.F. O'Keefe of the Thirty-Sixth US Infantry, who was supplying *Leslie's* again, as he had during the Philippine war.<sup>13</sup> A certain C.A. Killey published seventy of his photographs after the siege, and these and many more survive in picture libraries.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear if Killey was professional or amateur, and a similar ambiguity applies to others who were at work during the Boxer events, including two Japanese photographers, though a third was certainly a professional.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the most significant and productive photographic enterprises of the war were by stereographic companies, including the Keystone View Company, the American Stereoscopic Company, and Underwood and Underwood, the latter principally through their celebrated photographer, James Ricalton. Ricalton's account of his work photographing in China before and during the Boxer events, *China through the Stereoscope*, is a classic and enthralling chronicle of both his work and of the situation in China at the time.<sup>16</sup> Ricalton witnessed the fighting in Tientsin on 13 July and took views of the action. William Darrah, an expert on stereographs, says these 'are among the most graphic war views published up to that time', and praises Ricalton's work.<sup>17</sup> Illustrated periodicals covered the Boxer crisis in detail. The *Black and White Budget* was one of a number of new periodicals which were exploiting the use of photography. Its China coverage took off with library photographs and illustrations of imagined scenes until the autumn, at which time actual photographs from China appeared on its pages.<sup>18</sup>

Only a little information about censorship has emerged from this conflict, though official control was undoubtedly imposed, because one correspondent, Oscar King Davis, commented on how the various armies differed in the severity of their controls. Of all the national militaries he gave top marks to the Japanese, who were, he noted, 'the most direct and least mysterious in their dealings with the correspondents'.<sup>19</sup>

## FILMS OF CHINA AND THE TROOPS

### Everyday scenes of China

When the Boxer Uprising hit the headlines, any films related to the crisis acquired a new interest and value. Such films included shots of the personalities or troops involved or views shot in China. I will begin with the latter. As John Barnes writes, 'so much interest in China had been stirred up by the Uprising that audiences seemed content just to view everyday scenes of this distant land'.<sup>20</sup> Some such films were already available, because before the Boxer Uprising, China had been recorded to a limited extent in moving pictures, in the form of Lumière views, street scenes and the like.

Some of the most detailed filming of China and the region to date, undertaken only months before the Boxer conflict erupted, was undertaken by the unlikeliest of cameramen: a British member of Parliament, Sir Ernest Hatch. Hatch had been elected to Parliament in 1895, and served some ten years as a Conservative MP for a Lancashire constituency.<sup>21</sup> He had a particular interest in foreign issues and travelled widely, and from 1899 to 1900 went on a tour of the Far East and Canada, and on this occasion took a cinematograph camera with him. According to one source, he was accompanied by 'a skilled operator' (cameraman) to do the actual filming, though other sources do not mention the operator, so Hatch may have managed himself.<sup>22</sup> Whoever actually turned the crank, Hatch returned to Britain by May of 1900 with about fifty films taken during the tour, including some twenty views shot in China, and the remainder from Japan and the Rocky Mountains. (He also visited Korea, but doesn't seem to have filmed there).<sup>23</sup>

Films taken in China included a street scene in Peking, a view from a train between Tientsin and Peking, craft on the river, women spinning, etc.<sup>24</sup> Some time after his return, Hatch gave an exhibition of his films to a fashionable audience.<sup>25</sup> But by this time the Boxer Uprising was hot news, and while Hatch's films showed nothing of the conflict, the hunger for any visual reference to the events in China meant that the films, as one trade journalist remarked, 'will command more than ordinary attention at the present moment'.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the films quickly found at least one distributor, Harrison and Co., who advertised them in the trade press in September under the heading, 'Genuine cinematograph films of China'. The following month they were being shown at several London music halls, and were said to be, 'wonderful' and 'in great demand'.<sup>27</sup> Lantern slides from Hatch's trip were also available at the time.<sup>28</sup>

Other companies distributed general shots of China. Shortly after the crisis, the Edison Catalogue was offering a scene in Legation Street, Shanghai, showing 'a number of Europeans and Americans being driven down the thoroughfare in native rickshaws and wheelbarrows'.<sup>29</sup> The company also distributed a more contentious view: *Street Scene in Peking*, described as: 'Scene taken on the ground in front of the Legation, showing British police

dispersing a crowd of unruly Chinamen'.<sup>30</sup> It is not clear if this was a genuine, arranged or faked shot.

### **Troops departing for the war**

While general shots of the site of the war were in demand, even more so were shots of the soldiers connected with the hostilities. One of the easiest kind of war-related films to shoot were troop departures, for these took place at a set time and place, and in the home country. In the case of the Boxer conflict, by the time the siege became news, many troops were already based in the Far East or were en route. But several units were dispatched from various of the allied countries [Fig. 1], offering opportunities for filming. In Britain the Wrench company advertised three films showing marines and sailors ('Bluejackets') boarding the transport 'Jelunga', and the ship then leaving Portsmouth bound for China.<sup>31</sup> Australia sent a naval expedition to the Boxer Uprising, and a film of the unit's departure was shot – and shown as late as 1902.<sup>32</sup>

In the USA, the Biograph company either shot afresh, or pulled from its vault, a number of films of the US forces who, from early July, were being sent to fight in China. These included a shot of the Ninth Infantry, which would be the first American regiment to be sent to China; the Fifteenth Infantry, who were filmed embarking a transport at New York; and a China-bound US Cavalry unit, armed anachronistically with swords.<sup>33</sup>

The most significant of all these departure films was shot in Germany, from where a large contingent of troops was sent, late in the day, partially in response to the killing of the German minister in China, Baron Klemens von Ketteler. The news of von Ketteler's murder by a Chinese soldier – in a Peking street in broad daylight, on 20 June – shocked the hot-headed German Kaiser in particular, who sent his State Secretary Bülow a telegram demanding that 'Peking must be razed to the ground'.<sup>34</sup> In fact, as well as wanting to punish the Chinese, there were more cynical motives behind the Kaiser sending the force, for he hoped to gain territory and also a slice of the reparations which the foreign powers would extract from China.<sup>35</sup> By July contingents of a German expeditionary force were being despatched. [Fig. 2] Late that month, as one ship-load set off for China from the port of Bremerhaven, it was filmed by the pioneer film cameraman, Guido Seeber. The film survives under the title *Ausfahrt der sächsischen China-Krieger zu Schiff aus Bremerhaven* (Seeber, 1900). Running some four minutes, and with a rather jerky panning shot, it shows some of the thousands of troops gathered to depart on their mission to China.<sup>36</sup>

The film is of particular interest because the event itself (or possibly an embarkation some days earlier) has become so notorious. This is not so much because of the troop departure itself, as for the speech which the Kaiser delivered on the occasion, 27 July 1900. In words which were to haunt him, Wilhelm reminded his men of the ferocity of the Huns under Attila, implying that his modern warriors should emulate their ferocity; he exhorted his men to take no prisoners, and to build such a fearsome reputation that no Chinaman would ever again dare to even squint at a German.<sup>37</sup>



In the event, the German troops in China were to be every bit as violent as the Kaiser might have envisaged. While all the allies took part in punitive expeditions after the siege, some of which were little more than plunder raids, the Germans under overall allied commander Field Marshall Alfred von Waldersee undertook far more, generally employing more violent methods.<sup>38</sup> Incidentally, a film of Waldersee himself was also released, which its distributor, Warwick introduced as follows:

‘Field Marshal Count von Waldersee courteously granted our request to cinematograph him as he left his hotel in Berlin previous to his departure for China to take command of the allied troops. A splendid portrait.’<sup>39</sup>

In addition to these kind of ‘departure for war’ views, as we have seen from the Sudan, ‘heroic returns’ of troops and commanders were also filmed to illustrate a conflict. However, for the Boxer conflict I have found only one such homecoming, this of German troops, shot by Messter’s company as the soldiers arrived back in Berlin.<sup>40</sup> Celebrity shots, of leaders connected with the crisis, were also few in number compared with the many films of heroic generals and admirals which were associated with the other conflicts of this period (though there were films of the commanders in the field, shot by Ackerman, as we shall see). Perhaps this relative lack of celebrity commanders on screen was because the western public’s horror at the enemy’s actions – the Boxers’ attacks on missionaries – outweighed the admiration for those leading what was in the public’s eyes little more than an international police action to punish the perpetrators.

## **CAMERAMEN WITH THE ALLIES**

In Jay Leyda’s account of cinema in China, he mentions several cameramen who filmed the Boxer Uprising and its aftermath.<sup>41</sup> But my research has identified others, and I now believe that there were at least half a dozen operators who shot scenes in China during or just after the main events. Leyda briefly covers Rosenthal, Holmes/Depue and Ackerman, but I have found that in addition to these British and American operators, there were at least two Japanese cameramen, a Frenchman, and possibly another Briton. As we shall see (in a pattern which had developed in war filming by this stage) most of these men were tied to the foreign military forces.

In this section I will look at the work of all the cameramen apart from Ackerman and Rosenthal, who I deal with in the following sections. Because they arrived too late to film the siege, most cameramen covered the aftermath rather than the event itself. They filmed shots of the troops involved, and general views of the country, and also filmed war damage and covered expeditions which were being mounted to root out the remnants of the Boxers. Sadly, most of this war-related and other footage has been lost, and in the process a rich record of a colonial presence in several parts of China has disappeared.

### **George Scott**

A certain George Scott is the most intriguing and most elusive of the camera operators. His name is mentioned in just one report in a trade journal that I have so far discovered, in the rare *Photographic Dealer* for August 1900. I will quote the report in full:

‘Mr. Geo. Scott, of Geo. Scott and Co., 10 York Buildings, Charing Cross, sailed on the 19th of last month [June or July?] for China in order to obtain animated and ordinary photographs of the present crisis there. He will include America in his tour and will doubtless obtain several interesting pictures. The first consignment of films is expected in about five weeks.’<sup>42</sup>

It is not known if Scott ever made this trip, nor if so, whether he took either still or animated pictures there, though, given that his name does not recur in connection with cinema that year in any source I have seen (Scott is not mentioned in Barnes’ volume) I suspect that this was merely a plan or aspiration which came to naught.

### **Tsunekichi and Komakichi**

We can be more certain of the identities of a couple of other cameramen, these being two Japanese operators. The Yoshizawa Company sent Shibata Tsunekichi and Fukaya Komakichi to China during the Uprising to make reportage films. The pair filmed the Japanese army’s Fifth Division as the soldiers and their horses embarked, and the cameramen then travelled out with this force on the 28 July. Apart from Scott, this would make the Japanese pair the first to film the war. In China itself, Tsunekichi and Komakichi accompanied the Japanese army, filming events surrounding the Uprising until the allied victory in Peking in August.<sup>43</sup> Possibly Tsunekichi and/or Komakichi were still there a year later (or came back again), for Japanese cameramen were seen on 20 August 1901 filming a celebration of the allied victory in the imperial palace grounds in Peking.<sup>44</sup>

Sadly, there seem to be no more details of their assignment, but it is worth stressing that this was a truly groundbreaking venture in the history of Japanese cinema. It was highly unusual for the Yoshizawa Company to make films at all, let alone mounting such an ambitious foreign filming venture as this, for most of the films that they handled hitherto had been mere imports. The film which resulted from this venture into China, *Grand Motion Picture on the Boxer Rebellion* (Hokushinjihen katsudo daishashin) was also a landmark in terms of genre. It is considered to be the first news film shot by a Japanese cameraman (it apparently reported the war in virtually the same style as newspapers of the time). The film remained a unique example of the news genre in Japanese cinema for some years, and none of the actuality films made between 1901 and 1902 exceeded *Grand Motion Picture* in scope. Furthermore, it was a major success with the public. First released on 18 October 1900 at the Kinki-kan venue in Tokyo, thereafter it was shown in many cities throughout Japan, and, along with other imported reportage films on the Uprising, was exhibited for several years afterwards.

### **Gaumont's 'Monsieur X.X.'**

The cameramen at the Boxer Uprising were typically based with the forces of the country which commissioned them to film. This was true for the Japanese operators we have mentioned, who travelled with the Japanese Fifth Division, and, as we shall see, Ackerman was commissioned by the Germans and Americans, and mainly travelled with these forces.<sup>45</sup> It was also true for an unnamed Gaumont cameraman, who mainly seems to have filmed French military personnel (the French were one of the smaller contingents: Fig. 3). Some of his films, maybe most, were made in 1901. Incidentally, the work of this man has scarcely been discussed in previous film historical works.

In Gaumont's catalogue of 1903, a list of films related to the Uprising, with descriptions, appears under the heading, 'China Expedition. Monsieur X.X.'s films'.<sup>46</sup> The films are introduced with the following statement (my translation from the French):

'At the same time as the first French units embarked, one of our cameras was entrusted to a distinguished cameraman, ['opérateur distingué'] who was given the job of filming any interesting events which might happen during the campaign. All the following scenes were taken at Tientsin, just as they happened, without any manipulation.'<sup>47</sup>

The latter claim, incidentally, is untrue, for at least one of the films, a 'brawl between Chinese coolies', must surely have been arranged for the camera. The views are listed as Gaumont catalogue numbers 511 to 524, and a couple of them are in two parts, making a total of 16 views. Of these, ten or so are related to the war in some way: being either views of named military persons, or images of the destruction caused by the war, or just troops passing camera. For example, *Le Quai de France à Tien-Tsin* includes troops from Italy, Germany and America.<sup>48</sup> And another title, *Casseurs de Pierre Chinois*, though seemingly a basic shot of Chinese labourers, has a military significance because an officer inspects the work, and in the background are ruins of houses, 'destroyed during the bombardment'. What's more, the catalogue notes that these labourers were at work in the new French concession area, helping to carve out a new bit of the French empire in China.

The films were clearly taken from the French point of view, as they mainly feature French property and personnel, military and otherwise, including a couple of views depicting the French overall commander in theatre, General Voyron. Scenes also included a ceremony of giving a Légion d'Honneur medal to a Monsieur Du Chaylard in the gardens of the French consulate, Tientsin.<sup>49</sup> This French emphasis corroborates Gaumont's claim (above) that this filming was indeed set in train by themselves (entrusting a camera to 'Monsieur X.X.'), rather than being, say, a buy-in of another company's footage.

The final result had technical flaws, for the catalogue notes of the films, 'By the end of the long trip and the stay in China, several films had become flecked, but these small blemishes don't detract from their great documentary value'. This statement also contains, I surmise, a small clue as to the

movements of the cameraman, for the phrase, 'by the end of the long trip and the stay in China' implies that after the filming, his stay in China was concluded, and he may have brought the films back to France with him.<sup>50</sup>

Elsewhere in the Gaumont catalogue, another series of fourteen films taken in China are listed, several of which are about the region of Yun-Nan and the viceroy of the main town, Yun-Nan-Sen, including views of military movements or personnel in the region. This province, in the far south west of the country bordering French Indo-China (today's Vietnam), was in the French zone of influence in China.<sup>51</sup> France had significant economic interests in Yun-nan, and by this time, after the victory over the Boxers, was probably using this opportunity of Chinese weakness to bolster its interests and control in the region.<sup>52</sup> All the listed films are credited to another anonymous operator, a 'Monsieur X.', though, as the previous cameraman was referred to as 'Monsieur X.X.', I suspect that they might have been one and the same man. Like some of the previously discussed films which depicted French officials in Tientsin, three of this group of fourteen views included the official French representative in the Yun-Nan region. He is shown meeting the viceroy of Yun-nan and seeing off a General Tien and his men.

A third group of films, 'Au Pays des Mandarins', is listed in another Gaumont catalogue of about the same year. [Fig. 4] I believe that is by this same cameraman, for two main reasons. Firstly, several of these films were also shot in the town/region of Yun-nan; one film showing the French viceroy.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, this series is credited to a cameraman described as 'a distinguished amateur' ('amateur distingué') which is a similar phrase as that used ('opérateur distingué') for the Tientsin films. Incidentally this 'Mandarins' cameraman is described by Gaumont as 'one of our clients ... occupying a high position in China...' One wonders if this man – who I suggest shot all these Gaumont films in China – could have been a member of France's diplomatic staff based in the country?<sup>54</sup>

In any case he was an industrious cameraman, as 'Au Pays des Mandarins' alone is a substantial body of work, consisting of some 50 views. The films mainly showed daily life and culture in China – 'lifting the veil on the real China', proclaimed the catalogue – and Gaumont organised the films into five thematic groups. One of the catalogue groups is 'Scènes Militaires et Officielles', and though not containing any scenes of the actual Boxer Uprising, this group includes views of manoeuvres by Chinese soldiers and views of officers, notably in Yun-nan. What makes it of especial military interest is that these Chinese soldiers were part of the allied forces – surprisingly, some Chinese did indeed fight against their own countrymen during and after the Boxer events.<sup>55</sup>

This Chinese allied force also features in a one-off news film which is listed in the catalogue immediately after the 'Mandarins' series, entitled *Retour à Yun-Nan-Sen du Général Licou*. The film showed the triumphal return of these Chinese troops after they had participated in an expedition against a rebel chief, Tchéou-Tama-Tou, and had captured the town of Linh-Gan-Fou. This would seem to have been one of the many punitive expeditions which the

foreign allies launched after the Boxer events, though one undertaken by their Chinese cohorts. Unusually the film is given a precise shooting date: 30 June 1903, so it was one of the later actions in the wake of the Uprising, and if shot by X.X. it was a later assignment.<sup>56</sup> Sadly, like so many films which recorded significant moments and personalities in colonial history, this film, and indeed the entire work of this Gaumont cameraman in China, seems to have completely disappeared.

### **Burton Holmes and Oscar Depue**

Famed travel lecturer Burton Holmes visited China with his cameraman Oscar Depue in 1901. They travelled from Russia to Korea [Fig. 5], and then to China, visiting Tongku (on the coast, on the opposite side of the river from Taku) and Tientsin, and reached Peking in August.<sup>57</sup>

An important reason for going to Peking at this time was to see and photograph the city in the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising, for this was a year after the famous siege of the foreign legations had ended, and military action by allied international forces was still ongoing. Depue related:

‘From Seoul we went to Peking [sic] where the Boxer Rebellion had just been subdued. We saw troops of all the allies that took part in the siege – they were still there and in other parts of China. It was an opportune time for our visit because we were allowed, through the aid of our own troops, to see and film things that might not have been available to us otherwise. For instance, a company of American troops from Indiana guarded the north half of the Emperor's Palace in the Forbidden City. Japanese troops were stationed at the south half.’<sup>58</sup>

Holmes later presented two lectures based on this tour of China, ‘The Edge of China’ and ‘Peking’, and in the published versions gives an account of their China trip. He makes much reference to the previous year's Boxer conflict, and it also found some reflection in what was filmed, in that, even though some of the films were scenes of daily life, such as street scenes and vendors, they might contain some visual reference to the war: thus, their film showing crowds at Peking's city gate, ‘Chien-men’, was war-related in that the gate had been wrecked during the Uprising. Disappointingly, Holmes' account contains frustratingly little about their filming activities, though the pages are illustrated with a few sections of the films – several strips of frames being reproduced.<sup>59</sup> [Fig. 7] As Depue mentioned, they visited the Forbidden City, and the section of Holmes' published lectures on this inner sanctum is the most impressive photographically in his account of the China visit.<sup>60</sup>

### **JOSEPH ROSENTHAL: A MORE INDEPENDENT VIEW**

Joseph Rosenthal was one of the first cameramen to film in China, only beaten to the conflict zone by the Japanese pair.<sup>61</sup> Even though he was early on the scene, I leave discussing his work to this point because I feel he embodies a rather different filmmaking ethos than the other Boxer Uprising cameramen, in that he was not so firmly attached to (and certainly not

embedded with) the foreign military forces, and was generally more independent.

Rosenthal had returned to London in June 1900 after having filmed the war in South Africa.<sup>62</sup> By this time the Boxer Uprising was already in the headlines, and Rosenthal departed at the beginning of August to cover the conflict for the Warwick Trading Company. Film historians have hitherto not recorded that Rosenthal may have worked with a colleague from Warwick, for the company reported in early August that Rosenthal:

‘... is now on his way to China, where he will join our other photographer, Mr Seymour, who left India for China on June 22d last. These two gentlemen will form our War Staff in China, and we hope to receive the first consignment of Genuine Chinese War Film Negatives [in] the latter part of September.’<sup>63</sup>

Also at the start of August an unnamed daily newspaper was quoted as saying that ‘two well-known photographers’ were on their way to ‘biograph’ the conflict in China, which probably referred to Rosenthal and Seymour.<sup>64</sup> There is no further reference to the mysterious Seymour (who is not listed in any history of early cinema), though Warwick did later use the plural in referring to ‘our photographers’ who had shot the company’s views in China, so that might suggest that both men had indeed been filming together.<sup>65</sup>

### **Chinese views**

Though Rosenthal may have arrived before most of the other cameramen and photographers, by the time he was at the scene most of the action of the main conflict was over. But he had to film something to satisfy the audiences back home, and so Rosenthal set about recording general scenes in China, street views and the like, capturing what military activity he could, filming initially in Shanghai, Tientsin, and Taku. Then at the end of October he went on to Peking, and also at some point filmed in Hong Kong, Canton and Port Arthur.<sup>66</sup> He was back in Shanghai at the end of November.<sup>67</sup>

Few personal details of his trip survive, though his friend Will Day recorded that his pharmaceutical training (before he was a cameraman) had come in handy, for ‘... on one occasion owing to his knowledge of Medical matters, [Rosenthal] was sent down on a sailing junk with two American soldiers dying from dysentery [sic]...’<sup>68</sup> Incidentally, while Rosenthal’s sojourn in China overlapped with that of Ackerman (as we shall see), there is no record of their ever having met.

The first batch of Rosenthal’s films was advertised by the Warwick Trading Company in early November.<sup>69</sup> Altogether some forty China films shot by Rosenthal were released, the largest number of which were made in Shanghai, and others were shot in Tientsin and Peking.<sup>70</sup> Rosenthal was credited by name for some of these, an indication of his high status within Warwick, and the films’ uniqueness and his courage were trumpeted by the company:

‘Genuine Chinese films... The following series are the only animated pictures taken in China since the trouble began, and were secured at great expense and much risk to our photographers.’<sup>71</sup>

As far as is known, only one of these views survives, *Nankin Road, Shanghai*, which is described in the Warwick catalogue as follows.

‘This is an excellent street scene, owing to the varied character of the vehicles, and the cosmopolitan character of the pedestrians. Here are shown rickshaws, hansoms, a Chinese fourwheeler with a native driver and his pigtail, a European lady on a bicycle, sedan chairs, a detachment of Sikhs, Palanquins and German officers.’<sup>72</sup>

The detachment of Sikhs and the German officers mentioned are significant, for at the time street scenes like this might be more saleable if they showed any military personnel, or other reminder of the war. Such ‘reminders’ would include indications of the destructive effects of the conflict, and there was quite a lot of this to see and be filmed: indeed, Rosenthal recalled of his visit to China, ‘I saw the whole place smashed up’.<sup>73</sup> An example of one of his films depicting such war damage is *The Streets and Ruins of Teintsin* [sic] [5896a]. Other films by Rosenthal with a military content included: *The Sikhs’ Camp at Shanghai* [5875b], *Foreign Warships Off the Bund at Shanghai* [5889b], *American Transport Entering Peking* [5921a], and *H.M.S. "Terrible" and Other Battleships in Chinese Waters* [6002b].

He made one especially significant military-related film, when on 17 October he filmed the entry into Peking [Fig. 6] by the new allied commander, Count Von Waldersee (who’d arrived in China, at Taku, three weeks earlier, on 25 September).<sup>74</sup> The Warwick catalogue gives a vivid description:

‘This view was photographed outside the inner wall enclosing the Sacred City, Peking, showing the gateway piercing the wall, topped by imposing looking guard houses and forts. The road leading to the gate is flanked by long lines of troops presenting arms as Count Von Waldersee and staff pass through the gate. The progress of the Field Marshal can easily be followed by watching the huge German flag which is seen fluttering in the breeze, and borne along by the mounted escort. The Diplomatic quarter of Peking, where a thousand foreigners were besieged, is close to this scene. An imposing film of an historic event.’

Rosenthal shot a few such war-related scenes, but the military subject matter in his films is limited. I estimate that little more than a third of his China films comprise military-related material, even though there were still a lot of allied troops around, and Rosenthal could presumably have filmed more of them had he wished. So one feels that he might consciously have decided to stress the Chinese rather than the foreign aspects of what he saw in China. Many of his films are travelogue-type views, with no bearing on the war at all. For example, *Four Chinese Belles Smoking* [5929a] depicted four Chinese women ‘seated at the edge of the woods, smoking cigarettes’, while *Get Your Hair Cut*

*in China* [5931] showed a Chinese barber at work, and in addition there were several views of streets and everyday life, such as *Chinese Market and Canal at Shanghai* or *Chinatown Bazaar, Hong Kong* or *Chinese Cotton Weavers at Work*.<sup>75</sup>

Although unrelated to the war, such general scenes could still be difficult and sometimes hazardous to shoot. Many Chinese people simply didn't want to be filmed, especially one would imagine by a foreigner when their country had just been defeated by foreign powers. The photographer James Ricalton had had a similar problem while taking stereographs some months earlier, and was obliged to travel with armed guards to fight off the hostile crowds which gathered while he was photographing.<sup>76</sup> Rosenthal too had to have a police escort to protect him, notably when he filmed in one of the rough parts of Shanghai. The catalogue notes:

'The police generally patrol this section in squads, not trusting themselves alone and the particular squad shown in this picture formed the body-guard of our photographer.'

The situation, as briefly described in the catalogue, sounds quite menacing, for as Rosenthal was filming a general view of the area, hundreds of people passed by, 'all eyeing the camera operated by the "foreign devil" with suspicion'. It was much the same in the occupied city of Tientsin, and Rosenthal took one view in which the Chinese passers by, 'show their dislike of the "Foreign Devil" who is photographing them by casting vicious looks in the direction of our artist'.<sup>77</sup> The fact that he went through this ordeal testifies to Rosenthal's commitment to capturing the real China on film. Filming allied troops might have been a much easier and safer proposition, but it was not an option that he always chose.

### **Port Arthur**

Another example of how Rosenthal would take risks to capture the images that he sought, comes in two films he made of Port Arthur (today called Lüshun). This strategic, fortified port had been fought over in the 1890s, and was to be the focal point of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, when the Japanese laid siege and eventually wrested it from the Russians. (Rosenthal was to return to Port Arthur to film that war.) It lies across the Bo Hai part of the Yellow Sea from Tientsin, so physically it would have been easy enough for Rosenthal to reach by sea during this 1900 assignment, but photographing the port had been banned by the Russians. Nevertheless Rosenthal managed to do it, despite the risks, though it is not clear how: possibly he filmed from a passing ship on his way out of China, or more likely – for the catalogue implies that it was taken from near the docks – from a smaller vessel which he chartered for the job. The catalogue states of one of his two films of this important site:

'*The Russian Stronghold in the Far East* [5892b]: Port Arthur, the Key to the Situation in North China, was for the first time successfully cinematographed by us, and that not at slight risk to our photographer, as the Russian authorities or passing steamer captains would not allow



any one to level a camera and carry away a photograph of this port. We managed it just the same. Port Arthur was captured by the Japanese during the China-Japan War, but wrested from them by the Russians in 1898, since which time it has been solely occupied by the latter. This panoramic view includes the arsenal, store-houses, barracks and coast along this fortified settlement, while much shipping is eminent alongside the docks and landing stage.<sup>78</sup>

### **Technique and style**

Rosenthal was not only enterprising in what he filmed, but in how he did it technically. For this assignment in China he had brought with him Warwick's new panoramic tripod-head, or 'revolving tripod' as they called it. This device offered significant benefits for actuality filmmakers, for by panning, a cameraman could depict larger areas than in a static shot, and could also impart some extra movement to the image.<sup>79</sup> As John Barnes notes, the technique was 'used to good effect by Rosenthal in presenting these exotic views of the Far East'.<sup>80</sup> Rosenthal certainly seems to have become very partial to panning, and many of his Chinese views were these kind of shots. Indeed, on some pages of the catalogue listing his China films, most of the titles were described as 'circular panoramic view' or similar wording. The technique was used in, for example, *Circular Panorama of Hong Kong Harbour* and in *Curious Natives on Shanghai's Streets*, to show a wide area of the harbour or street.<sup>81</sup> Altogether, based on catalogue descriptions, I calculate that some fourteen of Rosenthal's forty-plus China films – i.e. about a third – consisted of panning shots, and several other of his films were taken from moving vessels/vehicles. Rosenthal had certainly become convinced of the value of a moving camera.

Rosenthal stayed in China until the end of the year, at which point he embarked for the Philippines where he would film aspects of the war in that country.<sup>82</sup> If one were to summarise his work in China, one might conclude that, despite his mission being ostensibly to record the successful quelling of the Boxers, he managed to film relatively few military subjects (even though thousands of troops were still there and military activity was ongoing). But one might also conclude, that of all the actuality cameramen filming in China at the time, Rosenthal produced the most positive view of the country. He was willing to face the anti-western crowds to get shots of ordinary people in the streets, or people going about their work, and he had a sufficiently positive view of the Chinese people to record simple human vignettes, such as the girls smoking. He used panning movements to show his audience more of the Asian locale. Furthermore, one might argue that this concentration on filming *general* scenes rather than concentrating on the current military activity, was not only 'politically correct', but economically intelligent, for Rosenthal was actually producing material which would have a longer shelf life for Warwick.<sup>83</sup> While the war would be old news by the following year, street scenes of China could still be offered for sale for a long time hence. Perhaps indeed, Rosenthal had received instructions from Warwick to bias his work toward taking general views, to help generate 'back catalogue' product which could be offered for many years to come?

Uniquely among the cameramen in China at the time of the Boxer events, Rosenthal seems to have maintained some distance from the allied military forces: he filmed, for example, in Port Arthur without getting permission, and while he did film some military events, foreign warships and the like, these scenes did not dominate his work. One feels with Rosenthal's work that he actually liked being in China and the east, and that he had no special interest in filming the foreign troops whose aim was to bring China to heel. In this respect he was utterly unlike other cameramen who were working so closely with their armed forces, such as 'Monsieur X.X.', and most notably C. Fred Ackerman. Ackerman is the subject of our next, and main, section.

## **EMBEDDED AGAIN: C. FRED ACKERMAN**

As we have seen, several of the cameramen who filmed in China in the wake of the Boxer Uprising were working with the armed forces of their respective countries. But none was more closely associated with the military than Biograph company cameraman, C. Fred Ackerman. In the Philippines Ackerman had been based within, and had filmed, US army units, and it is difficult to see how any cameraman could be more closely tied to the military. Yet Ackerman managed it for his next assignment, for in China he was working for not one, but two western armies, those of the USA and Germany. His China assignment represents the acme of a war cameraman's cosy relations with the armed forces.

Filming the allied armed forces really was the central aim and main outcome of his time in China. A quick glance at the frame fragments surviving from his Chinese films shows film after film of troop reviews, soldiers simulating charges, war damaged buildings, and lines of infantry filing through Chinese streets. In terms of filming the military, therefore, the mission was a success. However, aesthetically the result was less impressive than his work in the Philippines, for his moving images in China are more staid and less varied in character (apart from in length – see Appendix on Ackerman). I will discuss this difference below.

One of the factors which make Ackerman worthy of study in detail is that so many sources survive for his work: more than for any other cameraman who covered these two wars in the east. Not only do we have Biograph company documentation and surviving film prints, but there is also information from official American military records, as well as some of his letters.<sup>84</sup> Using all these sources I have put together the following account of his work covering the war in China.

### **Working for the Kaiser**

After his Philippines assignment for the American Biograph company, by May 1900 Ackerman returned to America, and was soon given the task of covering another foreign conflict.<sup>85</sup> It was reported in some sources that he was authorised in the first week of July to go to China by the US Government. They might have hoped for an immediate departure, but something delayed

matters, and in the event he didn't depart until nearly two months later, for reasons I discuss below.<sup>86</sup>

Historians have assumed until recently that Ackerman went to film in China at the behest of the American Biograph company, but I have found information which suggests that he was working equally for the Germans. That there was direct official German involvement in the enterprise at the highest level is confirmed by the manager of the Deutsche Mutoskop- und Biograph-Gesellschaft (the German Biograph company, hereafter DMBG) in a letter to the British branch of the company.<sup>87</sup> The DMBG claimed that Emperor Wilhelm himself, the Kaiser, had been in touch with them to encourage the filming of the war in China, and that as a result they had 'obtained the Emperor's co-operation in sending out one of their representatives to China'.<sup>88</sup> The DMBG noted that this operator would be 'directly attached' to the military in a 'semi-official' capacity – which sounds very much like the embedded arrangement that Ackerman had experienced in the Philippines with US forces. This arrangement would mean, according to DMBG, that the army 'would undertake the transport of our apparatus, &c., the only expenses being the personal expenditure of our representative and the films'.

Was this operator to be Ackerman, or was it another man?<sup>89</sup> All the evidence points to Ackerman. One source stated that 'Mr. Ackerman will be the personal representative of Emperor William of Germany, and will also be in China under the authority of the English, French, and United States war departments'.<sup>90</sup> Another author noted that thanks to Biograph's influence with Emperor William, Ackerman was to be 'directly under the protecting aegis of Count von Waldersee' – meaning Field Marshall Alfred von Waldersee, the supreme commander of the international forces in China.<sup>91</sup> Ackerman's letters home from the front, which I describe below, confirm that he was in direct contact in the field with German as well as American military commanders.

Ackerman was therefore working for companies and governments of two nations, and I surmise that the delay in his departure from July to early September may have been due to negotiations between the different national branches of Biograph and with the governments (possibly to agree on Ackerman as a joint representative).<sup>92</sup> If Ackerman had actually left in early July, as per the original plan – and which is when the American force commanded by Gen. Ada R. Chaffee departed for their voyage to Taku, China – he would have been on hand as the main assaults on the besieged Legations took place. As it was he only finally departed on 1 September, after the Allied entry to Peking and relief of the Legations.

However this delay might not have bothered his German sponsors greatly, for von Waldersee (the new overall head of the allied force) and his German troops only disembarked in China on 25 September, this being soon after the delayed Ackerman must have arrived. Perhaps this tells us that the German Biograph company had a significant influence on Ackerman's itinerary, for probably their priority was for him to record von Waldersee's role. Certainly, during Ackerman's stay in China, German troops featured in a good number of his films – in fact they appear in at least ten titles, of which Waldersee

himself featured in half a dozen.<sup>93</sup> The German press got to hear of this project to film the quelling of the Uprising, and an amusing multi-image cartoon appeared in a popular satirical journal, showing a cameraman (i.e. Ackerman) trying to film von Waldersee amid exploding artillery shells, and then stage-managing the troops for his camera as if he were making an epic feature film.<sup>94</sup> [Fig. 13]

Significantly, a German publication provides one of the best sources of information for Ackerman's work in the east: the house organ of a theatre in Hamburg where the DMBG screened Biograph films. This reproduced extracts of Ackerman's letters written to Biograph from China.<sup>95</sup> These were presumably addressed to the American branch and probably in English originally (though I have yet to find them reproduced anywhere in English). The introduction to the extracts describes Ackerman, albeit unnamed, as 'the chief cameraman of the Deutschen Mutoskop- und Biograph Gesellschaft', who has been based in China 'with the high command of the German East Asian expedition-Corps'. The phrase 'with the high command' is a slight exaggeration, as he wasn't actually based with von Waldersee, but the letters do confirm that Ackerman enjoyed cordial relations with the supreme commander (as we shall see).

#### **Authorised by the US President**

As well as the official German involvement, the American government's approval of Biograph's filming plans is confirmed in correspondence which I have discovered in the US National Archives. But this happened at a late stage, not the early July dates which were mentioned in some press reports. On 16 August, Biograph's vice president, Harry Marvin, wrote to the Secretary of War, Elihu Root, to seek permission for the enterprise. [Fig. 8] He requested that Ackerman be authorised to travel on a transport ship leaving San Francisco on or about 1 September, 'in order that he may obtain for us Biograph pictures of military Operations in China'. The *quid pro quo* was the same as for Biograph's arrangement to film the Philippine campaign, that is:

'In consideration for this service we propose to furnish the War Department with a series of interesting Mutoscope reels, showing scenes illustrating the campaign, for exhibition in the Mutoscope now in the War Department.'<sup>96</sup>

It seems that this application went all the way to the top for authorisation, to President McKinley himself. This top level authorisation had apparently not been sought for Ackerman's filming in the Philippines, and this difference perhaps reflects the sensitive international implications and alliances involved in the Boxer Uprising. The President must have approved, for a week later his assistant wrote to the Adjutant General, H.C. Corbin, asking him 'to have the permit granted at the very earliest moment'.<sup>97</sup> The very same day Corbin followed the President's directive and wrote a memorandum to the Quartermaster General, directing that transportation be provided for Ackerman from San Francisco to China, 'with reasonable allowance of baggage', to allow him to film the US army in the field.<sup>98</sup> As in the Philippines, Ackerman was also working for *Leslie's Weekly*, and, to introduce its

correspondent to readers, the magazine published an article about him in September, noting that,

‘Mr. Ackerman's chief business in life is studying warfare for the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, of New York, that certain incidents of the campaigns may be handed down to posterity in living representations.’

The article added that,

‘He will also be attached to the staff of *Leslie's Weekly* in China, and will contribute letters illustrated by photographs.... Mr. Ackerman will go to the front immediately upon his arrival in China, and will remain there until the campaign ends.’<sup>99</sup>

An accompanying photograph showed the correspondent on the deck of the departing ship, looking dapper in a white suit. [Fig. 9] He was still only twenty-six years old. Despite the German connection, and his continuing contacts with von Waldersee, Ackerman seems to have worked more closely with American units than German. Indeed, for much of his time in China, he was ‘embedded’ with the Sixth Cavalry under Lieut.-Col. Theo. J. Wint.<sup>100</sup>

Assuming Ackerman left San Francisco on 1 September 1900, he could have arrived in China about three weeks later. About the beginning of October there were over a dozen press men hanging around von Waldersee's headquarters, including, the commander said, ‘some with kinematographs’ – presumably meaning Ackerman, and perhaps other cameramen.<sup>101</sup> Thanks to his translated letters in the Hamburg periodical, I have managed to trace Ackerman's itinerary, which I detail below. To sum this up briefly: he seems initially to have been based in Tientsin, in early October. Then he went with the international force to Peking, which he reached by 22 October. Ackerman was back in Tientsin by 7 November, and after that he filmed in Shanghai.

### **A difficult assignment**

It soon becomes clear from his letters that this was not an easy assignment in terms of living and working conditions. The town of Tientsin where Ackerman made his first base, had been the site of a battle a few months earlier, and much of the town was still scarcely habitable. In a letter dated 12 October Ackerman noted his hardships:

‘Ever since I've been in China, with the exception of one night, I haven't taken off my clothes; I don't have a bed, and we sleep on the ground in tents. The days are marvellously beautiful, the nights bitterly cold.’<sup>102</sup>

As in the Philippines, Ackerman was struggling with the large Biograph camera and associated equipment, and noted that, ‘It is very difficult for me to find ways to transport my photographic apparatus, and I have to deal with many frustrations.’ However, he still managed to film a fair number of scenes in the town, though a formidable problem remained, viz how then to get the exposed film out of China and safely back to Biograph's headquarters. On 9

October Ackerman wrote of his concerns:

'I don't know what problems I'll have in despatching my films back: by 10 December the river will freeze over, and then there's no point even thinking that they will leave China before March. So without fail I must try to despatch the films earlier, otherwise they will have to winter here.'

But even if transport became available, the negatives were vulnerable, especially as he was presumably not developing them on site, so they must not be opened or exposed to light in transit back to Biograph's offices. A few days later (16 October) he wrote to his colleagues at the company about these concerns:

'What bothers me most here are the wretched prospects for despatch: I am worried about entrusting my fragile films to the local forms of transport. Probably I will have to send them by a special messenger to Shanghai or Nagasaki, or will carry them myself when I depart from Peking, since the films would certainly be lost if I handed them over to a local company. I will try to do my best in this matter.'

He must have found a solution, for the Tientsin films and his films shot in other locations were indeed received by Biograph, between mid January and early February 1901 (then processed and released); though perhaps he had ended up taking them back to the US himself.

### **Filming in war-torn Tientsin**

Ackerman's Tientsin films, shot either at this point or after the Peking trip, gave a good account of the military situation in the town. Some views showed the effect of the earlier bombardment, such as *Ruins of Tien-Tsin*. This was shot from the river, as were other films: a view entitled simply *Tien-Tsin* was taken from this point of view, from a launch near the French bridge; the reason for filming this being, as the catalogue stated, 'Very severe fighting occurred at this point'. *Street Scene Taku Road* (in three takes), gave a general view of the town under military occupation.

Ackerman also managed to record German, British, and Japanese troops who were stationed in Tientsin. Two films show German soldiers being presented with battle flags from Emperor Wilhelm, and several surviving films show formal reviews of troops, some of them before Von Waldersee, such as *Von Waldersee Reviewing Cossacks* [1734]. This film is doubly interesting in that Ackerman himself appears in the shot, in the foreground, as if determined to show himself in the same frame as the supreme commander.

On the same area of ground, Ackerman set up some rather more action-filled scenes, and three views showed his hosts the Sixth Cavalry: skirmishing, in a 'wild charge', and then Colonel Wint with the unit's colours [1775, 1776, 1777]. Some of these kind of films were described in Biograph's *Picture catalogue* as if they were scenes of real action, such as *Bombay Cavalry* [1753]: this unit was said to be depicted, 'in their dashing advance with the allied forces upon Peking', but in all probability this scene too was filmed on the parade ground.<sup>103</sup>

Ackerman naturally wanted to get nearer to where actual military action was taking place, and so was keeping abreast of likely developments with the commanders. An operation commanded by British Brig-Gen. Lorne Campbell seemed to be in the offing, and Ackerman noted on the 9 October that, 'I hear from the staff of General Campbell the news that a fight with the Boxers is in prospect, and I hope I will have the opportunity to make a record.' But Ackerman adds that the General's staff wouldn't discuss where they thought such an engagement would take place. In fact within a few days General Campbell co-commanded a punitive expedition to capture a former Boxer stronghold, Paoting-fu, though Ackerman didn't go along.<sup>104</sup> He did, however, film the General with his British Royal Light Artillery as they departed, resulting in a view which the Biograph catalogue described as, 'An unusually fine picture photographically'.<sup>105</sup> Possibly the reason that Ackerman didn't go with Campbell was that a general advance on Peking was about to take place, and, rather than go with Campbell's minor mission, he chose rather to go with the main group – sensibly so, as he had not yet been to the capital.

Ackerman expected to be able to take some shots during the planned journey to Peking, noting in a letter on 12 October that, 'If nothing happens to the camera I'll have an opportunity for some great filming.' He had some reason for hope, for by this time his relationship with the German military was becoming closer, and he added on the same day: 'Count Waldersee shows great interest in the records I propose to take, and I am assured of special support and protection in Peking'. A few days later (16 October) he was even more full of anticipation that his patron would help him:

'I have high expectations of my stay in Peking, because each day my relationship with Count Waldersee becomes a little warmer, and doubtless I will be the first photographer to enter within the walls of the "Forbidden City", because Count Waldersee will help endorse my presence there.'

But as he wrote these words, the weather was taking a turn for the worse, and Ackerman learned that he would probably not be able to film during the trip to Peking, which was going to be difficult and something of a forced march.<sup>106</sup>

### **To Peking**

The journey proved arduous indeed. Departing about 19 October, Ackerman travelled on horseback with Colonel Wint's cavalry, and the route from Tientsin took four days, the column marching up to 30 miles a day.<sup>107</sup> During the journey the weather was bad, with pouring rain, which soon turned to hail and finally snow, and, as Ackerman wrote, 'our clothing literally froze to our bodies'. He added, 'I felt so bad after this effort that I could hardly keep myself in the saddle'. Arriving exhausted in Peking he immediately went to sleep in the first place he found, even though this meant lying on the cold ground (though he adds that even the commanders were no better off in this respect than he). 'Finally in Peking!' he exclaimed on 23 October, 'I am glad that the journey is behind me; four solid days on horseback is really no pleasure.'

But despite his exhaustion, Ackerman kept thinking of the job in hand, noting that, ‘...on the evening of our arrival in Peking I was informed by various commanders of the regiments about some expected engagements, and I hope that I’ll be in luck, and can film some of these’.<sup>108</sup> This, along with the earlier reference to his discussion with Campbell, shows that Ackerman was doing here just what he had done in the Philippines: talking with commanders about forthcoming military action, and planning if and how he could film the expected events. He was certainly a proactive and industrious filmmaker. A few days later (29 October) he wrote to Biograph that he had, ‘...worked efficiently here in the first days, and hope the results will be satisfying’.

Ackerman stayed in Peking for ten days or so (before returning to Tientsin) and ended up filming quite a variety of scenes in the capital. He filmed some general views: a market in the Japanese quarter, and an American army transport mule train. Two shots were taken in front of the ruined legations: *The Evacuation of Peking* [1788] depicted the Fourteenth Infantry (which had led the assault on Peking) marching past, Col. Doggett commanding, while *General Chaffee in Peking* [1787], with the same framing, showed the overall American commander with other VIPs at the head of the Sixth Cavalry. Another famous landmark, the Gate of the Temple of Agriculture was filmed with the Ninth Infantry marching through.<sup>109</sup>

As in Tientsin, several of the films were taken at a parade ground, including Russian Cossacks and Bengal Lancers (British colonial troops). Von Waldersee was seen in some of these films, which suggests that Ackerman was still enjoying good relations with the supreme commander. And, as he had hoped, Ackerman did indeed manage to film in the Forbidden City, perhaps with von Waldersee’s say-so, though other cameramen and photographers also shot in the City, so it’s not clear if Ackerman was given any special treatment. The two views which he shot there are however, notable technically, for both were described in the catalogue as ‘panoramic views’, which shows that he was persevering with the panning technique that he had executed quite competently in the Philippines (and as we have noted in the previous section, Rosenthal was also doing pan shots in China at this time). Two groups of films shot by Ackerman in Peking demand special discussion, so we shall look at these separately.

### **Li Hung Chang**

The noted Chinese statesman Li Hung Chang was in Peking at this time, and Ackerman managed to arrange a meeting, and took two films of him in his ‘yamen’ (premises of a public official). Ackerman’s filming with Li was likely to be popular with his masters at Biograph, as the company made something of a speciality of ‘celebrity’ films.<sup>110</sup> It was also a prescient move, for this turned out to be the year of the statesman’s death. Ackerman records in his letters that the filming took place on the morning of the 29 October, and he grandiloquently describes his own actions in arranging to make these valuable films as ‘yet another triumph’.<sup>111</sup> While one must credit his initiative in arranging the scenes, this boastfulness is excessive, and is also evident in the films themselves, for Ackerman appears in both – as he had done with von Waldersee at one of the troop reviews – in a manner which suggests more



than a little desire to make a name for himself: the correspondent who met the statesman, as it were.<sup>112</sup>

But if Ackerman was self-promoting, so was the company for which he worked: Biograph itself probably proposed the action which one sees performed in one of the films, as it is effectively a promotion for the company's mutoscope viewers. The film survives as *Li Hung Chang and Suite: Presentation of Parlor Mutoscope*: The single shot shows Li (very tall) and his mandarin colleagues walking toward the table-top mutoscope machine which has been placed frame left. He shakes hands with Ackerman, who ushers him further forward and has a Chinese colleague bring the mutoscope nearer. The film ends as Li looks at the mutoscope with interest.<sup>113</sup> Frames of these films were later published in magazines. [Fig. 10 and 11] Ackerman later related this episode of his visit to Li Hung Chang and the mutoscope business in some detail:

'We had gathered in the courtyard of his yamen when Li Hung Chang was announced. The curtains of his rooms were rolled, and, with faltering steps and supported by two attendants, he came out into the sun. The little instrument was on a red lacquer table of quaint and exquisite workmanship, and he eyed it curiously. When asked to peer into the lenses he did not hesitate.

One of his attendants turned the handle of the machine, and he watched intently. For a few seconds not a muscle of his face stirred. Then he looked up and spoke quickly to his interpreter.

"They walk ! They walk!" he exclaimed. The smile that overspread his face and the handshake he gave me indicated his appreciation plainer than words. If he had been a child he could not have been more pleased.

After spending fifteen minutes with his new toy – and he would not be disturbed – he took me to the red room and invited me to sit down. I told him how well he was regarded by the people of America, and the world for that matter, and he arose and again shook my hand.<sup>114</sup>

In his letter to Biograph, written directly after the filming, Ackerman adds a further detail or two about the reaction to his gift:

'You should have seen the radiant smile and the tears coursing down the cheeks of the statesman when the apparatus was presented. He behaved like a child given a new toy. With him were his mandarins who set up the apparatus, and after Li had seen it, several of them tried to get a view of the miraculous device. It was extremely amusing.' (29 October)

Ackerman doesn't mention it, but the reel of moving pictures on this mutoscope was a shot of Li himself, filmed by Biograph some years earlier as he viewed Grant's tomb in New York during an official visit to the United States. Ackerman's film was therefore an extraordinary example of media self-reference. It was later described as the 'first moving picture exhibition in

China', which it was not, though it was probably the first time ever that anyone was filmed as they watched a film.<sup>115</sup>

One curious addition to this story is that Li had apparently already received a mutoscope viewer from Biograph. In early October 1896 it was reported that a few weeks after he was filmed, the films were exhibited to him in person, including a scene of he and his retinue passing along Broadway, and, the article adds: 'His celestial highness was greatly pleased with the reproduction of his procession and he was doubly delighted when Mr. Marvin presented him with one of the instruments.' (i.e. a mutoscope viewer).<sup>116</sup> So the mutoscope viewer that Ackerman gave him in 1900 in China was the second one that Li had received from the company. (Which suggests that AMB's publicity system was hard at work).

As I mentioned earlier, Ackerman recorded two films of Li Hung Chang on this occasion. The other, which I haven't seen, *Li Hung Chang, High Priest and Mandarins*, shows a prior moment, as Li with his mandarins meets Ackerman, and walks across the courtyard.<sup>117</sup> In both films the frame is static, so, because Ackerman was himself appearing in these scenes, he would have framed up and turned on the camera, and then himself ensured all action was within the camera's field.

### ***Assault on the South Gate and other arranged views***

As we have seen in the Philippine War chapter, rather than merely filming action as it happened, Ackerman quite often artificially 'arranged' scenes of actions with troops, in order to make his films more lively and to depict more specific incidents. Here in China he did the same, though to a lesser extent, in reconstructing military actions which had taken place earlier. He had arrived in Peking in October, only a couple of months after the siege of the Legations was lifted, and so a number of the international forces which had seen action were still in China and available to 'perform'.

The Japanese made up the largest contingent of forces, and Ackerman made one arranged/reconstructed film with these troops, *Japanese Infantry* [1750]. This was described in the Biograph catalogue as, 'Japanese Infantry in an assault upon a Chinese mud wall fortification during the siege of Peking', employing the familiar ambiguity of language to imply that the picture depicted the actual event, rather than being merely a reconstruction.

Ackerman made several reconstructed films with American troops, including three films with a unit of the Fifth US Artillery, Light Battery "F" [1736, 1737, 1738]. This unit had taken part in the celebrated American assault on the South Gate of Peking, which Ackerman would also reconstruct (see below). In the process its leader, a Captain Reilly had been killed, and his heroic death bestowed instant celebrity status on his unit, all the more reason for Ackerman to record them in action. His films showed the battery with its carriage-mounted gun, limbering, charging and firing – apparently acting out their original actions during the assault on Peking. One film is entitled, *Reilly's Battery, Bombardment of Peking* and another, *Charge of Reilly's Battery*. The latter is further described as 'Furious charge of Capt. Reilly's Light Battery "F",

5th Artillery, to take position for the bombardment of the gates of the "Imperial City" of Peking'. All this sets up an expectation that these films will show authentic battle action, or at least a good imitation of it.

However, the films themselves offer little in the way of authenticity, in that the shots were not filmed near any recognisable landmarks in Peking, most notably not at the gate which had been the principal target of this attack. Instead, they were filmed on an area of rather featureless open ground, apparently the same area where Ackerman filmed the previously mentioned reviews of troops, possibly nowhere near the Peking walls. What's more, the actions filmed were generic procedures for an artillery unit, with nothing in the scenes themselves to give a strong connection with the Peking assault, apart from that it is the original troops who were photographed. These three films therefore demonstrate the use of misleading titles and catalogue descriptions in fixing actuality films as authentic in some way. What is not clear is if buyers at the time would have felt let down, and perhaps the mere presence of the original unit in action in the shot would have offered sufficient 'authenticity', even though they were just going through exercises. However, Ackerman made up to some extent for this deficiency in a couple of other films that he made in Peking.

Ackerman's most effective reconstructions were two views depicting the American Sixth Cavalry's action against the South Gate of Peking. Unlike the previously mentioned films, these were shot at the actual location: 'taken by our operator on the spot', as the catalogue put it.<sup>118</sup> One of these with the unpromising title, *Squad of Men Clearing Road, South Gate Peking* [1780] showed a group of soldiers charging round the outside of the walls of the gate in preparation for an attack. The other film, *Assault on the South Gate of Peking* [1763], was taken from the same angle and with the same framing, and showed the elaborate attack on the gate in progress. [Fig. 12]

With this film, Ackerman managed to create and record an extraordinary piece of military choreography. The all-too-brief shot shows the walls of Peking in the mid-distance. A squad of US troops rushes into the foreground, lies down and takes aim (firing to clear the wall of defenders, states the catalogue). Straight afterwards two groups of mounted troops gallop into shot: one in mid-distance; and the other further away, racing along the base of the wall and around the back of it – and in through the gate, according to the catalogue. After this strong opening, the film ends indecisively, as a third mounted group comes into mid distance where the previous group was, but don't seem to know where to go.

The entire film is, as I mentioned, very set-up/choreographed, and this reconstructed action would have taken considerable planning and time, and of course, commitment of troops. The catalogue states that the commander was Colonel Wint of the Sixth Cavalry, with whom Ackerman had, of course, been based earlier, and with whom he had travelled from Tientsin, and presumably it was through Wint's cooperation that these couple of films were made.<sup>119</sup>

The copy of *Assault on the South Gate* which survives is very short and runs very fast, though this is just what remains, and the original film was probably somewhat longer.<sup>120</sup> It is a shame that it survives in such a poor condition, for, as the catalogue states – for once without exaggeration – this is ‘an historical scene of great interest’. The press also picked it out for particular comment, and a frame from the film was reproduced in 1901 in a magazine article entitled, ‘Biograph Operators: Some of the Risks They Run’. With typical press exaggeration, the author suggested that Ackerman had been in danger while shooting the scene:

‘The photograph we reproduce shows the attack of the Allied Forces on Peking; and during the time this picture was being taken Mr. Ackerman was under heavy fire, both from rifles and bows, the Chinese evidently being under the impression that the mutograph [sic] camera was some sort of machine-gun.’<sup>121</sup>

This claim that the film was taken while the Chinese were still defending the city, is of course untrue, though one journalist in Boston also supposed that Ackerman’s China films were taken during the actual hostilities, and that ‘Mr. Ackerman narrowly escaped serious injury while securing them’. The writer was enthusiastic in his praise for the views, and thought that the South Gate film depicted the genuine assault:

‘Some of the pictures are thrilling enough to arouse the patriotism of the most apathetic soul. This may be said especially of the "Sixth United States Cavalry Assaulting the South Gate of Peking." It was but a short time after the latter picture was taken by Mr. Ackerman that Capt. Riley lost his life.’<sup>122</sup>

Of course this was totally false, for as I have mentioned, Captain Reilly (correct spelling) had been killed during the actual assault in August, weeks before Ackerman arrived in China.<sup>123</sup> Where had these writers gleaned the idea of the courageous cameraman filming while under fire? Ackerman himself co-presented this Boston screening, so one suspects that it was he who made the claim that the film was shot during the real attack, or at least he might have left the issue vague. Such behaviour would not have been out of character, for Ackerman was nothing if not boastful, sometimes to the point of mendacity.

### **Bringing back ‘successful views’**

The concluding sentences of Ackerman’s letters from China illustrate this boastful side to his personality. Having arrived back in Tientsin after his filming expedition to Peking, he wrote back to Biograph:

‘I have returned, after managing to secure in Peking some outstanding photographs, and I can rightly state that my work will be a splendid success. Over the next four to five months there is still the prospect of many interesting photograph records, and I can only repeat that we will not have cause to regret this expedition. The successful views which I have taken cannot be valued in money – they are priceless because

they are one of a kind. We won't have to add highly interesting descriptions, for the subjects alone record the greatest moments of this memorable expedition...<sup>124</sup>

There is much exaggeration here from Ackerman, and actually his period in China had been less productive and successful than his Philippines mission. Another interesting point in this extract is his phrase, 'For the next four to five months many interesting photographs are still in prospect'. This suggests that he was planning to stay on for a long time yet, though I believe that he did not in fact do so. After filming in Tientsin and Peking, Ackerman would seem to have travelled to Shanghai, where he shot some general views of the city and filmed British colonial forces in review (Rajputs, Sikhs, Bengal Lancers, and Ghorkhas).<sup>125</sup> My hunch is that he departed China a while after this, returning to the USA by early the following year, bringing his exposed films back with him (the films were received from mid January 1901, according to Biograph's register). However, this is speculation, and I have no firm evidence of his return date, though he was certainly back by early March, for in that month he co-presented an illustrated lecture in the USA.

This lecture was entitled 'The War in China', and his fellow lecturer was a war correspondent he had known during the campaign, Thomas Franklin Millard (1868-1942). Millard was later to become recognised as one of America's leading authorities on, and advocates for, China, and he wrote about the Boxer troubles.<sup>126</sup> The two men gave the show in Boston, and a newspaper writer in the city praised the films, noting that, 'The moving pictures shown by C. Fred Ackerman, who tented with Mr. Millard in China, serve to double the interest in the lecture'. Other pictures which were shown included some I have mentioned above:

'Li Hung Chang in his palace, a panorama of the Forbidden City, street scenes during the disturbances, Count von Waldersee and his staff, Minister Conger being escorted out of Peking by the American troops, and others of the allied troops on the march.'<sup>127</sup>

The article added that 'Mr. Ackerman will show some interesting stereopticon pictures which he and Mr. Millard made while in China.' Perhaps these lantern images were made from the stills he had been taking for *Leslie's*? It has been suggested that Millard and Ackerman might have toured with this lecture, though this Boston engagement is the only one I have seen reported.

### **Ackerman's achievements**

After Ackerman returned to the US from filming in China in early 1901, it seems that his work as a cameraman came to an end, and he simply disappeared from the filmmaking world.<sup>128</sup> Why this permanent eclipse: were his China films considered unsuccessful? Possibly; or equally likely is that the ending of his brief career as a cameraman might have been his own choice, for within a few years he was in New York City, working for two of the country's most prestigious newspapers, the *New York World* and *New York Herald*. His assignments in the Philippines and China would surely have helped propel this journalistic move upward, endowing him with more prestige

as a journalist than he ever had when working as a sports reporter in Syracuse.

In fact, the surprising thing is not so much that Ackerman managed to work for major newspapers after his return, as that he had secured the job as war cameraman in the first place, almost without training – though as discussed in an earlier chapter, this was almost certainly due to his contacts at Biograph. One has to say, though, that having taken on these far eastern jobs as camera operator – and though not living up to his own boastful claims – he did not do at all badly. Though in general his Philippine work is more impressive, fresher and less staid in character, in China too he managed to record a good selection of images relating to the conflict, in all shooting some sixty films in the country. These included such varied shots as: scenes of war damage; views of the Forbidden City and other famous sites; troops from the various national forces; major personalities in the shape of Li Hung Chang, von Waldersee, and other commanders; and reconstructions of earlier military engagements. (See Appendix for Ackerman filmography). Purely as a military record, this surpasses Rosenthal's more general coverage in the aftermath of the conflict.

The only factors preventing Ackerman from achieving more, I suspect, were that he arrived too late on the scene, and that he was constrained by his commitment to so many authorities. He was accountable to two governments, two branches of the Biograph company, and to *Leslie's Weekly*. I suggest that the greater freshness of his Philippine views, with their audacious use of reconstruction/staging, is probably due firstly, to the fact that unlike in China, the command structure in the Philippines was simple, consisting solely of Americans, allowing him to film his reconstructions with greater freedom. And secondly, the armed struggle in the Philippines was far from won, so the films reflect the excitement of an ongoing conflict, whereas in China, by the time Ackerman arrived it was largely a 'mopping-up' and reprisal operation.

## **CONCLUSION**

I would suggest that there are two significant developments which emerge from the work of the cameramen who filmed this war. One stylistic, the other to do with relations with the military and official regulation.

### **Film style**

In filming the Boxer Uprising, cameramen and producers were building on filmmaking experience from previous conflicts. They already knew that, if they could not film actual warfare, then shots of related events, or of personnel connected to the conflict, might still have a significant appeal. During the Boxer context a variation on these 'related' shots emerged strongly: shots of bombed buildings, the aftermath of battles, and the like, were taken by several cameramen. Such shots could be quite effective in conveying the ferocity of a war and the damage done to people and property. Rosenthal and Holmes, as well as the Gaumont cameraman, all filmed this kind of shot. In addition,

Rosenthal filmed more general shots of China which would not only serve to illustrate the war, but could have a longer appeal on the film market.

In terms of stylistic innovation in representing war on screen, one must give C. Fred Ackerman the chief recognition with regard to this conflict. While earlier filmmakers had only managed to film troops at parades and the like, Ackerman managed to do in China what he had pioneered in the Philippines: to film military actions in the field. He did this through – and this is probably his major contribution to war filming – audaciously and skilfully ‘arranging’ military actions and scenes in the war zone. His most significant example in China was *Assault on the South Gate* which I discussed above, with its elaborate choreography of American attacking forces. Some people would no doubt criticise this kind of ‘arranging’ in actualities as being artificial, as not recording real, unmediated events; but it has subsequently been practiced quite extensively in actuality films. Ackerman was a thoroughly ‘interventionist’ filmmaker, a ‘filmic choreographer’, not content with filming the world as it is, but wanting to make his documentary scenes better by arranging them to his own liking. In this he brought a new element to the war film and to the non-fiction film in general.

### **Cameramen and the military**

But even more important than such stylistic development was the way relations were developing between the moving image and military authorities. This conflict saw an increasing bond between cameramen and the armed forces whom they filmed. The Japanese cameramen, from what we know, were utterly tied to their country’s Fifth Division. Monsieur X.X. (possibly a French government man) unashamedly filmed the French armed forces as they tightened their grip on China after the Boxers’ defeat. Burton Holmes and his cameraman were similarly in thrall to the military, for as Depue later recalled (quoted above), ‘we were allowed, through the aid of our own troops, to see and film things that might not have been available to us otherwise’.

Only Rosenthal seems to have retained some independence, and maintained a certain distance between himself and the allied military forces in China. He restricted himself to shooting only a certain number of military parades and the like, and showed his autonomy by filming in Port Arthur apparently without getting permission. Much of his output was in the form of general scenes of China, in which he took a by-no-means unfriendly attitude to the Chinese people. In these respects Rosenthal was utterly different from the other principal cameraman of the war, Ackerman, who was more closely tied to the military forces than any of his fellows.

In the Philippines Ackerman had been a tool of the American government, effectively making films for the US War Department, and for this China assignment he was tied even more tightly to the military, for he was working for both the Americans and the Kaiser. It is hard to see how a cameraman could be more securely embedded with armed forces. Therefore, while one must give due credit to Ackerman for his innovative filming technique, the content of his films was less admirable, journalistically speaking. Ackerman was utterly shackled to the western armed forces in their colonial campaign of

subjugation in the east; he recorded events almost exclusively from one side, from the side of the opponents of Asian nationalism; his mission was basically to make imperialist propaganda, and this achievement is his main legacy.

In his defence, however, one might add that he was not alone in his propaganda-making. Other filmmakers, far from the front, had been producing a different genre of film about the Boxer Uprising, in the form of staged or faked films, which took a strongly pro-imperialist and anti-Boxer line. Exhibitors were screening these, along with the war-related actualities, to audiences throughout the world, thereby spreading an unfavourable image of the Chinese far and wide. All that is the subject of our next chapter.

### Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> I favour the term 'Uprising' rather than 'Rebellion', as the latter rather suggests rebelling against a legitimate national authority, which the western powers in China were not. In recent years, many Chinese have come to see the Boxers' actions as part of China's resistance to Western imperialism, and the events of 1900 are known as 'the Yihetuan movement' or 'the invasion of the eight allied armies', so shifting the emphasis from the Boxers themselves to the foreign incursion.

<sup>2</sup> By late 1899, with hunger gripping much of northern China, Boxer posters promised that 'when the foreigners are wiped out, rain will fall'. Quoted in Diana Preston, 'The Boxer rising', *Asian Affairs*, 31, no. 1, Feb 2000, p.26-36. Paul Cohen argues that the drought was the most important element in the origin and rapid growth of the Boxer movement from the spring of 1900. P.A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), p.95. The international pressures on China might themselves have contributed to food shortages.

<sup>3</sup> James Ricalton, *China through the Stereoscope: A Journey through the Dragon Empire at the Time of the Boxer Uprising* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1901).

<sup>4</sup> Henrietta Harrison, 'Justice on Behalf of Heaven - Boxer Rebellion in China', *History Today*, Sep 2000. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1911, recognised the significance of the treaty which followed the war, noting that, 'The signature of this treaty brought the European powers on the scene'. It follows this with a masterly summary of how the foreign powers quickly exploited China's weakness, by launching what was effectively a commercial and strategic invasion. The author concludes that this aggression helped lead to the Boxer movement, though the western powers scarcely saw it coming: 'There can be little doubt that the powers, engrossed in the diplomatic conflicts of which Peking [sic] was the centre, had entirely underrated the reactionary forces gradually mustering for a struggle against the aggressive spirit of Western civilization.' *Britannica* entry on China: Section V, 'History, (D) From 1875 to 1901'.

<sup>5</sup> R. C. K. Ensor, *England, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p.219. See also p.332 on western anxieties about the 'yellow races' in the 1890s.

<sup>6</sup> Ricalton stated that the Boxers looked upon the missionary, 'as the emissary and forerunner of foreign commercialism'. Ricalton, *China through the Stereoscope*.

<sup>7</sup> Though this was not the first such international action, and (as we have seen) there was combined action by the 'concert of nations' on Crete in 1897.

<sup>8</sup> After the taking of the Taku forts on 17 June, 'The vacillation of the Imperial court between the Boxers and the foreigners now ended. No longer was the campaign one against an upstart movement of peasant bandits. The Allies were at war with China.' From Eric T. Smith, 'That Memorable Campaign: American Experiences in the China Relief Expedition During the 1900 Boxer Rebellion' (B.A., Louisiana State University, 1994), p.22.

<sup>9</sup> The story of the siege has been told many times in the written word, and also in the film, *55 Days in Peking*. Incidentally, one of the heroes of the siege has been almost forgotten: Frank D. Gamewell, an American missionary who had trained as an engineer, was the mastermind behind building and maintaining the legations' defensive works. See Joe Shepter, 'An



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American Missionary's Engineering Talents Made Him an Unlikely Hero During the Boxer Rebellion', *Military History* 17, no. 2, Jun 2000, p.20-22.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Palmer, 'With the Peking relief column', *Century Magazine* v.61, 1900-1901, p.302 etc. King seems to have travelled with Palmer, who arrived on 23 June.

<sup>11</sup> See Robert John Wilkinson-Latham, *From Our Special Correspondent : Victorian War Correspondents and Their Campaigns* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p.282-84. A number of the correspondents later published books about the events.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Fred Whiting, see Frederic Alan Sharf and Peter Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective* (London: Greenhill, 2000), p.20-21, 94-95.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Heller, *War & Conflict : Selected Images from the National Archives, 1765-1970* (Washington, D.C: United States National Archives, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> The Royal Commonwealth Society holds photos of the 1900 siege, most by Killey (or Killie). The Roger Viollet image library holds photos of the siege and of troops, especially German troops.

<sup>15</sup> See Clark Worswick, *Japan : Photographs 1854-1909* (London: H. Hamilton, 1980), p.145-48; and Clark Worswick and Jonathan Spence, *Imperial China : Photographs 1850-1912* (London: Scolar Press, 1979), p.145 and p.85.

<sup>16</sup> James Ricalton, *China through the Stereoscope*. The book contains texts relating to his images, but with much more description besides. It is a well-informed account of China, and shows Ricalton as a fine writer as well as a master photographer. See also Jane E. Elliott, 'American Photographs of the Boxer Rising', *History of Photography* 21, no. 2, Summer 1997, p.162-69.

<sup>17</sup> William Culp Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Nashville, Tenn.: Land Yacht Press, 1997, orig. 1977), p.137.

<sup>18</sup> Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture': Attack on a China Mission - Bluejackets to the Rescue (1900)', in *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.207.

<sup>19</sup> Oscar King Davis, 'Reporting a cosmopolitan war', HW 27 July 1901, p.748-9 and 3 Aug, p.772: the Japanese told the truth or refused to comment, whereas others, for example the British, gave false accounts of the military situation.

<sup>20</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.88. Barnes adds, p.108: 'The Boxer Rebellion created a sudden interest in all things Chinese, and every available film depicting China was used as a stop gap until cameramen could be sent out there to cover the actual situation.'

<sup>21</sup> Sir Ernest Frederic George Hatch (1859-1927). For more detail on Hatch, see the following: my entry in the *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema* (London: BFI, 1996); *Who Was Who, 1916-1928*; M. Stenton and S. Lees, *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> *Optical Magic Lantern Journal*, Sep 1900, p.ii states that 'a skilled operator with E.F.G. Hatch' took the films. But no mention of the operator appears elsewhere. e.g. *Showman* Sep 1900, p.14; AP 1 June 1900, p.422. One source implies that Hatch operated the camera himself, filming in Peking without interference as the Chinese locals watched 'in silent adoration' (BJP 8 June 1900, p.366: BJP adds, though, that they would not tolerate westerners using a stills camera). I suspect that there actually was an operator, but that Hatch wished to give the impression that he'd done it himself (indeed several travellers who made early films fail to mention their mere cameramen).

<sup>23</sup> An advertisement by Harrison (OMLJ Feb 1901, p.ii) lists the films by location: China, Japan and Rocky Mountains. Hatch's book about the tour contains photographs of Japan, Korea and China (Taku, Tientsin, Peking, Shansi, the Great Wall, etc). Ernest Hatch, *Far Eastern Impressions* (London: Hutchinson, 1904). Hatch himself evidently did not consider his filming activities of great importance, failing even to mention them in his book, even though this was one of the earliest ventures with a film camera into the Far East and indeed Canada.

<sup>24</sup> 'Cinematograph films of China', OMLJ, Oct 1900, p.135.

<sup>25</sup> This showing was at Lord Wimborne's house in Mayfair. AP 27 July 1900, p.62.

<sup>26</sup> *Showman*, Sep 1900, p.14.

<sup>27</sup> The *Court Journal*, 26 May 1900, called Hatch's films 'wonderful'. OMLJ Oct 1900, p.135 stated that the films were 'in great demand, and will be delivered in strict rotation of order received, with as little delay as possible'. The films also seem to have been distributed by Philipp Wolff, John Barnes suggests.

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<sup>28</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, op. cit., p.102 adds that, 'In addition to the films, there were several hundred lantern slides of places he had visited, providing a golden opportunity for lecturers who availed themselves of the material.'

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film, a Critical History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p.13-14.

<sup>30</sup> The Edison Catalogue, 1901, description (quoted in Jacobs) reads: '...taken on the ground in front of the Legation showing British police dispersing a crowd of unruly citizens.' The film is listed with this description in the Warwick Trading Co. catalogue, Apr/May 1901, p.219, under 'American Films', as film no. 7504b.

<sup>31</sup> The three films were: *Off to the East*, *Bluejackets for China*, and *Departure of the "Jelunga"*. These were first advertised in *The Era*, 7 Jul 1900. (Cited in Barnes, 1900 volume, op. cit., p.255). Also mentioned in 'Faked War Films', PD, Aug 1900, p.35, described as 'the embarking of "Handy Men" at Portsmouth, on their way to the Far East'. The films were distributed too by Walker, Turner, and Dawson, being listed in their catalogue, *Animated Photography for the Cinematograph* (c.1900-1901).

<sup>32</sup> Bob Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers : Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* (Sydney ; London: Allen & Unwin, 1986). The film apparently showed the departure of Victorian Naval Contingent for Boxer Uprising on 30 July 1900; a similarly titled film was screened in Ballarat in January 1902. Chris Long, 'Australia's First Films: Facts and Fables. Part 7: Screening the Salvation Army', *Cinema Papers*, no. 97-98, Apr 1994, p.65.

<sup>33</sup> My three examples come from frames credited to AM&B which were reproduced in *Leslie's Weekly*. The frame of the Ninth was in LW, 7 July 1900, p.16; the cavalry frame was in LW, 4 Aug 1900, p.98: they departed San Francisco 3 July; a frame of the Third Battalion of the Fifteenth was reproduced in LW 11 Aug 1900, p.116.

<sup>34</sup> John C. G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and His Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.13-14. Bernhard von Bülow was appointed as State Secretary in 1897, and promoted to Chancellor by Kaiser Wilhelm II on 16th October 1900. He adopted an aggressive foreign policy, including such policies as encouraging the punitive raids in China after the Boxer Uprising, and is sometimes blamed for the pre-World War One arm's race. He held office until June 1909. 'Peking' is the usual German spelling.

<sup>35</sup> Waldersee admits these motives in: Von Waldersee, *A Field Marshal's Memoirs* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), p.209-10.

<sup>36</sup> The film, from the SDK archive, was screened as a 16mm copy at the Pordenone festival on 14 Oct 1990. It is said that Seeber was later embarrassed about the jerky pan (information from Carlos Bustamente). A film, which might have been Seeber's, described only as '...Abfahrt der deutschen Chinatruppen' was screened in a small German town in early February 1901 (it was one among a mixed programme of 32 films shown). See Nadja van Keeken, 'Kinokultur in der Provinz. Am Beispiel von Bad Hersfeld', MA, Universität Köln (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993), p.83.

<sup>37</sup> The Kaiser words, as reported, were: 'When you come upon the enemy, smite him. Pardon will not be given. Prisoners will not be taken. Whoever falls into your hands is forfeit. Once, a thousand years ago, the Huns under their King Attila made a name for themselves, one still potent in legend and tradition. May you in this way make the name German remembered in China for a thousand years so that no Chinaman will ever again dare to *even squint at a German!*' From [www.h-net.org/~german/gtext](http://www.h-net.org/~german/gtext). See also Röhl, *The Kaiser and His Court*, p.13-14. The label 'huns' thereafter became an insulting term for the Germans. Incidentally, *Leslie's* reported that a Herr Harden was jailed for 6 months for lèse majesté for criticising this 'Attila' speech by the Kaiser. Harden was known as 'the Junius of modern Germany'. LW 10 Nov 1900, p.355. This was presumably Maximilian F. E. Harden (1861-1927), a journalist and spokesman for extreme German nationalism before and during World War I. He published (1906) accusations of homosexuality against several associates of the Kaiser. Thus quite an ambiguous figure, but in the case of the Attila speech rather courageous. Information from Frank Kessler.

<sup>38</sup> Some 35 of these actions were by German troops from September 1900 to May 1901. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History : From 3500 B.C. To the Present* (London: Jane's, 1986), p.1009. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911, states, 'At the end of September, Field Marshal Count von Waldersee, with a German expeditionary force of over 20,000 men, arrived to assume the supreme command conferred upon him with the more or less willing assent of the other powers.'

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<sup>39</sup> *The Era* 10 Nov 1900, p.30. This was no. 7108 in the Warwick catalogue.

<sup>40</sup> Oskar Messter advertised 'Films! Latest View: Arrival of our China veterans in Berlin on 16 December 1900' in *Der Komet* no.822, 22 Dec 1900, p.22. An article in the *Hamburger Fremden-Blatt* sometime in December 1900 described the same(?) Messter film shown at Hornhardt's establishment (Hamburg?) of troops returning to Lehrter railway station in Berlin, including the Kaiser Alexander Grenadier Regiment. Courtesy Deac Rossell.

<sup>41</sup> Jay Leyda, *Dianying: Electric Shadows. An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972), p.6-7.

<sup>42</sup> PD Aug 1900, p.31.

<sup>43</sup> Hiroshi Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War 1', in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, edited by D. Desser and A. Nolletti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.237. The Boxer filming was apparently a one-off, for Yoshizawa only made one other documentary, a minor film called *Bicycle Race* (Jitensha kyoso), shot in Japan in 1902. This Yoshizawa company episode typically is confused in Li Suyuan and Hu Jubin, *Chinese Silent Film History* (Beijing: China Film Press, 1997), p.10-11. They claim that Yoshizawa's Boxer film, which they call *The Event of Yihetuan*, was 16 reels in length.

<sup>44</sup> We know this from a brief mention in a French account which states that at the event, 'We come through the gates while Japanese photographers film the march...' (my translation of: 'Nous franchissons le seuil pendant que des photographes japonais cinématographient le défilé...') A. Anthouard, *La Chine contre l'étranger. Les Boxeurs* (Paris: Plon, 1902), p.19. At this anniversary victory parade the troops passed before a reviewing stand on which ministers of the eight foreign powers were stationed. With various flags waving, the Russian troops led the way, followed by the Japanese, Americans and Europeans. See Michael J. Moser and Yeone Wei-Chih Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates: The Legations at Peking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.80-81. A photograph of what may be this event is in Henry Keown-Boyd, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony: A History of the Boxer Uprising in China in the Year 1900* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), p.206.

<sup>45</sup> It is was much more practical to be based within a military unit than travelling separately. During the Boer war this system reached its logical conclusion when R.W. Paul entrusted a camera to a British officer, Walter Beevor. One is reminded of the soldier-photographers, mentioned earlier, who took stills of this and other wars.

<sup>46</sup> *Collection Elgé: Liste des Vues Animées* (L. Gaumont et Cie., 1903), p.50-52, under the heading, 'Expédition de Chine. Collection de M. X. X.'. The same listing appears in Gaumont's 1904 catalogue, p.45-47, 50-51. (These catalogues are held in the École Louis Lumière. Copies were made available to me by Sabine Lenk). Unfortunately we do not yet have a complete listing of Gaumont films, equivalent to Bousquet's magisterial catalogues of Pathé films.

<sup>47</sup> 'Expédition de Chine. Collection de M. X. X. En même temps que les premiers détachements français s'embarquaient, un de nos appareils était confié à un opérateur distingué chargé de prendre les épisodes intéressants qui pouvaient se produire au cours de la campagne. Toutes les scènes qui vont suivre ont été prises à Tien-Tsin absolument sur le vif sans rien d'apprêté. Par suite de la longueur du parcours et du séjour en Chine, plusieurs bandes sont piquées, mais ce petit défaut n'enlève rien à leur grande valeur documentaire.' This suggests that this operator might have travelled out with the French forces, though equally the man might have been a regular visitor to or resident in the region.

<sup>48</sup> This was filmed in a place in Tientsin where, in March 1901, a dispute between Sikhs (British) and Russian soldiers broke out over a railroad siding. Incidentally, this gives an earliest shooting date for the film.

<sup>49</sup> This was probably le comte Georges du Chaylard, who had been French consul in Manchuria in 1896 and ministre plénipotentiaire. See Mgr Guillon, *Rapport Annuel des Évêques* (France, 1896) and H. Ensleme, *A travers la Mandchourie...* (P. Rueff, 1904). The medal was awarded by the French ambassador, Monsieur Pichon, and also present at this ceremony, states the Gaumont catalogue, was a Russian officer. In another film made of Du Chaylard at the consulate a General Tchong-Ki-Tong is mentioned, presumably a pro-allied Chinese. There is no record of a Légion d'Honneur being awarded to this M. Chaylard, but perhaps locally-given awards were not recorded ([www.legihonneur.org](http://www.legihonneur.org)). There are a number of files relating to the Tientsin consulate at the French archives at Nantes, which I have yet to consult.

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<sup>50</sup> In French the sentence is: 'Par suite de la longueur du parcours et du séjour en Chine, plusieurs bandes sont piquées, mais ce petit défaut n'enlève rien à leur grande valeur documentaire.'

<sup>51</sup> *Collection Elgé: Liste des Vues Animées* (L. Gaumont et Cie., 1903), p.55, and the same listing appears on p.50-51 of the catalogue of c.1904. These are films nos. 545 to 559. No.559 sounds especially interesting, showing a Yun-nan judge delivering sentence on an accused. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, c1910, Yun-nan-sen was the metropolis of the province. There was a French-originated Catholic mission in the province.

<sup>52</sup> According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1911, entry on Yun-Nan, parts of the province were badly affected by the Boxer events and took many years to recover prosperity. France had wrung concessions from the Chinese after the Japanese victory in the mid 1890s, including railway rights in Yun-Nan, and French engineers opened a line from there to Tongking in 1910.

<sup>53</sup> 'Au Pays des Mandarins', in catalogue of L. Gaumont et Cie., n.d. but circa 1904, p.86-90. The Yun-nan films include, for example, *Faubourg du Sud à Yun-Nan-Sen*.

<sup>54</sup> If he was a diplomat, there is some chance that his name might be traced. Incidentally, the phrase 'one of our clients' might mean that this man had previously purchased a stills camera (possibly a 'Photo-Jumelle') from Gaumont, or a even a Chrono film projector.

<sup>55</sup> A photograph of a British-organised Chinese unit is in Lynn E. Bodin and Chris Warner, *The Boxer Rebellion* (London: Osprey, 1979), p.28.

<sup>56</sup> 'Le 30 juin 1903 après la prise de Linh-Gan-Fou. Entrée triomphale des réguliers chinois ayant pris part à l'expédition contre le chef rebelle Tchéou-Tama-Tou.' Film no.1285 in catalogue of c.1904, p.90. The French troops apparently rivalled the Germans in their frenzy for looting. (So states Keown-Boyd, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony*.) 'Linh-Gan-Fou' is possibly today's Lincang, a town in Yunnan, between Kunming and Burma. I can find no trace of any General Licou on the internet.

<sup>57</sup> Holmes was travelling through Russia up to July 1901, thereafter to Mongolia, down the Amur river (to Korea, adds Depue) and on to China. See *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, 1901, vol.9, p.117. He was in Peking in August 1901. On p.133 are five frames of a film of Tongku station. Incidentally, volume 8 covers their preceding travels across Russia.

<sup>58</sup> Oscar B. Depue, 'My First 50 Years...', op. cit., p.126. A mangled version of this passage, which evidently has been translated into Chinese and back into English, appears in Li Suyuan and Hu Jubin, *Chinese Silent Film History*, p.11.

<sup>59</sup> *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, op. cit., 1901, vol.9. On p.148 are two frames of 'vendors'; on p.162-3 Holmes notes that they filmed crowds at Peking's city gate, Chien-men, ruined by the war, and five frames of this film are reproduced. On p.219 is a photograph possibly of Holmes with a camera on tripod and his assistant(?), a Chinaman with another camera.

<sup>60</sup> *The Forbidden City* forms the third and final section of *The Burton Holmes Lectures*, op. cit., 1901, vol.9. Jay Leyda in his *Dianying*, op. cit., p.7, states that Holmes and Depue 'filmed places that his lecture audiences had heard of, as associated with the defense of the Legation Quarter, and various personages, including the Dowager Empress'. By the latter I assume he means that Holmes filmed places associated with the Empress, rather than the Empress herself, who was exiled from Peking until late October 1901, states Keown-Boyd, by which time Holmes and Depue had presumably departed China. See Henry Keown-Boyd, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony*, p.233.

<sup>61</sup> Rosenthal... 'was the first cameraman to reach China after the bloody suppression of the Boxers', states Jay Leyda, *Dianying*, p.6. Rosenthal was passing through Marseilles, departing the port on 15 August. See F.A. Hetherington, *The Diary of a Tea Planter* (Lewes: The Book Guild, 1994), p.2. He might have stopped off in Singapore en route, for three films of the port appear in the Warwick April 1901 catalogue (p.178), two of which were pans, which was virtually Rosenthal's trademark on this trip. Incidentally, hard copies of this Warwick Trading Co. (WTC) catalogue of April/May 1901 are held in the BFI; also in the Urban collection, Urb 10/24 (at the NMPFT); and in the Albert E. Smith collection, UCLA, Box 1

<sup>62</sup> On his return from S. Africa, Rosenthal gave an interview which appeared in *The Jewish World*, 3 August 1900. Incidentally, it is suggested, wrongly, in one film history book that Rosenthal was American: see Suyuan and Jubin, *Chinese Silent Film History*, p.11.

<sup>63</sup> WTC ad, *Era*, 4 Aug 1900, p.24.

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<sup>64</sup> As summarised in the *Photographic News*, a newspaper had reported that some of the raw films being taken to China to record the war 'by two well-known photographers' were 1000 ft. long, and suggested that about the beginning of October one might expect to see the resulting animated images of the war. (As I note in my Appendix on opposition to filming early warfare, the journal went on to express its hopes that no such 'gruesome war photographs' would be shown in entertainment venues.) See 'Biograph-ing the Chinese War', PN, 3 Aug 1900, p.481. This probably referred to Rosenthal and Seymour as it is almost the same date as the *Era* notice, though the newspaper report would have preceded the PN reference by several days. I can find no more information about Seymour despite web searches on his name in relation to India and the Boxer events.

<sup>65</sup> Warwick referred to their 'Genuine Chinese films' as having been, 'secured by us at great expense and much risk to our photographers'. WTC ad, 10 Nov 1900, p.30.

<sup>66</sup> An ad for the films states: 'A cable from China, dated from Tien Tsin, Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>, 1900, received, announcing the forwarding to us of important consignments of Negatives of Stirring Events secured at Shanghai, Taku, and Tien Tsin [sic]. Mr. Rosenthal further states that he starts for Peking the following day...' *The Era*, 10 Nov 1900, p.30.

<sup>67</sup> Visitor's pass for Rosenthal for Shanghai Club, 26 Nov 1900. Also letter from Major Watson(?), 30 Nov introducing Rosenthal and asking officers in Shanghai to help him in filming British and Indian troops. Both in Will Day collection, Cinémathèque française.

<sup>68</sup> From Will Day MSS, 'Joe Rosenthal' (8<sup>th</sup> page): held in the Cinémathèque française. This was a 'journey down the River Peeho to Tientsen [sic]', states Day.

<sup>69</sup> They were advertised in *The Era* in November, states Barnes, 1900 volume, p.88. This batch included WTC film nos. 5886–5897, which are also listed in the WTC April 1901 catalogue.

<sup>70</sup> These are listed in the Warwick April 1901 catalogue as follows: p.178: 1 title; p.180: 6 titles; p.182: 12 titles; p.186-8: 15 titles; p.201: 4 titles; p.202: 4 titles. I count between 16 and 19 of these 40-odd films as shot in Shanghai. From p.203 a series of films are listed about the Goorkhas, apparently filmed during their service in China after the Boxer Uprising, which may also have been shot by Rosenthal.

<sup>71</sup> WTC April 1901 catalogue, p.180. On p.182 the catalogue states, 'Photographed by our Mr. J. Rosenthal, now operating in China'.

<sup>72</sup> It is film no. 5997a in the WTC catalogue of April 1901, which source adds, 'It is of the highest photographic quality, and a most satisfactory film. Length 75 feet.' A copy of the film is held in the National Film and Television Archive. Leyda adds: 'Traces will surely come to light of other Rosenthal films made in Peking' [sic], but they haven't yet. Leyda, *Dianying*, op. cit., p.6.

<sup>73</sup> 'Round the World with a Camera', *Bioscope* 17 Dec 1908, p.22. In full, the quotation reads, 'I saw the whole place smashed up, and went through the Forbidden City. Really, the thing wasn't so bad as the press made it out.' It's not clear what he means by the last comment.

<sup>74</sup> The film is *Entry Into the Sacred City, Peking, of Count Von Waldersee, October 17th, 1900* (length 100 ft.), catalogue no.5922a, p.187. The dates are somewhat confusing here. Warwick stated (*The Era* 10 Nov 1900, p.30) that they had received a cable from China, 'dated from Tien Tsin, Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>, 1900', announcing the forwarding to them of negatives of events secured at Shanghai, Taku, and Tientsin. The cable also mentioned that Rosenthal, 'starts for Peking the following day, having secured permission from Field-Marshal Count von Waldersee, with every facility granted by the Staff Officers of the Allied Troops now stationed there'. But paradoxically, this cable, stating that he planned to go to Peking, is dated after Rosenthal had filmed (17 October) the entry into Peking. So either a) the cable's dispatch date of 26 Oct is wrong, or b) the cable was sent well after it was written, or c) Rosenthal had asked permission to go to Peking for a second time, or d) the Waldersee entry into Peking was filmed by someone else and was bought in by Warwick. Incidentally, the film of Waldersee's entry was being shown in England at the Palace, Greenwich, in February as an 'Edisonograph' film. See *The Showman*, 22 Feb 1901, p.134.

<sup>75</sup> The catalogue description of the first mentioned film, including a demeaning comment in parentheses, begins: 'Four beauties (from a Chinese stand point), are shown in the picture'. Will Day noted the emphasis on Chinese views during Rosenthal's trip: '...the well known Chinese towns of Shanghai and Hong Kong were visited, and some magnificent moving pictures secured from life of the Orientals in the Far East, which was the first occasion of

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motion pictures being obtained in that country.' [the latter is untrue]. From Will Day MSS, 'Joe Rosenthal' (8<sup>th</sup> page).

<sup>76</sup> Ricalton, *China through the Stereoscope*.

<sup>77</sup> The first film was entitled, *Shanghai's Shops and Opium Dens* [5864a], and the second was *A Street in Teintsin* [sic] *After Occupation by the Allied Troops* [5895b].

<sup>78</sup> WTC April 1901 catalogue, p.181. Length 60 feet.

<sup>79</sup> WTC April 1901 catalogue, p.182. As John Barnes suggests, perhaps Rosenthal had seen films which incorporated this new panning technique at the company's offices on his return to London from South Africa. In filming the Boer War the only moving shots he had been able to take were travelling shots which depended on being in a moving vehicle, so the ability to pan was advantageous. Panning also allows a cameraman to follow moving subjects, though this was a less used application in this era.

<sup>80</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.88.

<sup>81</sup> Film numbers 5877B and 5887B respectively. Catalogue pages on which the majority of Rosenthal's China films are pans include p.178 where three of the four are pans, and p.180 where four of the six are pans.

<sup>82</sup> A scene was filmed on board a liner, *Empress of China*, on Christmas Day 1900: apparently by Rosenthal, in Chinese waters. WTC April 1901 catalogue, p.202.

<sup>83</sup> Low and Manvell noted that Rosenthal's work in China was 'a series of non-action pictures'. *The History of the British Film*, Vol. I (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), p.26.

<sup>84</sup> The main sources available on Ackerman's work in China are the following: Biograph's collection of frames in MoMA preserves images of virtually all of the films, nos.1732-1771 and 1775-1797; and at least a dozen survive as paper prints in the Library of Congress. Biograph's *Picture Catalogue* lists some of the films with brief descriptions, many under the overall title, 'The War in China', nos. 1732-1744, 1750-1793. His films are listed in Biograph's register, with some production details, though unlike for his Philippine work, the register doesn't give shooting dates for these China titles. See below for details of the US government sources about Ackerman and his translated letters.

<sup>85</sup> I stated in an article that Ackerman return to America in March, but this is not certain. See Stephen Bottomore, "'Every Phase of Present-Day Life": Biograph's Non-Fiction Production', *Griffithiana*, no. 66/70, 1999/2000, p.147-211.

<sup>86</sup> British Mutoscope Co. report, 9 July 1900, p.23. Held at the Seaver Center. This noted that 'the Government of the United States... have just authorised the representative of the American Company who went through that war to proceed to China, under protection of the United States Government, and with special credentials to accompany the Military Staff and get any views of interest that might occur. The United States Government have no commercial interest in the Mutoscope or in the representation of its views, but they regard so highly their value from an historical point of view.' Another report added: '...early in July Mr. Ackerman will sail from San Francisco for China to take mutoscope pictures of the trouble there.' 'The Mutoscope in War', *Kansas City Star*, 24 June 1900, p.8.

<sup>87</sup> The letter is cited in British Mutoscope Co. report, 9 July 1900, p.23-24.

<sup>88</sup> In the letter the DMBG stated that the Emperor had just sent them a telegram suggesting that they team up with the German naval league (Deutscher Flotten-Verein) in filming the war. British Mutoscope Co. Report, 9 July 1900, p.23-24. The company had already had dealings with the Flotten-Verein in the past, in filming pro-militaristic propaganda, and the German Emperor had facilitated Biograph's filming of the battleship *Odin*: indeed the caption to four images of this film in *Leslie's* stated that it had been 'photographed officially at Kiel, for Emperor William', by AM&B. See LW 14 July 1900, p.32. See also BJP 20 July 1900, p.462 which stressed the supportive attitude toward Biograph of the German Emperor.

<sup>89</sup> There is one suggestion that there was a second Biograph cameraman in China. Biograph in their 1902 *Picture Catalogue* stated that they covered the war in China 'by two expeditions'. (Introduction to 'Military' section in *Picture Catalogue*, Nov 1902, on Musser, *Motion Picture Catalogs... Microfilm Edition*, reel 2.) However, the second expedition probably refers to Robert Bonine who filmed in August 1901 in Honolulu, and September in Japan, China and the Philippines.

<sup>90</sup> LW, 22 Sep 1900, p.199. (On the same page is a brief biography of Captain Leonard who was badly wounded leading an assault at Tientsin.) The introduction to the 'Military' section in the *Picture Catalogue* of 1902 states that: 'in the case of the China campaign, our operators were recognized and assisted by the American, English and German War Departments'.

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<sup>91</sup> Roy L. McCardell, 'Pictures That Show Motion', *Everybody's Magazine* 5, August 1901, p.231.

<sup>92</sup> I surmise that Ackerman's German-sounding name might have helped in having him accepted by the German side.

<sup>93</sup> From here on, the German part of the force would play a major role in the campaign (and a particularly brutal one, in various punitive expeditions). As previously mentioned, the German contingent had been seen off by the Kaiser with his notorious 'hun' speech.

<sup>94</sup> *Beiblatt zum Kladderadatsch* 53, no.35, 2 Sep 1900.

<sup>95</sup> This single, closely-printed page, reproducing extracts from Ackerman's letters, is in the house publication of the Hansa-Theater in Hamburg: 'Der Biograph', *Artistische Nachrichten*, Nr. 58, März 1901. Joseph Garncarz found it and kindly sent me a copy. A transcription from the old German script is courtesy of Frank Kessler. The originals of these letters have apparently not survived, and I have not yet found them reproduced anywhere in their original English, so this German version is all we have. The existence of the letters was noted in *Black and White Budget*, 1 Jun 1901, p.300, which stated: 'Mr. C. F. Ackerman, the operator, who was dispatched to China on the outbreak of hostilities, has scored distinctly with the pictures he has sent home. In his letters he tells something of the hardships he had to undergo and the difficulties with which he was beset, not only so far as the actual taking of the pictures was concerned, but with the dispatch of the films afterwards.' These difficulties are indeed covered in the *Artistische Nachrichten* letters. Joseph Garncarz has included extracts of these Ackerman letters in his essay, 'Filmprogramm im Variété: die ›Optische Berichterstattung‹' in Uli Jung and Martin Loiperdinger, eds., *Geschichte des Dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland, 1895-1945. Band 1: Kaisereich, 1895-1918* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005), section 3.3.

<sup>96</sup> Letter from H.N. Marvin, 2nd Vice President, AM&B, 841 Broadway, New York City, 16 Aug 1900, to Mr. Elihu Root, Secretary of War, Washington, D.C. Filed in National Archives, Washington: AGO Misc MV file, no. 339886. The follow up documents are in the same file.

<sup>97</sup> To Major-General H.C. Corbin, War Department, Washington, D.C., from Executive Mansion, Washington, 23 August 1900. 'My dear General: I herewith enclose you [sic] application from Mutoscope people which, by Mr. Mc-Kinley's [sic] direction, has been enclosed to me, with the hope that you will be good enough to have the permit granted at the very earliest moment. With best wishes, I am, Benj. F. Montgomery'. Perhaps this application went all the way to McKinley for reasons of international protocol, because in Germany Biograph's plan for filming had received the attention of the Kaiser.

<sup>98</sup> For the Quartermaster General from the Adjutant General, 23 August 1900: 'The Secretary of War directs that transportation on government transports be furnished to Mr. C. Fred Ackerman, from San Francisco to China, with reasonable allowance of baggage. Mr. Ackerman is the representative of the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, and wishes to make photographs of scenes and incidents with our Army in China.' The permit was to be sent to Ackerman at Biograph's offices at 841 Broadway, NYC. Charles Musser concludes that Ackerman went to China in September. Musser, *Emergence*, p.265.

<sup>99</sup> LW, 22 Sep 1900, p.199. The article notes: 'The accompanying photograph of Mr. Ackerman was taken just before the departure of his transport for the Orient.'

<sup>100</sup> Wint is named in full in the description of the shot of assaulting the South Gate of Peking.

<sup>101</sup> Fedor von Rauch, *Mit Graf Waldersee in China* (Berlin: F. Fontane & Co., 1907), p.85. Von Waldersee states that around 1 October several pressmen were waiting around his headquarters, including 2 to 3 Frenchmen, 5 to 6 Americans and English, 5 Germans and 'solche mit Kinematographen und weiss Got was sonst noch für Apparaten'.

<sup>102</sup> 'Der Biograph', *Artistische Nachrichten*, op. cit. Ackerman's letters are dated Tientsin on the 9, 12 and 16 October, Peking 23 and 29 October, and Tientsin again on 7 November. The letters were probably originally in English; I have translated them from the German back into English.

<sup>103</sup> Biograph's *Picture Catalogue*, p.186, lists three more films of British colonial troops in China, perhaps shot by Ackerman.

<sup>104</sup> General Campbell co-commanded this column from Tientsin to Paoting-fu, arriving the 20th October, according to one expert of the time on China missions. Arthur Judson Brown, *New Forces in Old China : An Unwelcome but Inevitable Awakening* (New York: F.H. Revell company, 1904), chapter 17, 'The Boxer Uprising'. This was a punitive expedition to punish

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officials responsible for the pre-siege murder of missionaries in Paoting-fu. See Peter Fleming, *The Siege at Peking* (London: Hart-Davis; OUP, 1959), p.70, 253.

<sup>105</sup> The film was entitled *British Light Artillery*. Filmed in Tientsin, it was described in the AMB catalogue (1902) as: 'British Royal Light Artillery on the advance to Peking. Brig-Gen. Lorne Campbell in command. An unusually fine picture photographically.' Campbell's expedition was going to Paoting-fu rather than Peking, though may have started with the Peking-bound units. The Paoting-fu expedition was accompanied by at least one other journalist, the artist Fred Whiting, so probably Ackerman could have gone along, but instead went to Peking (where Whiting had already been). See Sharf and Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective*.

<sup>106</sup> On the same day, 16 October, he speculates that perhaps after Peking he'll go to Canton where a battle is expected.

<sup>107</sup> The letters state that Ackerman travelled with the Fifth Cavalry under Wint, but all other references state that Wint commanded the Sixth, and I suggest that this is a mis-transcription of a '6' for a '5' when the letters were published. (In any case the Fifth are not listed as being in this campaign). They followed the course of the Pei-ho river, and Ackerman wrote: '...the first day we went it to Nang Tsun, approx. 24 miles travel. There was no opportunity for filming. The second day onward to Ho-Si-Wu, another 22 miles, and on the third day again 30 miles to Thang Chou.' And finally, he concludes, 16 more miles to the gates of Peking. This route to Peking is shown on maps in Sharf and Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective*, p.7-8.

<sup>108</sup> This on 23 October. He adds that, 'Anyway I have enough stock'.

<sup>109</sup> McCardell, op. cit., p.234, describes an incident in Detroit (17 March 1901) when a woman allegedly recognised her dead brother, Allen McCaskill, in a Biograph film of the Fourteenth Infantry entering the gates of the city, which could be one of the shots I have just described.

<sup>110</sup> In my article 'Every Phase of Present-Day Life' in *Griffithiana*, op. cit., I cover this proclivity by Biograph to make films of celebrities.

<sup>111</sup> In an article by Ackerman he wrongly recalls that, 'It was during the month of November that I was granted my first audience with Li Hung Chang'. And in this article Li also gives his views on the future of China, and the future of various western inventions there. See Carl Frederick Ackerman, 'Li Hung Chang's Forecast of China's Future', *Everybody's Magazine* 6, no. 1, Jan 1902, p.84-87. In another article, Ackerman states that he spent two days in the presence of Li in his 'yamen' in Peking, who apparently posed for the photographs at 11 am on the second day, these being 'the last photographs taken of him'. Carl Frederick Ackerman, 'How Li Hung-Chang Foretold the War', *Harper's Weekly* 48, 9 April 1904, p.553-4. The yamen was in the courtyard of his summer home in Peking, at the Palace of Roses. The films are numbers 1746 and 1747. Li was dubbed 'The Grand Old Man of the Orient' in the Biograph catalogue.

<sup>112</sup> Jay Leyda, with typical insight, noticed this: 'Ackerman himself briefly appears in his presentation of a Mutoscope apparatus to Li Hung-shang.' And he reproduces a still of it. Jay Leyda, *Dianyng*, p.6.

<sup>113</sup> It is the same courtyard and buildings as in the other film, and the people are the same, wearing the same clothes, though Ackerman has his trousers worn over his boots in this film, while in the other film (*High Priest and Mandarins*) the trousers are tucked into the high boots. Incidentally, with the use of the mutoscope viewer in shot, this pair of films may be seen as an early example of 'product placement'. Both of the Li Hung Chang films survive as paper prints.

<sup>114</sup> *Everybody's Magazine*, Jan 1902, op. cit., p.85-6. Li's exclamation was 'It moves! It moves!', according to 'The Moving Picture and the National Character', *American Review of Reviews* 42, Sep 1910, p.317. Ackerman reiterated elsewhere that this present to Li of the mutoscope 'pleased him infinitely'.

<sup>115</sup> The 'first' claim comes in the article, 'The Moving Picture and the National Character', op. cit., which reproduces a frame from Ackerman's film of Li (p.317), also picturing the mandarins, Ackerman and the mutoscope. The caption states that the pictures inside the machine were of Li in New York as he visited Grant's tomb (incidentally this had been shot by the Biograph company's cameraman, Dickson, who filmed Li in several places in New York on his visit in 1896).

<sup>116</sup> 'The wonders of photography', *Canastota Bee*, 3 Oct 1896 (a clipping found in the Hendricks collection).



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<sup>117</sup> Two slightly different frames from this film, *Li Hung Chang, High Priest and Mandarins*, were reproduced in articles by Ackerman in subsequent years: in *Everybody's Magazine*, Jan 1902, op. cit., and *Harper's Weekly*, April 1904, op. cit. The fact that these have the same framing but show different parts of the action indicates that these are film frame blow-ups rather than photos taken with a stills camera. The quality of image reminds us what detail is contained in these large Biograph frames. Three frames of this film are in the MoMA Biograph clippings collection, and these suggest that this film was made up of two slightly differently framed shots.

<sup>118</sup> Introduction to 'Military' section in the AMB *Picture Catalogue* (Nov 1902).

<sup>119</sup> The AMB *Picture Catalogue* (1902) states of this film: 'Sixth United States Cavalry, Lieut.-Col. Theo. J. Wint, assaulting the South Gate of the city of Pekin. Skirmishers fire to clear the wall; Capt. Cabal's troop charges across the moat, several horses falling; Lieut. White's troop charges through the gate, which has previously been battered down. Capt. Forsythe commands the squadron. An historical scene of great interest.'

<sup>120</sup> The film (derived from a paper print) shows very accelerated action, suggesting that it was step-printed from an original which itself was not shot at the normally high Biograph speed. Jay Leyda recognised the importance of this film, calling it 'possibly the first staged film made in China: Ackerman's reconstruction of the Sixth Cavalry's assault on the South Gate, a turning point in the defeat of the Boxer Uprising'. (*Dianying*, p.6) He reproduces a frame from it as Plate 2a.

<sup>121</sup> Pat Brooklyn, 'Biograph Operators: Some of the Risks They Run', *Black and White Budget*, 1 June 1901, p.300. The caption to the frame still underlined the alleged dangers to the operator: 'The biograph in the fighting line in China: the attack on Pekin', it proclaimed.

<sup>122</sup> 'The War in China', *Boston Herald* 10 March 1901, p.17, col.3. Cited in Musser, *Emergence*, p.264-5 and p.56.

<sup>123</sup> But, as mentioned, Ackerman did make three films with the artillery unit which Reilly had commanded, film nos. 1736, 1737, 1738.

<sup>124</sup> Dated Tientsin, 7 November 1900. This is my free translation from the German version. He concluded with this statement, presumably to explain why he hadn't sent some or any films to Biograph: '...the difficulties of transport of the pictures (films) is demonstrated by the delay of these China pictures'.

<sup>125</sup> These Shanghai films generally have later Biograph register numbers than most of the other films, suggesting that he shot in Shanghai *after* being in Tientsin and Pekin.

<sup>126</sup> Millard of the *China Press* was to become one of the most influential American voices on China, with strong ideas about American expansion in the Far East, but also in favour of advancing the interests of China in Washington against those of Great Britain and Japan. See also: Thomas Franklin Fairfax Millard, 'The War Correspondent and His Future', *Scribner's Magazine* 37, Feb 1905, p.242-48.

<sup>127</sup> 'The War in China', *Boston Herald* 10 March 1901, op. cit. The Minister Conger film refers to *General Chaffee in Pekin* [1787]. As I mentioned above, this same Boston writer went away with the impression that some of the views showed genuine military engagements.

<sup>128</sup> He shot some four films on the Pacific liner, *Empress of China*, showing crew activity and the like, presumably during his voyage back to the USA. Ackerman later went back to Syracuse, working as a journalist and in other capacities. After Ackerman's brief spell in the limelight, Robert Bonine took over, also briefly, in 1901, as one of Biograph's main cameramen. After him, other cameramen worked for Biograph, and names appear in the register such as H.J. Miles, A.E. Weed, W. McCutcheon, F.A. Dobson, O.M. Gove and 'Hiaggi'.

**Chapter 13**  
**THE BOXER UPRISING**  
**II. Denigrating the Chinese on screen**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Summary**

In this chapter we look at two aspects of the Boxer Uprising in cinema: staged films of the events, and the exhibition of the crisis on screen. At both these stages of representation the common assumptions were that the behaviour of the Boxers was savage, and that the international community was exacting just revenge for it. The predominant mood of these films and film programmes was anti-Chinese.

Some interesting exhibition practices emerged from this conflict, including an increasingly complex blending together of genres of films about the crisis. This complexity even went as far as mixing in films of the Boer War too. These practices demonstrate both the vibrancy and creativeness of the exhibition sector at this time, and more particularly that a kind of general purpose 'war genre' was evolving, which was almost independent of which war was being represented.

Most of this chapter is concerned with staged films of the conflict. The process of staging war films had reached its culmination in 1900 with the Boer War, but the Boxer Uprising was represented almost as intensively in topical drama. Part of the reason for this proliferation of films of the Boxer events is that public interest was pan-national, because the besieged citizens and later the armies of several countries were involved.

Dramatised topical films of the conflict were produced in France, Britain and the United States (all of which countries were also participants in the allied military action).<sup>1</sup> The main producers were Lubin, Mitchell & Kenyon (M&K) and Pathé, and in addition single films were produced by Amet, Edison, Méliès, Vitagraph and Williamson. Altogether at least seventeen fakes or symbolic representations were made of the Boxer Uprising.<sup>2</sup> These staged scenes tended to be pro-western propaganda, demonising the Boxers. In the fakes, especially, the Boxers were shown as beyond the pale, as unmitigated evildoers who must be destroyed; and some of the films show the outside world wreaking its revenge on these savages through superior firepower.

In the process of listing these staged films, comparing catalogue descriptions and viewing what film prints survive, I have identified for the first time that two of the films are extant; and also I have established more details than were known hitherto about other non-surviving titles. The most significant of all these films was Williamson's fake or 'representation' of the war, *Attack on a China Mission*. This was hugely popular at the time, and is now seen by

historians as one of the key films of the early history of cinema, for it helped to establish fictional narrative as the major cinematic form.<sup>3</sup>

## **‘EXCITING AND INTERESTING’: FAKED WAR FILMS**

Faked films of the Boxer crisis (and of other events) gained more attention than symbolic scenes both at the time, and from historians too. Jay Leyda considered that these reconstructions, filmed – as he charmingly though none too accurately put it – ‘on Brighton lawns, in French parks, and on New Jersey farms’, were ‘the most significant film treatments of the Boxers’.<sup>4</sup> I have identified three main themes or plots found among the fake films of the conflict (i.e. not including the symbolic representations): Attacks on westerners, particularly missionaries; beheadings or other punishment of Chinese, especially Boxers; and battlefield victories by the allies against the Chinese/Boxers. The most frequent of these themes was attacks on westerners (about seven films), followed by beheadings and battlefield victories (some four each). The common factor in these, needless to say, is a negative view of the Chinese. In what follows I examine the output of fakes company by company, in the process providing more general information about these films.

### **A suggestion for fakes**

By the summer of 1900, with the Boer war considered virtually concluded, the events in China became the big story, and in Britain some showmen were wondering how they could translate this news story into paying customers. One pundit, writing in *The Showman* magazine in September, noted that ‘interest in the Boer war has very largely died out’, and advised that showmen might do better to choose ‘another subject of the same nature’ – that is to say, the conflict in China, or indeed the theme of China more generally, and suggested that they put on a combined projected/live show on this subject.<sup>5</sup> The title he proposed was ‘Heathen Chinees – his manners and customs’. The only problem with mounting such a show was, ‘the scarcity of suitable slides and films’, so he also had a message for filmmakers:

‘The difficulty could, however, be got over by makers of these goods engaging some Chinese natives to take the parts that required personal acting, and there are plenty of these gentlemen about who can generally be obtained at moderate wages.’<sup>6</sup>

Even before he wrote, filmmakers had been doing as he suggested, making faked scenes of the conflict, though employing made-up western actors rather than ethnic Chinese to represent the Boxers.

### **Lubin and the Taku forts**

US filmmakers were quick to fake the events of this war.<sup>7</sup> The first off the block was probably Sigmund Lubin, whose interest in making films about the crisis might have been heightened by the fact that it had provoked an international military operation, including the US, but also European powers, and he was of German extraction and distributed his films in that country.

Lubin's company made at least four fakes about the conflict: *Chinese Massacring [sic] Christians*, *Beheading a [or the] Chinese Prisoner*, *In the Pillory* and *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*.

In June 1900, just as allied military involvement was beginning, the first two titles were re-enacted at Lubin's rooftop studio in Philadelphia.<sup>8</sup> Both of these survive in George Eastman House. *Beheading the Chinese Prisoner* is described in the 1903 Lubin catalogue as follows:

'A Chinese prisoner is tried before one of the chiefs, and being found guilty, is sentenced to be beheaded, which sentence is immediately executed. The executioner displays the head to the spectators to serve as a warning for evil doers. Very exciting.'<sup>9</sup>

A contemporary advertisement and the 1903 Lubin catalogue both suggest that this film was marketed as an actuality straight from the war. But the film was indeed shot at the Lubin studio, which is very apparent from the stylization, and if one were in any doubt, both it and *Chinese Massacring Christians* include painted backdrops and an identical papier-mâché chopping block.<sup>10</sup> [Fig. 3]

Also released by Lubin in the summer of 1900 were *In the Pillory*, and *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*.<sup>11</sup> The latter was sold in Germany (by Lubin's company), where it was advertised in *Der Komet* in September as, '...the siege and storming of the Chinese fortified harbour at Taku. Amazing views; one sees the explosions of mines under water, etc.'<sup>12</sup> Probably this film was made in the summer of 1900 (and as the bombardment of the forts occurred on 17 June 1900, the film could not have been made before about the end of June). The Taku bombardment was extensively celebrated in other western visual media too. [Fig. 9 and 10]

I believe that this film survives (derived from a paper print), but is not identified as a Lubin film.<sup>13</sup> It was copyrighted by the Edison company on 16 August 1900, as *Bombardment of Taku Forts*, though Charles Musser doubts that it was actually produced by Edison: 'It seems probable that an Edison licensee made the film very shortly after the event, exploited the picture as an exclusive on its exhibition circuit and then turned over the negative to the Edison company.'<sup>14</sup> Musser does not name Lubin as the producer, but does reprint the Edison catalogue description and other details, from which one can see several similarities to the Lubin film as described in *Der Komet*.<sup>15</sup> The title of the Lubin film, *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts*, is very similar to the surviving Edison-distributed title, and both are harbour settings with a naval bombardment. The Edison catalogue description mentions 'the explosion of mines' as does *Der Komet*. Furthermore, the footage matches: the Lubin film advertised in the *Komet* was 200 ft. long, and the surviving Edison-copyrighted copy is about the same length.<sup>16</sup> My provisional conclusion is therefore that the original film was made by Lubin and distributed by Edison (perhaps even pirated/duped by someone at Edison?)

Quite apart from these issues of identification, this film is surprisingly

interesting, and relatively convincing. The setting is a model of a port city on a hill with two towers/forts at the sides, and a harbour or body of water in the foreground in which model ships are steaming about. [Fig. 8] The ships start turning and circling, and seem to fire their guns, and there are explosions and smoke in the town and around the ships. The film is quite long and has an improvised feeling about it: there are various similar angles jump-cut/spliced together, all wide shots, and the camera pans jerkily to capture the action, all of which helps give it a quite realistic, shot-as-it-happened quality. Indeed, a pressman of the time wrote: 'A wonderful and realistic naval battle.'<sup>17</sup>

The film was quite widely shown, not only in Germany (through Lubin's sales) but also apparently in France, where a film entitled 'Le Bombardement de TienTsin' was shown by the Royal Bioscope in August 1901. I take this to be the Lubin film, for Tientsin is just opposite to Taku, and this name might have been used because it was better known to the French public by then.<sup>18</sup>

An intriguing account survives by a spectator who saw this film at the time. Edmund Cousins was only a child when he went with his family to a local public hall to see a film advertised as the bombardment of the Taku forts by Allied warships. The family had just returned to England from China, where they had been refugees from the Boxer Uprising. Cousins claims that they 'had been present at the actual bombardment', and for that reason, 'it was adjudged suitable that this should be the first motion-picture that I should see, and I was accordingly taken'.<sup>19</sup> His account is worth quoting at length, because it confirms both that fake films were sometimes claimed to be genuine, and that spectators on occasion saw through this sham:

'Sitting in the dark on a cane-seated chair I had a vivid mental picture of the real affair; the low, flat line of the mud forts a mile or so inland; the British and Japanese gunboats out in the harbour, the screaming of an occasional shell overhead, and the tiny white puff and cloud of black dust that marked its destination. We waited, eagerly, for this experience to be miraculously reborn.

I am convinced, looking back, that without the title which was considerably displayed we should have had no idea that it was the bombardment of the Taku forts we were witnessing. A model of a European mediaeval fortress, with towers at each corner reminiscent of the Tower Bridge, stood in a small lake, and round it swam several toy clockwork launches of a type and size then popular at 3/7 each [about \$1] (I owned one myself). Now and then a tiny puff of smoke would issue from the side of one of these vessels, and the top of a tower, as though by mutual agreement, would splash down into the water.

When the lights went up my mother, brother, and I sat gazing at each other in bewilderment, while the rest of the audience roared, clapped, and stamped its approval of the masterpiece. "Was that it?" said my mother, dazed.'

### **Other US fakes**

Apart from Lubin, a couple of other producers made Boxer Uprising fakes in the USA. The Edison company produced a film entitled *Boxer Massacres in*

*Pekin* (though, like the Lubin Taku bombardment film, this might have been a buy-in).<sup>20</sup> Another producer who faked the conflict was Edward Amet, who made a film entitled *Execution of Six Boxers*.<sup>21</sup> To stage this scene, Amet called upon friends and colleagues from the Waukegan area to re-enact the conflict (he also faked the Boer war in this way). A surviving Amet production still, with 'Boxers' armed with curved sword-spears, strongly suggests that a film on this subject was indeed made. [Fig. 4] A participant later recounted that a beheading scene, complete with red coloured water for blood, which was acted by Amet's brothers Herbert and Arthur, provoked the local authorities to curtail the film's public showing.<sup>22</sup>

### **Mitchell and Kenyon**

In July 1900 the British film company Mitchell and Kenyon released a series of fake war films, shot in the Lancashire area, relating to the Boer and Boxer conflicts. There were some ten Boer War dramas and four about the China events. Because the latter were made in the relatively early stage of the crisis, before the relief of the legations, they represent the Boxer threat and the barbarities of which these Boxers were deemed capable, rather than reflecting the allied response. The titles of the four films were:

*Attack on a Mission Station*  
*Attempted Capture of an English Nurse and Children*  
*The Assassination of a British Sentry*  
*The Clever Correspondent*<sup>23</sup>

A full synopsis of each film can be found in John Barnes' volume for 1900, so I won't restate this here, but one journal offered a brief summary:

'...here we see the attacks of murderous Boxers upon Mission stations and white children. The assassination of a British sentry, and the capture and execution of the "heathen Chinees," forms the thrilling theme for another film, while yet one more depicts the clever way in which a correspondent outwits and vanquishes two Boxers.'<sup>24</sup>

The films were initially advertised on 14 July 1900, by the firm of John Wrench & Son, implying that this company also produced the films.<sup>25</sup> However, I have now found another listing of the films, which confirms John Barnes' suspicion that these were M&K films. A description in *The Photographic Dealer*, September 1900, notes: 'The above films are made by Messrs. Mitchell & Kenyon, and are supplied to the trade by Messrs. Wrench & Son, 50 Gray's Inn Road, London.'<sup>26</sup> So M&K produced them and Wrench was only the distributor, and what's more not the only one, for two other firms also handled these films in subsequent months: Harrison & Co. distributed *Boxers Sacking a Missionary Station*, which is more than likely the M&K film, *Attack on a Mission Station* and Walker, Turner, Dawson distributed all four titles.<sup>27</sup> Such an active rental history – with three distributors – suggests that these films were popular, as one of the trade writers predicted:

'Although these films were not actually taken at the seat of war, still they are sure to be very popular during the coming season. We have

had an opportunity afforded us of seeing the negatives of the following subjects, and can testify to their general excellence. Nothing is wanting in definition, and the subjects are posed in a most satisfactory manner and full of excitement.<sup>28</sup>

A report of a showing in Newcastle of 'wonderfully reproduced scenes in the China and Boer Wars', suggests that they went down well, and they were the penultimate item on the programme, a typical placing for 'hit' items.<sup>29</sup> It seems that *Attack on a Mission Station* was the most noticed film, and this survives in the NFTVA.<sup>30</sup> Incidentally, Wrench were perfectly open that these were *faked* war films and called them exactly this in their ads, even drawing attention to the advantages of fakes over genuine war films in *The Era* in July when the films were released (which I have quoted in Chapter 2).

### Pathé

The Pathé company in France produced a series of four fake films about the Boxer Uprising. It is not known exactly when the films were made, but sometime after M&K's and Lubin's, for they reflect a later stage of the conflict, after the allied victories. The films were distributed by Warwick from September, by Walter Gibbons in November, and by British Pathé too. The titles, as given in Pathé's 1903 British catalogue were:

532. *An Engagement Near the Walls of Peking*

533. *After the Bombardment of Tien-Tsin*

534. *A Missionary Martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou. Intervention of the Allied Troops*

535. *An Execution in Peking*

Two of the films showed military intervention by allied forces, one depicted Boxers attacking a mission station and subsequent rescue by the allies, and the last represented the execution of a mandarin. [see **Box** for more detailed list] Though it has until now never been identified as such, the last film survives in the NFTVA as *Beheading a Chinese Boxer*. I make this identification based on the action in the surviving print matching the catalogue description (decapitation followed by the head being shown around on a spear) and the length also matching that in Pathé's British catalogue (32').

The titles were available in Britain by September 1900, distributed by the Warwick Trading Co. with the titles: *Under the Walls of Peking*, *Chinese Attack on a Mission*, and *Chinese Prisoners and Decapitation*, the last being two of the films spliced together (533 and 535).<sup>31</sup> The catalogue states, with Warwick's typical honesty, that these films about the war in China, 'are only representations, photographed in France', and gives the additional detail that they were shot 'at a military tournament'. So this means that Pathé wouldn't even have needed to make the settings or indeed the costumes for the performers: all had been done already for the tournament, and Pathé just had to film an existing production. One wonders whether this practice had been followed for other war fakes; certainly filming existing productions would cut costs.

As well as being distributed by Warwick, the films were shortly afterwards available in the UK from Walter Gibbons, listed in his ads with no specific indication that they were fakes. [Fig. 5] Possibly one of the titles was distributed by another company in the UK, and the films were later listed by the Pathé company itself in both its French and British catalogues.<sup>32</sup> This rental history was therefore as active as that for the M&K films, suggesting that these Pathé films too were popular, or at least that the renters thought that they would be.

Henri Bousquet has found three places in Europe where these films were screened between 1900 and 1902.<sup>33</sup> The 1900 screening, in Limoges, was reviewed in the local newspaper as follows (the film referred to was probably the first):

‘The recent events in China are likely to encourage an appreciation of French patriotism, when one sees our brave troops, swords in hand, conquering places in Peking.’<sup>34</sup>

The chauvinistic tone of this review is an indication of how some fakes, with their clear-cut victories by ‘our’ side, were received at the time by some audiences, or at least by some reporters. The popularity of other fake Boxer films (e.g. by M&K) suggests that such a triumphalist reaction by audiences might not have been uncommon.

Most interesting is the surviving title, listed as film number 4, which is described differently by its various distributors, especially in regard to the principal character, the condemned man. For Warwick the subject of execution is a Boxer; but Gibbons describes him as a Chinese soldier executed *by* Boxers; while Pathé has him as a mandarin (a high-ranking Chinese). This is then a classic example of how a film (especially a war-related film) could be re-described in a catalogue – or indeed in a showman’s verbal description – and therefore ‘re-interpreted’ to give a different impression.<sup>35</sup>



**Box:**

**The Pathé Boxer Uprising series**  
(descriptions by various British distributors)

This series of four fake films was distributed in the UK by three different companies, each of which had their own title for the group of four films: Warwick called the group *Representation of Chinese War Scenes*; Gibbons' title was *The Latest Chinese War Pictures*; while British Pathé dubbed the series, *Events in China*. Each company also had different titles for each of the four films, and different catalogue numbers and descriptions. I list all this data under the relevant film, and I have numbered the films 1 to 4 for clarity.<sup>36</sup> (Note that Warwick combined two of the films into one of 100 feet, *Chinese Prisoners and Decapitation* [7206], but I have separated this and listed it as the two original films.)

Abbreviations: WTC = Warwick Trading Co. catalogue, Sep 1900, p.177. Gib = Gibbons' ad, *Era*, 17 Nov 1900, p.30. P-GB = Pathé British catalogue, 1903.

**1. *Under The Walls of Peking* [WTC, 7205]; *Outside the Walls of Peking* [Gib, 1035]; *An Engagement Near the Walls of Peking* [P-GB, 532]**

This scene is a natural reproduction of a fort and walls of Peking, which the Chinese are defending against the assaults of the Allied Troops, who storm the fort after climbing the steep hill and walls, while many of the combatants are seen to fall and roll down the steep incline. 75 ft. [WTC]

A strong body of Boxer Troops is seen entrenched on a hillside, the walls of Peking being distinctly seen in the distance. They have an old piece of ordnance with them, and repeatedly discharge this and their rifles at the advancing Allies. Our brave troops eventually rush the position, many, however, falling in the attempt. The Boxers are taken prisoners, and the victors' colours are seen proudly floating in the van of the column now advancing on Peking. 90 ft. [Gib]

The Chinese hidden behind the walls of Peking attempt a sortie to repulse the allied troops: but the European forces rush to assault, enter the city and hoist their standards on the walls. A lively fire is kept up on both sides. 80 ft. [P-GB]

**2. *Chinese Prisoners* [part of WTC, 7206]; *The Allied Troops Taking Chinese Prisoners Over Tien-Tsin Bridge, Outside Peking* [Gib, 1036]; *After the Bombardment of Tien-Tsin* [P-GB, 533]<sup>37</sup>**

... shows various squads of the Allied Troops escorting several batches of captured Boxers over a narrow bridge, connecting two sections of the fort over a deep moat, the sides of which are strewn with the killed and wounded. [WTC]

This picture shows various detachments of the Allied Troops leading Prisoners over the now famous Tien-Tsin Bridge. The various Banners waving as the different sections of the Regiments come into view, combined with the rugged scenery around this notorious place, make a very stirring picture. Length, 85 ft. [Gib]

The allied troops construct a bridge across a stream and cross over on their way to the town, escorting some boxer prisoners. 100 ft. [P-GB]

**3. *Chinese Attack On a Mission*** [WTC, 7204]; *The Burning of a Missionary and the Dispersing of the Infamous Monsters By the Allied Troops* [Gib, 1037]; *A Missionary Martyred at Pao-Ting-Fou. Intervention of the Allied Troops* [P-GB, 534]

A horde of Boxers are seen descending on a Mission station, and after dragging out the Missionary whom they hang up by the heels, they surround and fire the buildings. After running their sword spears through the body of the unfortunate missionary they build a fire under him, but during this proceeding the Chinese are put to the sword and routed by a squad of the Allied Troops, who suddenly put in an appearance. 75 ft. [WTC]

A very thrilling incident, showing the Chinese Boxers hanging up a missionary to burn. Huge flames and dense volumes of smoke are now seen rising from the fire, over which the ill-fated missionary hangs upside down. The infamous monsters now commence dancing with glee, but their merriment is cut short by the arrival of the allied troops who kill some of the rebels, dispersing the others. The picture is now filled with a multitude of troops, thus bringing to a finish one of the most exciting incidents ever portrayed by the camera. Length, 90ft. [Gib]

Boxers seize a missionary, and hang him by the feet over a fire, afterwards setting fire to the mission station. A detachment of the allies comes on the scene and charges them with fixed bayonets, putting them to flight, and killing a good many. 100 ft. [P-GB]

**4. *Decapitation*** [part of WTC, 7206]; *The War In China. Boxers Decapitating a Prisoner* [Gib, 1039]; *An Execution in Peking* [P-GB, 535]. Held in NFTVA.

...represents the punishment meted out to a condemned Boxer who is led forth by his pigtail, made to kneel in a stooping position, when the executioner cuts off his head with one blow of his sword. The head is then set up on a pole as a warning to others. [WTC]

An unfortunate Chinese soldier, taken prisoner by the rebels, is brought in bound and forced to kneel in the centre of a circle of Boxers; the headsman marches in, brandishing his broad-bladed sword, with one clean cut he causes the soldier's head to fall to the ground. It is immediately picked up and impaled on a spear, while the Boxers execute a characteristic war dance round the head of their unfortunate victim. Length, 85ft. [Gib]

A mandarin is condemned to death by the Court of Peking and is executed ; his head is placed at the end of a pike and insulted by the Chinese populace. 32 ft. [P-GB]

My description of NFTVA print: On a hillside is a semi-circle of over twenty men with spears. A shaven-headed prisoner is brought in by two men, one of whom has a sword. The prisoner kneels and, as his pigtail is held by the second man, the swordsman chops off his head. There is a splice in the film at this point, and we see the prisoner still in place with the 'severed head' on the ground. The head is then shown around by the second man, who takes one of the men's spears, sticks it in the ground and puts the head on it. The spearmen parade round and round it. 32 ft.

[NFTVA 602819]

### **Troops scaling Peking's walls**

I will discuss one further Boxer Uprising film which is relevant; though rather than being a fake as such, it might simply have been a re-titled existing film. An extraordinary letter has survived in the American National Archives which refers to this film. The letter is from a certain George Campbell, who was an attorney, a noted writer on public issues, and former US Senator, based in Kansas but still with connections in Washington.<sup>38</sup> He wrote to the Secretary of War on 22 February 1902. [Fig. 7] His letter reads as follows:

'Dear Sir,

In the kinetoscopic pictures, showing the part taken by the troops of the various nations in the capture of Peking, the U.S. troops are represented as assigned to a place near the wall. One American soldier looks up towards the top of the Great Wall and immediately begins to climb it, and is followed by many other soldiers. They reach the top of the wall, and fire at the Chinese soldiers within the walls; and descend the other side of the wall into the interior, and open the great gates to the other nations. Is this representation borne out by the records of your office? Respectfully, Geo Campbell'.<sup>39</sup>

Two key questions arise from this. One is Campbell's own query: did American forces really take part in such an action? The other, more pressing question for us, is about the true identity of this film (or 'kinetoscopic picture', as he calls it).

To the first, the answer is that US forces were indeed involved in an action similar to that depicted in the film as described. In fact it was one of the key exploits during the assault on Peking on 14 August 1900, and took place near the south-eastern gate (the Tung Pien Men). The Russian forces had blasted a hole in the outer gate but had become pinned down at the inner gate by Chinese gunfire. When American troops of the Fourteenth Infantry arrived they too could find no way through and decided to climb the wall even though they had no ladders. This was an act of heroism which became the stuff of legend. Once on top they soon controlled a sizable section of the wall, relieving the Russians at the gate.<sup>40</sup>

The description of the film in Campbell's letter matches this in some respects, for the film did depict the climbing, and also showed Americans helping troops of allied nations.<sup>41</sup> This issue, of whether the film's action matched the original battlefield action, was the crucial point for both Campbell and the War Department. It seems that they were not so concerned about whether the film was actually taken on site (for Campbell apparently realized it was a fake) but simply that it got the events right. He twice employs terms which indicate that he understood that the film was staged, for he uses the words 'represented' and 'representation'. And the official response too was about what happened, not about whether an actual cameraman on site had filmed the wall climbing.<sup>42</sup>

The question remains, what was the film that Campbell saw? One possibility is that it was an existing Biograph film depicting soldiers climbing a wall. Six

frames from such a film were reproduced in a article about Biograph's productions in *Everybody's Magazine* of 1901, with the caption, 'French soldiers scaling Peking's walls', and it was implied that this film was shot by Ackerman during the conflict.<sup>43</sup> [Fig. 6] But these frames are not from Peking, and are actually from a Biograph film (no.76E) shot at the gymnastic school in Joinville, France in 1897, showing French soldiers in a wall-climbing drill !<sup>44</sup> The Biograph catalogue describes it as follows: 'This is a really remarkable exhibition. The wall is about 40ft high, and a battalion of soldiers by the use of scaling ropes clamber over it with amazing rapidity.'<sup>45</sup>

Showmen might have been using this Joinville film to represent the heroic American action in scaling Peking's walls, but there are some discrepancies between the summary and Campbell's description of what he saw. Campbell says that after the soldiers reach the top of the wall they fire at the Chinese soldiers inside the city, then descend and open the great gates to the other nations. There is none of this in the Joinville film, and soldiers merely clamber over the wall using scaling ropes.<sup>46</sup> So another possibility is that the film which Campbell described was Pathé's *An Engagement near the Walls of Peking*, listed above. Part of the summary of this states that the 'Allied Troops... storm the fort after climbing the steep hill and walls', which does pretty much match the action as described by Campbell. It is always possible, of course that there was another, lost, film which matches Campbell's description even more exactly.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Attack on a China Mission***

The most important film made about the Boxer Uprising was surely James Williamson's *Attack on a China Mission*. John Barnes describes it as, 'one of the key films in the history of the cinema', which 'has the most fully developed narrative of any film made in England up to that time'; Frank Gray hails it as 'one of the most sophisticated "edited" films of its time', a classic 'rescue narrative'. Georges Sadoul regarded it as equal in importance with the later *Life of an American Fireman* and *The Great Train Robbery* in the development of film narrative methods. It has been extensively described and analysed by Barnes and Gray, and what I offer here is mostly based on their work, with a few additional pieces of information and interpretations of my own.<sup>48</sup>

Williamson's film was made in the autumn of 1900, and one source says November, which is possible, as the first advertisement that I have seen for the film was the following month.<sup>49</sup> It is even possible it was earlier, for there was a screening at the beginning of November in Brighton of a film representing an 'attack on a mission station by Boxers', which would be either the Williamson or the M&K version.<sup>50</sup>

Williamson was an experienced filmmaker by 1900, and had already made at least 122 films when he made *Attack on a China Mission* late that year. He was already known for his 'one-minute comedies', as well as actualities. A few of the latter were multi-shot, but, as Gray notes, these were merely 'compilation films', and did not depict sequential action by dissecting a scene through varying camera position and framing.<sup>51</sup> This is where *Attack on a China Mission* was different, for this four-shot work of 230 feet – an

unprecedented length for an English fiction film – was Williamson's first edited multi-shot narrative film, and 'its appearance marks his move from the production of 'non-continuous' to 'continuous' film narratives'.<sup>52</sup> The following is my summary of the Williamson film, based on my own viewing and the descriptions of Barnes, Gray and the original catalogue.<sup>53</sup>

Shot 1. Outside the mission compound, with the Boxers running in and firing.

Shot 2. Wide shot of the house inside the compound. The missionary is reading, with his daughter(?) He looks up to see the Boxers (one can just be seen in left frame), then sends his daughter inside, holding onto his wife and baby. He shoots at the Boxers, but his ammunition runs out and he fights at close quarters with another Boxer armed with a sword. He is overcome, and left presumably killed. The Boxers enter the house, more appear in right frame. The wife, who has taken refuge in the house, appears on the balcony waving a handkerchief.

Shot 3. View of the front gate, seen from inside the compound. A party of sailors race to the rescue in the distance, they climb over a fence and advance through the open gates, kneeling to volley fire as they approach to the rescue, under command of a mounted officer.

Shot 4. Wide shot of the house (a continuation of shot two). The Boxers are dragging the daughter out of the house, which they have set on fire, at the moment the bluejackets appear from the left of frame; a struggle takes place with the Boxers; the mounted officer rides up and carries the daughter out of the mêlée. The missionary's wife rushes out of the house pointing to the balcony, where she has left her child; three sailors mount on each other's shoulders and land the child safely in the mother's arms. The Boxers are finally overcome and taken prisoner.

There is more of an attempt at realism here than might be apparent at first viewing, and in this sense it was probably a more effective fake than we can today appreciate.<sup>54</sup> For example, while a Hove house (Ivy Lodge) might seem to have little in common with a Chinese mission station, some ecclesiastical buildings in China were western in style, and contemporary reports had described the British Legation in Peking as 'a garden of some ten acres, partly occupied by buildings, and surrounded with a high wall of sun-dried clay'.<sup>55</sup> Barnes notes that the bluejacket rescuers were played by 'a contingent of professional sailors', adding to the sense of realism.<sup>56</sup> As they come to the rescue they kneel to fire volleys, which to the modern eye looks stilted and unnatural, but this now outmoded method of firing was standard in the British forces in this period. Even the masses of smoke produced when the guns are discharged is not so far from reality, as ammunition was still in the process of transition to smokeless powder in 1900, and as Barnes states, it also enhances the dramatic effect of the fighting.<sup>57</sup>

Though it was Williamson's first attempt at a serious dramatic reconstruction of a contemporary theme, he was following the precedents of numerous reconstructions of incidents in the Boer and other wars, as well as Georges Méliès with his film of the Dreyfus affair. On the face of it, the plot seems very like the M&K film *Attack on a Mission Station*, which preceded Williamson's by

about three months, but this does not necessarily mean there was plagiarism, for probably both drew on a similar source, such as the daily press.<sup>58</sup>

The press, especially the illustrated press, is indeed a likely inspiration: a virulently anti-Boxer tone permeated newspapers and magazines at this time, and Williamson cannot but have noticed and absorbed this. Indeed, he interpreted the conflict in his film as a simple battle of good winning out against evil, or as Frank Gray characterises it, the victory of Empire and Christendom over the 'yellow peril'. Gray adds that in this way, the film may be seen as, 'a meeting point between the histories of Orientalism and early cinema'.<sup>59</sup>

It is plain that the film was very popular, due to a combination of the subject matter being drawn from topical events, and the style of the film with its clearly-told story based on a 'rescue narrative' of great power.<sup>60</sup> From first release, the film's emotional pulling-power was remarked on. A trade journal in December praised it as, 'full of interest and excitement from start to finish', while a newspaper added, 'the attack on a Mission Station... proved a very exciting scene'.<sup>61</sup> An early exhibitor, reminiscing about some of his early successes, was asked if he remembered *the film*: 'Oh, my word, yes,' he replied, 'Yes, rather, yes that was very popular.'<sup>62</sup> It was something of an exhibition phenomenon, for it was being shown through 1901 in various locations in England, and was 'everywhere received with great applause'.<sup>63</sup> Early the following year a leading entertainment journal could conclude, 'This film has been before the public over a year, and is still a trump card'.<sup>64</sup>

## **BOXER ALLEGORIES: MÉLIÈS AND OTHERS**

As we have seen in earlier chapters, Georges Méliès faked several of the wars in this era. In this case, though, he didn't make a fake as such, but rather a symbolic representation of the struggle in China, and one with an unusually pro-China message. The film, made in 1900[?] and sadly now lost, was entitled (in English) *The Congress of Nations in China: A Topical Creation*, and it was also known more descriptively as *China Against the Allies*. This vignette ran about one minute – Méliès' typical brevity – and the catalogue description was as follows (my translation):

'A magician presents a circular piece of paper from which he removes the flags of the allies. Then from each flag he produces a soldier from the respective country, and finally he produces a Chinaman. But hardly have the allies seen the latter than they pounce on him and try to cut him into pieces. The funniest part of our story is that the Chinaman escapes in a balloon, with an expression of childish innocence on his face as the allies try to cut him up.' (20 m.)<sup>65</sup>

Méliès who was often sympathetic to the underdog (as witness his films of *l'Affaire Dreyfus*) proved true to form in this case, and his is probably the only one among all the films/fakes of the Boxer Uprising which does not take an anti-Boxer stance. Furthermore, while clearly light-hearted and witty in Méliès'

usual style, the film is also intelligent in its action depicting a metaphorical chopping up, for an underlying cause of the Boxer Uprising was indeed that China was being cut up and taken over by foreign powers. In having the Chinaman escape, the filmmaker was expressing an aspiration, and not of course describing the current situation, because after the Uprising China was subject to extreme punitive action by the indignant foreign powers. Méliès notes at the end of the catalogue description, 'This parable requires a little commentary during projection.' One can imagine what he himself might have had to say about the wished-for escape of his innocent hero, China.

An American film by the Vitagraph Company was produced soon afterwards, in the Autumn of 1900, with virtually the same title as the Méliès film, *The Congress of Nations*. It sounds almost as interesting, though for different reasons (and sadly, it also does not survive). As well as copying Méliès' title, the plot synopsis too suggests that it was inspired by the French film. A stage magician has a hoop covered with white paper from which the flags of Germany, Russia, Ireland, England and China are brought forth, and from each a soldier of the corresponding country is produced.<sup>66</sup> So far it matches the Méliès version, but then the plot diverges. It seems (synopses disagree) that the other powers try to grab the Chinese representative, but through a dissolve effect he is transformed into a Statue of Liberty, and then other national flags appear, an American one most prominent, and there is a transition to a patriotic tableau.<sup>67</sup>

The similarities with the Méliès version are evident, but in its American transformation the pro-Chinese tone of Méliès has become a piece of patriotic American propaganda, in which China literally disappears, and America dominates. This actually matched genuine events, for after the Boxer Uprising, China was considered fair game to be punished and plundered.

As if to reflect this mood, in September R.W. Paul made an allegorical film, *The Yellow Peril*, with a magical tone, and full of transformations and imps. It has many similarities to the two titles I have just described: a 'European conjurer' as the leading role, the presence of allied forces, and a Boxer as a floating, disembodied head (rather like Méliès' balloon). The narrative is complex, but in summary the film has a Boxer appropriating the allies' bags of gold (another meaning for the 'yellow peril') until the conjurer manages to take it back. He then cuts open the Boxer's head, and imps of disorder emerge, but as they are about to be attacked by warriors of the allies, they transform into a symbol of China, and peace breaks out, the allies laying their flags at China's feet.<sup>68</sup>

If the Chinese are merely the losers in Vitagraph's film, in Paul's piece they are the villains, appropriating the money of the allied powers – an extraordinary insinuation from the filmmaker, given that the exact opposite was the case, as China had been plundered by other nations for years. By the end of Paul's story China has none of the allies' money and has been humbled, as peace is effectively imposed by the allies.

## EXHIBITION OF BOXER UPRISING FILMS

### Increasingly complex film combinations

In December 1900 a writer in a well known British music hall and theatrical journal expressed the opinion that the Boxer Uprising wouldn't feature strongly on the halls that Winter, 'managements being quick to recognize the general indifference with which the public has regarded that particular crisis'.<sup>69</sup> It is not clear where he got the impression of 'general indifference', but in any case this was not borne out either by the actions of managements or of audiences at halls and elsewhere, and the Boxer Uprising became a popular theme in films and other media.

In the Spring of 1901, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show presented a re-enactment of the attacks on Tientsin and Peking and the capture of these cities.<sup>70</sup> But the famous siege of the legations remained the central and quintessential episode of the Uprising, in media representations and in the popular imagination. It constituted a perfect dramatic sequence of threat and struggle followed by salvation: the ideal 'rescue narrative' to use Frank Gray's felicitous phrase. The siege was the central event, for example, in a great military spectacular mounted at Earl's Court in London as long as a year after the conflict, with hordes of Boxers shown besieging the Legations.<sup>71</sup>

Films related to the Boxer Uprising were shown at various kinds of entertainment venues – music halls, fairgrounds and public halls – and the audience reactions were frequently highly positive.<sup>72</sup> I have found few references to the screening of Boxer films abroad, so my coverage will be based on British examples. The popularity of the films emerges clearly from reviews of screenings especially from the Midlands and north of England.<sup>73</sup> Some interesting exhibition practices are also evident from these sources, notably concerning the way different kinds of films of wars and of genres were combined and mixed together in the shows.<sup>74</sup>

One kind of mixing was in the combination of wars. A strong tendency emerges in exhibition practice at this time for films of the Boxer and Boer wars to be shown in the same section of the programme, these concurrent conflicts being, in a sense, conflated together. The advantages to the showman were that more film material would be available for two wars rather than one, and that the sense of national (British) triumph would be reinforced. Another possible benefit of combining wars was that the programme item so created was more of a 'feature' than a news film about one particular event.

Such 'combined war' programmes or sections of programmes proved popular. As early as the beginning of October 1900, 'representations of incidents' of the wars in South Africa and China were being shown at Wall's Boer Warograph in Nottingham to 'general approval' and, the reporter noted, 'no part of the fair seems to attract more attention'.<sup>75</sup> Similarly in Newcastle in December, films of the China and Boer wars were said to be, 'attracting enormous audiences'. The report stated: 'There is frequently quite a crush to gain admission, and notwithstanding the vast capacity of the hall many visitors are glad to find standing accommodation'.<sup>76</sup> Even into March of the



following year a similar combination of views of the 'Boer and China wars' were the chief attraction:

'...and judging by the enthusiasm which was displayed at both the matinee and the evening performance, the stay in Nottingham bade fair to be attended with unqualified success... The photographs of the stirring events in South Africa and China were received with unbounded delight.'<sup>77</sup>

Another kind of programmed mixing of Boxer films also took place: the mixing of genres. In this way one had genuine and fake Boxer war films being grouped together, to create a special section in the programme about this far eastern war. Such exhibitions lasted for quite some time after the war had finished. A show in Brighton in late 1900, partly about the Boxer events, 'Sons of the Empire', seems to have integrated live elements as well as lantern slides, actuality views and 'composed' films (i.e. fakes).<sup>78</sup> At a show in Northampton as late as the summer of 1901, the second part of the programme was largely made up of war scenes, including the Naval Brigade setting off to China, followed by the (fake) storming of the Taku Forts, and then the landing of the Naval Brigade – the fake being sandwiched between the two actuality films.<sup>79</sup> A similar mixed group of staged and actuality films was shown earlier in the year when the North American Animated Photo Company exhibited three Boxer scenes – the bombardment of the Taku Forts, 'an attack by the Boxers' and 'a street scene in Pekin' – which were 'rendered startlingly realistic by the aid of gunpowder and various mechanical effects, and to the accompaniment of military music'. All this 'fairly took the audience by surprise, and a repetition was demanded'.<sup>80</sup> The latter two shows took place during the year after the main Boer and Boxer events had occurred, and it is impressive that such films had such a lifetime. Even so, by May 1901, there was a hint of a tailing off of interest. At the St. James's Hall in Manchester, though some new films of the 'China and Boer wars' still 'drew an enormous audience', the critic added that the spectators: '...probably grew weary and eye-tired' from too many films.<sup>81</sup>

## **CONCLUSION: FILMIC PREJUDICE?**

I concluded the previous chapter by suggesting that the two most significant developments which came out of the filming of the Boxer Uprising were to do with film style and political significance. I would see the same two issues as being most significant with regard to cinema on the 'home front'. As my conclusion to this chapter I will examine, firstly, the issue of film style; and then will move on to discuss, in more depth, the political or propaganda content of films and screenings about the Boxer events.

### **Style**

I would suggest that the most interesting stylistic development in exhibition of war films at this time was the way in which the mix of films in the programme became more complex. Films of various kinds to do with the Boxer events were programmed together, as were films of other wars. Evidently, exhibitors

were continuing to experiment with forms and combinations, and warfare was continuing to be a strong stimulus for these kinds of imaginative exhibition practices.

As far as staged films were concerned, the Boxer conflict marked a very significant point, for the conflict was the inspiration for Williamson's *Attack on a China Mission*. With this subject the war fake reached its apotheosis. This was the film which moved fakery into mainstream fictional filmmaking, for it is possible to argue that fakes, being the dominant form of acted stories on screen in the 1900 era, helped 'set the stage' for fictional narrative films as the dominant kind of motion picture, and Williamson's film provided the final link in the chain. I will have more to say about the relationship between fakes and narrative development in the Conclusion to this thesis.

### **Politics**

The Boxer conflict came to public attention through attacks on westerners in China; the crisis culminated in the siege, and reached fruition with a multi-national, eight-nation response, which punished China as well as exacting reparations. The result was almost total triumph for the allied nations, and this was reflected in the staged films about the events, and in the triumphalist music hall reactions from audiences. Such reactions mirrored a generally demeaning, 'orientalist' attitude to the Chinese found in some western media of the time.<sup>82</sup> Before going on to conclude our analysis of the message in these films, it might be as well to look at this wider, media context.

Firstly, it is important to note that in much adult non-fiction literature the image of China and her people remained positive, as it did, surprisingly, in some popular news reporting.<sup>83</sup> And furthermore, if some of the western media displayed 'orientalist' and prejudiced views about the Chinese – and had done so for many years [Fig. 1] – the reverse, 'occidentalism', was prevalent in China. For example, in the run-up to the siege of the legations, the Boxers spread their negative propaganda about foreigners using handbills and traditional puppet shows. In one of these shows the puppet characters were depicted in national costume, with the addition of a pig, which, it was said, 'always represents the missionary'.<sup>84</sup> [Fig. 2]

But, as xenophobic as such representations were, these Chinese shows were scarcely 'mass media', and the effects if any in China would have been sporadic. On the other hand, the western media, putting the other point of view to populations in industrialized countries through mechanically reproduced media, would have reached more people, more systematically. Here the predominant message about China was of the savage Boxers and their revolt, and of their ultimate defeat – a triumph of good versus evil'. This theme was seen in the performance media which I mentioned earlier, and was also prevalent in novels and stories, which made heroes of westerners and stereotyped the Chinese as a fanatic enemy. Such narratives were widely disseminated: one novel about missionary heroism during the Boxer events went through numerous editions and translations and remained in print to the 1940s.<sup>85</sup> Some historians argue that plots and themes of this kind reflected and helped to consolidate a sea change in the west's image of China following

the Uprising. In juvenile literature the Chinese race fell from commanding relative respect in 1870s and 80s to abhorrence after the Boxer events; the Chinese were now demonised as the 'yellow peril'.<sup>86</sup>

In all the fake and symbolic films about the Boxer Uprising, with the exception of Méliès' film, the tone was one of 'yellow peril' – of hostility toward the Chinese and outright abhorrence for the Boxers. As we have seen, these films often depicted the gruesome habits and barbaric attacks by Boxers (all the worse because their victims were missionaries, men of God). In this respect the demonisation goes beyond what we see in the fake films of other wars in this period: for example, Spanish and Filipino fighters were depicted as merely cowardly, Boers were shown as sneaky, but not utterly savage.

The depicted barbarity is perhaps the key point. One might say that the Boxers were indeed barbaric: they did kill missionaries and their families and other Christians. Yet they had some cause for their anger, in that China had been plundered for years by foreign powers. But there was no effort to portray this history in these fake films. Only in the symbolic film by Méliès do we get some sense that China was being exploited and that international equity was called for. What's more, as discussed in my previous chapter, a scarcely more sympathetic view of the Chinese emerged from the cameramen who went to film in China – Ackerman and the like – for they were based with, and sympathetic to, the armies which were fighting the remnants of the Boxers.

One feels that perhaps this stress on defeating and humiliating the Chinese is what many spectators at the time expected and wanted. As we noted in discussing the Pathé fakes, one writer gloried in seeing a film representing, 'our brave troops... conquering places in Peking'. He hoped that this vivid representation of his countrymen re-asserting themselves in this manner might help to encourage French patriotism. One doesn't know if such films or the anti-Boxer fakes did have this effect or did help to perpetuate or engender negative stereotypes about the Chinese. All one can say is that they can't have helped to instil cultural tolerance.<sup>87</sup>

All in all then, the representation of the Boxer Uprising in cinema cannot be seen in a very happy light. While filmmakers might have made significant technical and stylistic advances in representing this conflict (I am thinking of Williamson, especially), the content of these films, whether fiction or non-fiction, was one-sided and bigoted. In retrospect one might well trace the origins of the propaganda film to these xenophobic efforts of 1900.

**Box:**

**The first film referring to China and to warfare (1895)**

Unlikely as it might seem, one of the first films ever made (probably Britain's very first), contains a reference to a landmark in Chinese history which helped lead to the Boxer Uprising. Birt Acres' *Arrest of a Pickpocket* of April 1895 was an acted film, depicting a scuffle and arrest, and takes place in front of a selection of posters with headlines from newspapers, significantly including a reference to the recent peace treaty between Japan and China. This treaty, signed by Li Hung-Chang at Shimonoseki on the 17th of April 1895, ended the Sino-Japanese War.<sup>88</sup> It obligated the defeated China to pay Japan a substantial indemnity, and gave a green light to western powers to increase their incursions into Chinese territory (as discussed in my previous chapter). Acres' little film therefore, albeit unknowingly, marks a crucial moment in Chinese history.<sup>89</sup> [Fig. 11] This film was recently discovered (in 2005) by the Sheffield-based National Fairground Archive, and has been restored on their behalf.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> No staged films were made in other countries which participated in the allied action in China, such as Germany, Russia and Japan. Komatsu notes that, while Japanese cameramen made this important actuality film of the events, 'Japanese film producers never took up the Boxer Rebellion as a form of fiction, as, for example, some of their British counterparts did.' Hiroshi Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War 1', in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, edited by D. Desser and A. Nolletti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.237.

<sup>2</sup> Sopocy counts seven fakes of the war, but since he wrote his book more information has come to light. See Martin Sopocy, *James Williamson: Studies and Documents of a Pioneer of the Film Narrative* (Madison, N.J.; London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Associated University Presses, 1998), p.40.

<sup>3</sup> I have identified as extant Lubin's *Bombarding and Capturing the Taku Forts* and Pathé's *An Execution in Peking*; and I have shown that four alleged M&K fakes are indeed by that company.

<sup>4</sup> Jay Leyda, *Dianying: Electric Shadows. An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972), p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Val Royle, 'To Attract the Public', *The Showman*, Sep 1900, p.16-17. Royle noted that at that time, China was little known among the British public, and the ancient manners and customs could be potentially 'highly interesting', and a 'picturesque and realistic show representing them could not fail to be instructive and entertaining'.

<sup>6</sup> Val Royle, op. cit. He added, in the common racist idiom of the day: 'These Chinese could also sing some of their native songs, and with their pigeon [sic] English would excite side-splitting laughter. In their picturesque dress they could not fail to make an interesting show, and one which would attract the public.'

<sup>7</sup> Following Dewey's naval victory, the war in the Philippines and the action against the Boxers, America's thoughts had turned to this part of the world, along with plans for expanded world trade. As film historian Lewis Jacobs wrote, 'Dewey, Hay, and the Open Door were

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perhaps the most talked of people and issues of the day, and movies helped to keep the pot boiling.’

<sup>8</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.287.

<sup>9</sup> S. Lubin, *Complete Catalogue, Lubin's Films* [January 1903], p.54. This film was produced by John F. Frawley and Jacob Blair Smith (?) at Lubin's rooftop studio, 912 Arch Street, Philadelphia, and runs 42 seconds. One author puts the shooting date at July or early August 1900. See Jan-Christopher Horak description in Jay Leyda and Charles Musser, eds., *Before Hollywood : Turn-of-the-Century American Film* (New York: Hudson Hill Press, etc, 1986), p.101.

<sup>10</sup> Horak adds that, ‘Also, the exclusively Caucasian actors are dressed in traditional Chinese, rather than modern, dress, thus reinforcing contemporary stereotypes.’ I assume that by ‘modern’ Horak does not mean western dress, for Chinese people in 1900 still did dress in ‘traditional’ style, as contemporary photographs show, though not always in such ceremonial garb as we see in the Lubin fakes.

<sup>11</sup> This is according to Horak. A couple of these Lubin titles sound similar to the Pathé films, and one wonders if there was some copying going on here in either direction, of plot or of ideas for staging, or of the physical films themselves.

<sup>12</sup> This was one of several films listed in this advertisement, and cost 100 Marks. See *Der Komet* no.808, 15 Sep 1900, p.28. At the end of the year Lubin advertised his films again in Germany, including this film of the storming of the Chinese fortified harbour at Taku. *Der Komet* no.823, 29 Dec 1900, p.28. Incidentally, as Deac Rossell has informed me, this reconstruction of a contemporary event was an unusual kind of film for Lubin to be distributing, as, over the previous few months the Lubin ads had mostly been for comedies, Méliès films, a couple of films of fires, and the Passion Play.

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes known as *Bombardment of Taku Forts, by the Allied Fleets*. Prints are held in the Library of Congress at FLA4979 and in the NFTVA at 605514. The Edison copyright reference was D16704.

<sup>14</sup> Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*.

<sup>15</sup> The Edison catalogue entry is as follows: ‘The scene opens by showing the battleships manoeuvring for a position. They finally draw up in line of battle and commence firing on the shore batteries. Immense volume [sic] of smoke arise from the fleet and from the distant shore. Shots are seen to fall thickly among the vessels and immense bodies of water are thrown up by the explosion of mines. A very exciting naval battle.’ *Edison Films*, July 1901, p.16. Quoted in Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*, no.837.

<sup>16</sup> I measured the length in the 16mm paper print copy at 74’, equivalent to 185’ in 35mm. Niver gives it as 81’, equivalent to 202.5’ in 35mm. Kemp R. Niver, *Early Motion Pictures : The Paper Print Collection in the Library of Congress* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985). Musser gives a 35mm length of 100 ft. rather than 200 ft., but he notes in his introduction that purchasers were given a choice of length for some films.

<sup>17</sup> *NY Clipper*, 1 Sep 1900, p.604. The film was also noticed in the *NY Clipper*, 18 Aug 1900, p.564.

<sup>18</sup> A newspaper of 25 Aug 1901 mentions the screening. Cited in Pierre and Jeanne Berneau, *Le Spectacle Cinématographique à Limoges, de 1896 à 1945* (Paris: AFRHC, 1992), p.36.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund George Cousins, *Filmland in Ferment* (London: Denis Archer, 1932), p.31-33. The family had returned in the summer of 1900 and settled in Bedford. The notice stated that ‘Marvellous, True, and Authentic Moving Pictures of the bombardment of the Taku forts by Allied warships’ were to be shown. This reference was sent me by Tony Fletcher.

<sup>20</sup> This is listed in the Edison catalogue according to Lewis Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film, a Critical History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1964, orig. 1926), p.403.

<sup>22</sup> Kirk J. Kekatos, ‘Edward H. Amet and the Spanish-American War Film’, *Film History* 14, no. 3-4, 2002, p.405-417.

<sup>23</sup> *The Era* 14 July 1900, p.24e. The lengths of the films were, respectively, 87, 60, 91, and 54 feet. They are listed with prices etc, in Robin Whalley and Peter Worden, ‘Forgotten Firm: A Short Chronological Account of Mitchell and Kenyon, Cinematographers’, *Film History* 10, no. 1, 1998, p.35-51.

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<sup>24</sup> 'Faked War Films', PD Aug 1900, p.35. It added, 'The price of the films is 1/- per foot', and this is indeed what was quoted, the prices being: £4 7s.; £3; £4 11s.; £2 14s (in the order of my listing of the films).

<sup>25</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.109, wrote, 'With a company such as Wrench, which dealt in films from so many different sources, it is often impossible to be sure which films were actually made by the firm itself. Denis Gifford, in his *British Film Catalogue*, identifies the producers of the Boxer films, emanating from Wrench, as Mitchell & Kenyon. He may well be right, but I have found no contemporary evidence to support him in this matter. However, we do know that a series of films depicting the 'Procession of the City Imperial Volunteers', also listed by Wrench, were in fact made by Hepworth. So I am inclined to side with Gifford regarding the attribution of the Boxer films.'

<sup>26</sup> 'Chinese War Films', PD Sep 1900, p.67-68.

<sup>27</sup> See Barnes, 1900 volume, p.102, re Harrison (who released the film in July/August). Walker, Turner, Dawson (known as Walturdaw ) offered these 'Interesting scenes representing the troubles with the Boxers in China' ('showing Boxers' barbarity', they noted) in their catalogue, *Animated Photography for the Cinematograph* (c.1900-1901) with exactly the same titles as the M&K originals. Leyda, *Dianying*, p.4 gives alternate titles for two films that Walturdaw distributed: *Attempted Capture of an English Nursery [sic] and Child by Boxers* and *Assassination of an English Citizen by Boxers* He implies that these have survived, and states wrongly that they were imitations of Williamson's *Attack on a Chinese Mission*.

<sup>28</sup> 'Chinese War Films', PD Sep 1900, p.67-68. This source lists the films with plot summaries, which are similar to those in the *Era* 14 July, though for some reason miss out the final sentence or two of the summaries in the *Era*.

<sup>29</sup> Though one cannot be sure that it was the M&K China fakes which were shown, the screening was by the American Animated Photo Company, which is known to have specialized in M&K films. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* 4 March 1901. These war scenes were the penultimate of 12 items on the programme.

<sup>30</sup> *Attack on a Mission Station*, survives in the NFTVA as film no.603352. I have viewed it and can add the following details to *The Era* description: the missionary fights off the second sortie against three Boxers using a walking stick. Then three more Boxers appear. i.e. there are seven Boxers in all. Then four soldiers (marines?) run up from woods behind, firing rifles, and the officer firing his pistol. After they have driven off the Boxers they offer the family a drink, and overpower one remaining Boxer. At the end a soldier glances at the camera. Two frames from what looks like this film are in *The Pageant of the Century* (London: Odham's Press, 1933), section for 1900.

<sup>31</sup> They are listed in supplement no.1 to the Warwick Trading Co. catalogue of September 1900 as three films, nos. 7204 to 7206. Bousquet makes a slight error in his catalogue in giving the two parts of the spliced film as numbers 534 and 535.

<sup>32</sup> Gibbons ad is in *The Era* 17 Nov 1900, p.30, headed 'the latest Chinese War pictures'. On the same page of the *Era*, the Société Générale des Cinématographes et Films advertised *Boxers Killing Missionaries*, which may be the Pathé film no. 534. The series was listed in the French Pathé catalogue (March 1902?) possibly without the fourth title. Bousquet notes that 'Tous les titres sans indication d'origine proviennent soit du Catalogue de mars 1902, soit du Catalogue anglais de mai 1903. Cependant, quelques scénarios ont été retranscrits du Catalogue français d'août 1904.' In a handwritten note to me Bousquet indicated that the final title is only in the catalogue of May 1903, i.e. the British Pathé catalogue.

<sup>33</sup> Limoges, December 1900; Perpignan, March 1901; Trieste, June-July 1902. Cited in Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des Années 1896 à 1914: Vol 1, 1896-1906* (Charente/Bures sur Yvette: Henri Bousquet, 1996), p.858-9. I have not seen the relevant citations, so I don't know if it is certain that it was these Pathé fakes which were screened.

<sup>34</sup> My translation from the French original, 'Les derniers événements de Chine sont également bien faits pour produire un mouvement où le patriotisme français se reconnaît, lorsqu'on aperçoit nos braves fantassins s'emparer à l'arme blanche des positions de Pékin.' The term, 'arme blanche' is not as racist as it sounds, as I state in a note in Chapter 1. In French it often meant using knives or swords; in English, as 'the white arm', it tended to mean the cavalry.

<sup>35</sup> Thanks to Frank Kessler for pointing this out.

<sup>36</sup> Pathé's 1903 British catalogue adds the following information, which I list as a matter of interest: the code words (for telegraphic ordering) and prices of these four films (in £ and

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shillings). #532: Cantine, £2; #533: Canton, £2.10 s.; #534: Capable, £2.10 s.; #535: Capital, 16 s.

<sup>37</sup> Unlike the other sources, the Pathé catalogue mentions constructing the bridge. What's more the French Pathé catalogue (March 1902? from Bousquet) states that the bridge is being hastily built across a *ravine*, but doesn't mention a *stream*. (This is the only significant difference between the descriptions of these four films in the British catalogue and the French one).

<sup>38</sup> George Campbell of Oswego, Kansas, began his career as a teacher, but studied law determinedly and was admitted to the county bar in 1883. In 1896 he was elected state senator and served one term of four years after which he resumed his legal practice at Oswego.

<sup>39</sup> National Archives, Washington: RG 107, AGO, file no.422,777 of 1902. Handwritten letter from Geo Campbell, Attorney at law, Oswego, Kansas, 22 Feb 1902 to 'the Hon. Secty. of War, Washington, D.C.' The letter is on Campbell's firm's headed paper, which states that he is a member of the Supreme Court bar and registered attorney in the Interior Department, Washington, D.C. The fact that it was handwritten suggests his confidence that his name would be recognised, and his letter given attention. The 1902 date suggests that the film was shown in the USA a surprisingly long time after the events.

<sup>40</sup> A young bugler from the Fourteenth, Calvin P. Titus, volunteered to climb the wall, which kick-started the operation, for he found a portion of the top unoccupied, and soon the Fourteenth held a sizable section of the wall. They raised a flag, which was the first foreign flag to fly on the walls of Peking. Titus and other US servicemen in the campaign were later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Lynn E. Bodin and Chris Warner, *The Boxer Rebellion* (London: Osprey, 1979), p.18. Henry Keown-Boyd, *The Fists of Righteous Harmony : A History of the Boxer Uprising in China in the Year 1900* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), p.178 and map on p.174. Eric T. Smith, 'That Memorable Campaign: American Experiences in the China Relief Expedition During the 1900 Boxer Rebellion', B.A., Dickinson College, Louisiana State University, 1994, p.57. Gerald McMahan, 'The Right of the Line', *On Guard*, 1990, and on web. Contemporary news reports about the taking of Peking noted that the Americans had scaled the wall to do so. See, for example, LW 8 Sep 1900, p.171.

<sup>41</sup> The American troops may indeed have opened the great gates to other nations, as in the film, though I can find no confirmation of this. Why was Campbell particularly concerned with the truth of events depicted in this film? We can only speculate, but his writings indicate someone interested in America's colonial ambitions. So, perhaps he was trying to discover if American soldiers really did play a lead role in the capture of Peking, and if this was being truthfully portrayed to the American and world publics. Campbell was a writer of note, some of his best known works being: *America, Past, Present and Future*; *Island Home*; and *The Greater United States of America*. Cited in entry on Campbell in *Kansas: a Cyclopaedia of State History* (Chicago: Standard Pub. Co., 1912).

<sup>42</sup> The summary on the cover-sheet might suggest a different interpretation – 'George Campbell... inquires if the kinetoscopic pictures of the taking of Peking, China by troops of allied forces are authentic' – but I believe that this use of 'authentic' too refers to events depicted, not to the nature of the film as a fake or otherwise. The Assistant Adjutant General (J. Peck?), replied 5 March to say that they had sent him, Campbell, a copy of part 7 of the Annual Report of the Lieutenant General Commanding the Army for 1900 relating to the operations of the United States Army in China, 'from which the proceedings by means of which the United States troops occupied Peking may be ascertained'. It is possibly significant that this letter came over a week after Campbell's letter, which is a long response time in this era – probably the officials needed some time for internal discussion of the matter.

<sup>43</sup> Roy L. McCardell, 'Pictures That Show Motion', *Everybody's Magazine* 5, August 1901, p.227-236. Though McCardell does not directly state who made this film, he does mention, p.231-32, that Ackerman filmed the American war effort in China and the frames of the climbing film are on adjacent pages, p.230-31. The caption states, 'Actual size of film' which indeed is the large Biograph frame size, approx 65 mm.

<sup>44</sup> Barry Anthony made this identification, noting that the film is almost certainly *l'Assaut d'un Mur*, filmed in Joinville, near Paris, in August/September 1897, and shown in London early the next year. Listed in Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise : The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897-1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1999), p.248. My suspicions were alerted when I realised this was not filmed in the

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real Peking, for photographs of the real walls of Peking show loopholes for firing all along the top, giving it a 'serrated' look, while in the frames of the climbing film the top of the wall is smooth. Moser reproduces a photo of the city, and though it is quite distant, one can make out the serrations all along the top of the wall. [Michael J. Moser and Yeone Wei-Chih Moser, *Foreigners within the Gates : The Legations at Peking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.30.] The frames from Ackerman's films of the American action against the real South Gate in Peking also show the serrated wall top.

<sup>45</sup> So the *Everybody's* caption was correct in stating that the soldiers were French, but the Peking location was falsely claimed.

<sup>46</sup> However, perhaps the other action mentioned by Campbell could have been in lantern slides, or given verbally by the showman. Furthermore, Campbell does not state that he saw this film personally: he could simply be repeating an inaccurate description which someone had given to him.

<sup>47</sup> A few years later, this film or a similar one was the subject of much press deception and exaggeration, possibly generated by Biograph or its press agents, when it was given as an example of the sheer expense of making films. One entertainment trade publication claimed that, 'the costliest negative ever taken' was during the Boxer rebellion, namely, '...the pictures of the allied troops as they scaled the walls of the city. That film cost \$7,000'. I surmise that this cost figure might have come originally from the press campaign of 1901. This claim as the costliest film was stated in 'Varied uses of moving pictures', *Billboard*, 22 Sep 1906, p.3; repeated in 'Uses for moving pictures', *The Sun* (NY) 20 Aug 1906, sec.3, p.5; and in 'The value of film negatives', *MPW* 23 Mar 1907, p.40.

<sup>48</sup> Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture': Attack on a China Mission - Bluejackets to the Rescue (1900)', in *Celebrating 1895: The Centenary of Cinema*, edited by J. Fullerton (Sydney: John Libbey, 1998), p.203-211. Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's Rescue Narratives', in *Young and Innocent? : The Cinema in Britain, 1896-1930*, edited by A. Higson (Exeter: U. Exeter Press, 2002), p.28-41. Barnes, 1900 volume, p.47-55. See also Martin Sopocy, *James Williamson*, op. cit., p.39-45, 298-9: Sopocy presents important information about the film, but is, in my view, a little too concerned to promote the idea that it was accompanied by commentary. The film's full title was *Attack on a China Mission – Bluejackets to the Rescue*, though, as Frank Gray notes, a slightly variant title was used in early ads for this film. I abbreviate the title to *Attack on a China Mission*.

<sup>49</sup> Ad for Williamson's new film, *Attack on a Chinese Mission Station* in *OMLJ* Dec 1900, p.168. But Rachael Low, p.70, states the film was made in January 1901. (Low and Manvell, vol.1). See also Butcher Co. ad for Williamson films, including four frame stills (including *Attack*, which is 230 ft.) in *The Showman*, Dec 1900.

<sup>50</sup> The film was screened along with other 'composed' pictures, actuality views and lantern slides in a show at the West Pier in November 1900, 'Sons of the Empire'. 'The pictures have given unmistakable interest to large audiences,' noted the *Brighton Herald*, 3 Nov 1900, p.3. Cited by Frank Gray in 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture'', op. cit., p.210.

<sup>51</sup> These actualities comprised related views of a single activity or views of different activities taken at the same location - examples of what Tom Gunning has called the 'anthology format'.

<sup>52</sup> This according to Gray, who adds that the film 'came after a summer of inspired filmmaking by George Albert Smith, his Hove friend and counterpart'. Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's Rescue Narratives', op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> This description is based on NFTVA print no.603653, labelled the 'composite version'. This is to distinguish it from NFTVA 613170, a version with a different, non-intercut shot order. Apart from the intercutting itself, the only real differences between the versions are that in the composite/intercut version the front of the first wide shot of the house (shot 2) is longer and I noticed more graininess in the gate shots, 1 and 3. It is not clear who edited the non-intercut version in the way it is, for the catalogue describes an intercut version.

<sup>54</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.52, states that, 'The action is staged in depth and with a fair degree of realism'.

<sup>55</sup> As Gray has noted. Possibly Williamson aimed to relate this story directly to the siege of the Legations rather than to represent an attack on a generic mission station. Barnes notes (ibid, p.52-54) that Ivy Lodge 'was a derelict property in Hove which was soon to be demolished'.

<sup>56</sup> In all, the film fields a cast of over two dozen, the main performers including members of Williamson's family. Gray states (James Williamson's 'Composed Picture'): 'Williamson's



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daughter, Florence, was cast as the 'young girl' or daughter. The 'Missionary' was performed by Ernest Lepard, Manager of the Brighton Alhambra Opera House and Music Hall. It is likely that the Bluejackets were members of the Hove Coast Guard and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.' A Mr. James played the officer. Tom Williamson, James' son, recalled: 'The missionary's wife actually was my sister. And I'm there as the Chinese boy.' ('When films began', transcript, p.2. In Anthony Slide collection, BFI.) Leyda writes in *Dianyng*, p.4: 'Brighton, as a center of the British vogue in chinoiserie at the start of the nineteenth century, was able to furnish all the Chinese costumes and properties that were wanted.'

<sup>57</sup> Barnes writes (1900 volume, p.52): 'Williamson, who was himself a chemist, seems to have devised special cartridges to give off the maximum amount of smoke when the guns are discharged so as to enhance the dramatic effect of the fighting.' It is not clear where this information comes from. For more on smoke and gunpowder see Chapter 1.

<sup>58</sup> John Barnes makes this point. Barnes, 1900 volume, p.109 And Barnes adds: 'In any case, the Wrench film merely consisted of a continuous action, recorded in one shot, whereas Williamson's made use of a more complex narrative technique by splitting the action into a number of separate shots. Besides, the Wrench film was only 87 feet long whereas Williamson's was 230 feet.' Barnes notes, p.54, of the M&K film: 'Its simple treatment goes to show what a tremendous stride Williamson had taken by breaking up his story into a number of separate shots.'

<sup>59</sup> Frank Gray, 'James Williamson's Composed Picture', op. cit.; Sopocy, op. cit., p.298.

<sup>60</sup> Barnes states (1900 volume, p.47) that: 'The plot more or less speaks for itself and can just about be understood without the help of a commentator.' Gray describes typical 'rescue narratives' as, 'stories in which familiar representatives of the dominant culture – a woman, a child or a family – are thrown into a crisis precipitated by the arrival of a disruptive force'. See Gray, 'James Williamson's Rescue Narratives', op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> *The Showman* Dec 1900, p.56 re a Butcher and Co. screening. A newspaper cutting from mid December, headed, 'Entertainment at Burgess Hill', notes that the China crisis was 'fully illustrated, including the attack on a Mission Station, which proved a very exciting scene'. From Tee scrapbook, Brighton public library.

<sup>62</sup> The words of Bert Chambers (an exhibitor, born in 1879). From 'When films began', transcript, p.2, in Anthony Slide collection, BFI.

<sup>63</sup> Several reports demonstrate its popularity. In July 1901 a Stalybridge reporter saw crowds at one fairground cinematograph show which was screening a representation of an attack on a Chinese Mission station. (*The Reporter*, 27 July 1901 – 'made in England possibly!' he added). Williamson's company stated: 'This sensational subject is full of interest and excitement from start to finish, and is everywhere received with great applause.' (Catalogue of CUTC, Nov 1903, quoting Williamson catalogues of Jan 1901 and Sep 1902). The *Halifax Evening Courier*, 12 Mar 1901, p.3 in reviewing a local show, praised 'an exciting episode in the shape of a Boxers' raid on a mission station, and subsequent vengeance and rescue by Bluejackets'.

<sup>64</sup> Ad for Williamson in *The Showman*, 3 Jan 1902.

<sup>65</sup> My rough translation from Georges Méliès and Jacques Malthête, *158 Scénarios de Films Disparus de Georges Méliès* (Paris: Association "Les Amis de Georges Méliès", 1986), p.36. The French title is *Le Congrès des Nations en Chine : Une création d'actualité* also known as *La Chine Contre les Allies*, no. 327 in the Méliès catalogue. In English it is also known (after Sadoul) as *China versus Allied Powers*. Stills from the film appear in Maurice Bessy, *Georges Méliès, Mage* (Paris: Prisma, 1945), p.147, photos 6 & 7, where it is entitled *l'Expédition Fantastique (Querelles à Pékin)*: these images were identified by Malthête as from the Congress film.

<sup>66</sup> Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures... Filmography*, Kemp R. Niver, op. cit., 1985. Clearly Blackton and Smith's background in magic would have influenced the film's magical milieu. Incidentally, the action includes an Irish policeman, rather than a soldier as for the other nations, emerging from the Irish flag!

<sup>67</sup> The Edison catalogue omits to describe a key point of this film, the Chinese representative being pursued by the other powers. Vitagraph's historian (describing the film as 'a noble gusher of emotional oil') supplied the missing part of the plot: '*The Congress of Nations...* depicted a tiny Chinaman standing in abject supplication, surrounded by a group...of towering figures representing the various nations involved in this shameful embroglio: John Bull, La Belle France, Germania, and so forth. At a given signal from the cameraman, Smith, ... the

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Great Powers made a concerted grab for the little Chink who was, it must be admitted, dressed like a laundry-man rather than as a mandarin dignitary. But lo! before the grasping hands could dismember the unfortunate Chinaman he was magically dissolved into an animated Statue of Liberty, before whom the disgruntled Congress of Nations fell back... In their places there appeared, fluttering in amity with the American flag, which was uppermost in the background, the flags of all the Nations, with Miss Liberty smiling complacently around.' He added: 'The dual role . . . of the little Chinaman and the giant Miss Liberty was played by the Vitagraph clerk, Morris Brenner.' Quoted from Courtney's 1925 'History of Vitagraph', in Leyda, *Dianying*, p.6. According to Musser the cameraman was not Smith but Blackton, and Smith acted.

<sup>68</sup> Synopsis from *The Era* 15 Sep 1900, p.28, from Barnes, 1900 volume, p.12 and 194-5.

<sup>69</sup> MHTR, 21 Dec 1900, p.405: cited in John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950, Studies in Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.53.

<sup>70</sup> NYDM, 13 Apr 1901, p.15. Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (U. Oklahoma Press, 1960), p.419.

<sup>71</sup> Sharf and Harrington, *The Boxer Rebellion, China 1900: The Artists' Perspective*, p.63.

There was one offbeat stage version of the siege by the famous *grand guignol* playwright, André De Lorde, *The Last Torture* in 1904.

<sup>72</sup> In at least one case, a serviceman was at a screening in a music hall when he saw himself in a film: this being a navy man from HMS *Centurion* who recognised himself in the film of his unit's victory march, shown at the Cambridge music hall. *Era*, 26 Oct 1901, p.20.

<sup>73</sup> Many thanks are due to Vanessa Toulmin and the National Fairground Archive for all these citations from Midlands and northern newspapers which have given me a new perspective on the exhibition of films of this war.

<sup>74</sup> Actually, the mixing was none too surprising, for film showmen would frequently programme together a variety of kinds of films, such as general actualities, local films, dramas, comics, as well as the war films. For example, the American Animated Photo Company listed 12 items on the programme including local pictures and the China and Boer War films. (*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 4 March 1901.) The Tee family showed films of the South Africa war and 'the struggle in China' along with 'humorous and other views', and they were accompanied by music and a lecturer. See *Mid Sussex Times*, 11 Dec and 18 Dec 1900, from Tee scrapbook, op. cit. In Liverpool, though the show at Hengler's Circus was headlined, 'War in Liverpool!' and the 'Boer and Boxer Wars' were main features on the bill, 'the comical has also its innings in grotesque tableaux, which afford no end of amusement'. The show was by the North American Animated Photo Company. (*Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 Apr 1901, p.9, c.3. See also an ad for this show in *Liverpool Daily Post* 22 Apr 1901, p.1, headlined 'Boer and China wars'.)

<sup>75</sup> *Nottingham Evening News*, 4 October 1900, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> *Newcastle Upon Tyne Evening Chronicle*, 11 Dec 1900, p.4, c.6. The animated views were at the Olympia.

<sup>77</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 19 Mar 1901, p.4, c.3. The show, for that week only, was by Thomas Edison's Animated Photo Company, with the war films 'as its chief claim to support'.

<sup>78</sup> This was at the West Pier in November 1900, 'Sons of the Empire', noted in the *Brighton Herald* 3 Nov 1900, p.3. Cited by Frank Gray in 'James Williamson's 'Composed Picture'', op. cit., p.210.

<sup>79</sup> Ad in the *Northampton Mercury*, 27 Aug 1901. A few scenes of the Boer War were also shown.

<sup>80</sup> *Bolton Chronicle*, 2 Feb 1901.

<sup>81</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 7 May 1901, p.5. Re Edison's Animated Pictures. This added: 'Two hours and a half of vibrating 'graph' pictures is rather too much of a trial... A little more of the band and less of the pictures would probably have been welcomed by the audience.'

<sup>82</sup> 'Orientalism' as used in the currently fashionable sense popularised by Edward Said (and one should add that his work has been much criticised) means a prejudiced western interpretation of eastern cultures and peoples. Similarly, 'occidentalism' implies negative, prejudiced views of the west when found in eastern societies.

<sup>83</sup> For example, we find two such articles in consecutive weeks in *Leslie's*, even in the wake of the Uprising. On 3 November 1900 China was described as 'a tremendous force' which would ultimately triumph: '... she will awaken, and nothing in the world can stop her then'. A week later another writer expressed similar optimism and positive views, noting that westerners

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who went to China were often captivated by the society: 'those who have once lived there are never satisfied anywhere else', adding that they often settle down and marry, and thereafter come to find western language and manners 'harsh and abrupt'. See 'A Chinese statesman's solemn warning', LW 3 Nov 1900, p.318, and Guy Morrison Walker, 'China's irresistible charm', LW 10 Nov 1900, p.343. Pulitzer's New York *World* was commendably fair, and regularly included the Chinese side of the Boxer story, reported the deaths and losses incurred by Chinese citizens, and avoided anti-Chinese terminology. See Jane E. Elliott, 'Who Seeks the Truth Should Be of No Country : British and American Journalists Report the Boxer Rebellion, June 1900', *American Journalism* 13, no. 3, Summer 1996, p.255-285.

<sup>84</sup> The *Illustrated London News* reported the use of a Punch and Judy show as an anti-foreign instrument, and pictured a show set up in a Chinese street, with a member of the Boxers' society haranguing a small crowd while his associate operated the show. See 'The Boxers' propaganda: the Chinese punch and judy as an anti-foreign instrument', *Illustrated London News*, 25 Aug 1900.

<sup>85</sup> John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1984), p.214, 226.

<sup>86</sup> See John M. Mackenzie, ed. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.212.

<sup>87</sup> The generally negative image persisted in American films until the 1920s: the most anti-Chinese period in American cinema was before 1923, according to Leyda. Equally there was an anti-western tinge in Chinese media, and Leyda tells us that, 'The psychological need to "humiliate the foreigner" is still a dominant ingredient of historical films, whether of the far or the recent past.' Leyda, *Dianying*, p.4.

<sup>88</sup> Incidentally, Li himself was subsequently filmed on a number of occasions (see above).

<sup>89</sup> The only other early filmic reference I have found to China in international context is a Biograph film of diplomat Lord Charles Beresford returning from his mission in China, which was screened at the Palace music hall in London. Cited in a Palace Theatre programme, 1 Apr 1899, held in the British Library, shelf mark 11796.d.6.

## Chapter 14

### CONCLUSION

#### The political and aesthetic legacies of the early war film

In December 1899 a film show was advertised in the north west of England. Some twenty films were to be shown. These included at least half a dozen scenes (mainly actualities) depicting recent trouble spots in the world, including films of wars in the Sudan, Cuba and South Africa, along with one scene related to the Armenian massacres. Such a panoply of current conflicts offers a good example – and not the only one – of how militarism and war had become major themes and attractions of early film exhibitions.<sup>1</sup>

A show like this with so many military referents was reflecting the global reality, for this was a very violent period, with several wars being fought in the half decade after cinema's debut (including two of really historic importance: the Spanish-American and Boer wars). Because the new medium arose in this particularly conflict-ridden era – albeit a historical accident – this meant that warfare could in no sense be peripheral to the early cinema, and it was inevitable that the moving picture would confront it in some way. In the course of this thesis I have offered an account of how early cinema dealt with warfare, and in the process have presented new information, and, I hope, some new perspectives. In particular, I have explained how, in only half a decade, filmmakers began to surmount the problems inherent in recording and representing armed conflict.

In this final chapter I present some more general conclusions about the manner of this representation and some thoughts about where it was to lead. I suggest, broadly speaking, that in this meeting of medium (cinema) and message (war), the consequences were twofold: filmmakers were oriented to the military point of view, with early war films often being sheer propaganda for armed intervention; but on the other hand the military influence had a more benign consequence, for thanks to the challenge of filming modern warfare, the cinema developed faster and in different ways than it would have done otherwise. The early war film therefore has a dual legacy, for media politics and for film aesthetics.<sup>2</sup> I start with the former aspect, the militaristic ideology which informs so many of these early films.

## **PIONEERING FILM PROPAGANDA**

### **Controlling the message**

Throughout this thesis I have described various ideological ‘messages’ found in many of the early war films: often these visual ‘arguments’ tended to be about imperial triumph, the success of ‘our’ forces, and the unpleasantness and inferiority of the opposition. Given such extreme messages, and knowing the extensive audience reach of these films, one is surely entitled to call many of them ‘propaganda’ – which, by dictionary definition is any organised scheme to propagate a doctrine or belief.

Early war films as propaganda employed a number of innovative cinematic practices to create and communicate their chauvinist messages – ‘techniques of persuasion’, one might call them. I have identified several such techniques, used in various war film genres, applied at different points in the production process, from shooting through editing to exhibition. These techniques were instigated by various different ‘actors’ in the process of bringing the film to the audience, including, most significantly, the producers, the military authorities, and the exhibitors. The practices included:

- The selection of a suitable cameraman to film at the front, placing him with a suitable unit of troops, thus making him physically dependent on the army of our side (‘our’ meaning the western side).
- The ‘arranging’ of battle scenes in the field to give a more positive impression, usually with the connivance of the military.
- Filming troops and commanders in positive roles, or en route to or returning from battle (‘related films’).
- Re-titling films to make them seem more relevant to the current war, and/or more sympathetic to our side.
- Artificially staging films (with actors) to represent the victory of our troops, while belittling or demonising the other side.
- Artificially staging films which contain allegorical messages about the triumph of our flag or nation.
- Programming together any of the above films, and exhibiting them with emotive commentary and music, to create a patriotic narrative about the war.

At least one of these persuasive techniques was employed in respect of every one of the half dozen wars which I have discussed in this thesis. Here are some examples, taken from earlier chapters, listed, in order, war by war:

- One of Méliès’ fakes of the Greco-Turkish War, was re-titled as ‘Cruel murders of Christians’, this inflammatory description being the first instance of re-titling to make a propaganda point.

- The Sudan War was represented through shots of returning troops and commanders, notably Kitchener, these 'related' images becoming the object of triumphalist glorification in Britain's music halls.
- A similar glorification of Admiral Dewey took place during the Spanish-American War; and during this conflict too several war films were programmed synergistically to celebrate America's triumph.
- During the Philippine War a cameraman, Carl Ackerman, was effectively working for the US military, and was embedded with the US Army in the war zone; meanwhile, patronising fake films painted the Filipino opponents as incompetent cowards.
- This patronising of the other side advanced a step further during the Boer War when British acted films depicted the Boers as devious; and actuality cameramen glorified the British side by filming innumerable regiments and commanders in South Africa or fresh from their triumphs there.
- The height of filmic demonisation was reached in the wake of the Boxer events, when staged films represented the Boxers as savages, and actuality cameramen made heroes of the international troops and dwelled on the Chinese nation's defeat.

### **Regulating cameramen**

For actualities, an important means of ensuring films were 'on message' was by controlling who did the filming. We see in this period important developments in the relationship between war cameramen and the armed forces, and a number of different 'models' or kinds of relationship emerge. In my research to date I have found few instances in any of these half dozen wars of cameramen being completely free to film in a war zone. Mainly they were 'placed with army units, and then generally they were regulated in one of two ways, depending if they were seen as being 'friendly' to the armed forces, as being 'one of us'; or if they were seen as independent. Unattached/independent cameramen in this period were heavily regulated, restricted in their activities and movements, and their work was censored in various ways. For example, Paley suffered restrictions and rough treatment when filming under Spanish control in Cuba. Rosenthal underwent repeated hold-ups as he sought filming permission during the Boer War, and also had his films censored at the front. Dickson faced similar kinds of restriction, and repeatedly so.

On the other hand, 'friendly' cameramen were often given considerable freedom to roam by the forces at the front with whom they were based. This category of cameramen may be broken down further into four sub-classes, starting with the most closely 'tied':

- Those who were actual members of a military unit (e.g. Beevor, who was a front-line officer in the Boer War).
- Cameramen closely associated with the military (e.g. Benett-Stanford, a former officer, who filmed in the Sudan).

- Operators who were working for and living with the army, i.e. 'embedded' with the forces (e.g. Ackerman: commissioned by the US Army to film in the Philippines).
- Cameramen generally seen as 'friendlies' (e.g. Holmes in the Philippines, Villiers in the Sudan).

Incidentally, and looking ahead, the different treatment meted out to 'friendly' cameramen and to independents became even more stark during the Russo-Japanese war in 1904/05: while official Japanese cameramen were allowed to film extensively in the war zone, independent correspondents and cameramen (most notably Rosenthal) were kept from the front for a long time, and once there were heavily regulated by the Japanese authorities. These models for the regulation of cameramen were an early warning of how things would be managed in future conflicts, notably during the First and Second World Wars.<sup>3</sup>

### **Propaganda in staging and exhibition**

What of staged films? As we have seen, all these wars in the 1900 era were dramatised, and these films were often vehicles for stinging propaganda against the enemy. But it is worth analysing such films with rather more subtlety, for there were variations in the 'level' of propaganda between the two major types of staged films, fakes and symbolic scenes. These differences are most evident in films of the Boer War. I have noted in an earlier chapter that while the acted films by Pathé and Edison about this war were relatively balanced, a very different tone characterised the several British examples, which were almost all highly partisan, as was the single Dutch example.

Interestingly, this contrast was to some extent associated with genre difference, for while the Pathé and Edison examples were mainly fakes (acted battlefield incidents), the Dutch film and many of the British-made staged films were symbolic representations. In short, the symbolic scene seems to be more consistently associated with propaganda than the faked battlefield incident. As some explanation for this difference, one might say that a fake film was always trying to stay within the bounds of the vaguely possible, whereas in a symbolic film there were no limits to the nationalistic excesses.

Interestingly, symbolic films have received less attention from historians than the fakes; yet one might argue that such allegorical scenes were of more lasting influence or significance. While fakes virtually died out, as we shall see in the next section – and were regarded a few years hence as being an outdated genre – allegorical images persisted in some form, if not in this exact style of film. One thinks of swastikas in Nazi propaganda, communist symbols in Soviet films, and even flags and national figures such as Uncle Sam seen in advertising and in American war films. Indeed, some nationalist symbols are still seen in films and other moving images.

One should not forget the exhibition sector in this discussion of propaganda, and two aspects are striking. Firstly the sheer emotion which was stirred up by some war films in this period, and secondly how much the reaction varied between audiences with different sympathies – especially between different countries. The emotional power is best exemplified by the Spanish-American war, when showmen in America evoked powerful patriotic sentiments in their audiences through an accumulation of images related to the war, often combined with an appropriately partisan commentary, and stirring music.<sup>4</sup>

Yet motion pictures about the same war might stir different audiences in quite dissimilar ways. Probably the clearest example of this comes with Kruger during the Boer War, for while his image was hooted in music halls and other venues in Britain, it was cheered enthusiastically by audiences in Continental Europe. It is of course no great surprise that reactions varied (for Kruger was viewed very differently in Britain and other countries), but the interesting thing is the *intensity* of the equal and opposite reactions. I discuss some possible reasons for this passionate response in the following paragraphs.

### **Propaganda and jingoism: the power of film**

These three issues just discussed – the regulation and control of cameramen; the production of staged scenes, especially nationalist allegories; the pandering to audience prejudice – all are surely clear cases of propaganda in action. And here I must refine the use of this term ‘propaganda’, for the general belief about this practice is that it is a form of information or misinformation designed to (or likely to) change a target audience’s opinion. But this is not what propaganda actually does, according to some historians who have studied it.<sup>5</sup> There is little evidence that propaganda drastically changes a person’s viewpoint, and it is more likely that it tends merely to confirm or reinforce their existing opinion or prejudice.<sup>6</sup> This is exactly what this early film material was doing: confirming a belief in nationalism, empire and/or military triumph, among an audience which was already broadly sympathetic; and in effect marginalising dissent. In other words, these early war films, staged or actuality, rather than changing minds, tended to focus common beliefs and encourage conformity.

Propaganda is discussed by J.A. Hobson in his influential book, *Imperialism*, though he puts it in terms of ‘jingoism’. Hobson defines jingoism as the enthusiasm for warfare by people who do not actually have to take part in it, but merely view conflict vicariously from afar. He sees jingoism as capable of influencing behaviour, for the worse:

‘Jingoism is merely the lust of the spectator, unpurged by any personal effort, risk, or sacrifice, gloating in the perils, pains, and slaughter of fellow-men whom he does not know, but whose destruction he desires in a blind and artificially stimulated passion of hatred and revenge.’... ‘Tricked out with the real or sham glories of military heroism and the magnificent



claims of empire-making, jingoism becomes a nucleus of a sort of patriotism which can be moved to any folly or to any crime.<sup>7</sup>

Hobson doesn't explicitly mention film in this connection, though, given that the book was published in 1902 he must have known about this new medium, and presumably knew that films were made of the Boer War. His comments just quoted, about people seeing the conflict but not actually taking part, and the term 'lust of the spectator', do suggest the context of a film show.

In any case, film was certainly an effective means of promulgating and airing prejudice or jingoism; it was and is an excellent form of propaganda, for several reasons. As mentioned above, by dictionary definition propaganda is aimed at spreading a doctrine or belief, and while earlier media such as printed matter had done this quite well, film could do the job far more efficiently, reaching many more spectators. This is because multiple copies could be made of a film, and each copy could be screened several times to audiences of hundreds or even thousands. This mass market effect was increased by the inherent drawing power of the moving image and the social, communal context of the gathered audience: a 'crowd', all of whose members broadly shared the same culture and opinions. Emotive moving images were screened in this social, and often highly emotional context, in a dark hall with stirring music as accompaniment, making for a quite intense experience.

For the ordinary spectator, seeing these powerful images of one's own nation on the large screen, surrounded by his or her fellow citizens of like mind, the effect must have been extremely powerful, inflaming their 'spectatorial lust' (as Hobson put it) in the common cause. And if one multiplies these spectators by all the other spectators in different halls on many other evenings, the 'reinforcing' effect on the entirety of public opinion might have been substantial. The spectators for these films in the 1900 era were therefore not merely viewing early war films, they were witnessing the origins of mass propaganda.

## **WAR AND THE RISE OF CINEMA**

In the first half of this chapter I have argued for the pivotal significance of early war films in the origins of visual propaganda. But I would further suggest that war films had an even wider, and, thankfully, more positive effect. I consider, based on the many examples cited throughout this thesis, that many of the first war films were stylistically highly innovative, and played an important role in the development of cinema itself. Developments and advances in film style appeared in early war films in surprising profusion. I will mention below some specific instances of these, but first I will suggest why the war film should have been such a dynamic force.

In 1913 the German sociologist Werner Sombart published a book entitled *Krieg und Kapitalismus*.<sup>8</sup> The basic thesis of the book was that, throughout history, the preparation for war has had, as a kind of by-product, a stimulating effect on the development of business and industry. There are many instances of inventions and technologies which had been developed for military use – certain precision instruments or chemicals, for instance – which later found application in civilian fields.

I submit that Sombart's thesis also applied to the media and notably to early cinema. One can cite several examples. In time of war there is a greater demand for news, so circulation of newspapers often increases (as mentioned in Chapter 1). Other media enterprises have experienced growth during conflicts: for instance, during the US Civil War the photographic business of Anthony enjoyed a huge growth of sales.<sup>9</sup>

With the early film business too, things boomed when war erupted. The Spanish-American War offers a convincing instance of this effect. Just before the war, as one film pioneer later stated, the public had begun to tire of films of 'commonplace events', such as views from moving trains and the like which made up much of the film fare at the time. So the various films of the Spanish-American War and the war-related film shows of the summer of 1898 had a substantial impact, giving cinema, as this author noted, 'a new lease on life'. He stressed that the war, '...was directly responsible for resuscitating the art of motion pictures which for a time seemed doomed to oblivion'.<sup>10</sup> Film historian Charles Musser confirms this opinion, stating that, while in 1897, 'moving pictures showed signs of fading', the industry bounced back in early 1898 due to the war.<sup>11</sup>

A similar stimulating effect came about in Britain during the Boer War. Film output swelled at this time, mainly through the production of war-related views. What's more, the public appetite for images of the conflict helped lead to the first great proliferation of film shows around the country. In short, as producer A. C. Bromhead later declared, 'The South African War helped the development of the business very considerably'.<sup>12</sup> Or as historian Richard Brown has put it, '...the Anglo-Boer War had a significant, catalytic effect on the early development of the British film business'.<sup>13</sup> As further confirmation of the positive effect of the conflict, as hostilities came to an end, the film business in Britain stagnated again, at least temporarily – as I have noted in chapter 11.<sup>14</sup>

And if war was a stimulus for the economic growth of the industry, it was also a motor for stylistic development. As we have seen in earlier chapters, in solving the problem of how to represent modern warfare with its increasingly inaccessible battlefield and 'invisible' combat, filmmakers invented various new cinematic practices, techniques and genres. This was an extraordinary feat of creativity which has seldom been acknowledged by film historians (though which might have been predicted from Sombart's thesis). In what follows I will describe what I

see as the most important of these techniques and developments, and indicate the consequences of particular innovations for the later history of cinema.

### **New practices**

In meeting the challenge of depicting warfare, I suggest that film pioneers came up with at least three particularly significant practices and genres (some of which I have mentioned in the first half of this chapter). Firstly, there were 'war-related actualities', meaning films which, while not showing battlefield action, had some direct ('indexical') connection with the real events: for example, images of people who had fought in the war. Another innovation was programming, whereby films of various types with some connection to the conflict were projected together, sometimes as a 'war show' of considerable duration (often including lantern slides). A third innovation was to use actors to re-enact or otherwise represent the war: I classify these films into sub-categories of fakes and symbolic scenes, and I will cover these in the next section.

The category of 'war related films' was to have a long and influential legacy, for the technique has been used by newsreel makers and TV news producers ever since. This technique might not seem such a novel or original development, for it might seem obvious that if you cannot show the event itself, then a substitute shot will 'work' satisfactorily as a representation (for example, an image of the participants, or an existing shot of the site of conflict). But I submit that this practice was *not* entirely obvious, and entailed some insight. Indeed, such use of 'stand in' shots to represent the event itself was an early example of using a kind of 'symbolic' image in non-fiction films. In this sense the 'related film' may be seen as one of the ways in which a more complex relationship between film and actuality was under way, even during this early period of cinema. I will have more to say about actuality films below.

Programming was another important area of the film industry which saw unusually precocious and rapid progress due to military influence. From 1898 during the Spanish-American War, exhibitors were putting together programmes of war-related films and lantern slides to create extensive shows. In this way some exhibitors of war films were in effect pioneering the documentary feature, years before this form actually came into being (and indeed before any multi-shot dramas had been released).

### **The staged war film: innovation and influence**

Staged war films were a surprisingly early development in cinema. Little more than a year after films were first widely screened, the first war fakes were made: Méliès' films of the Greco-Turkish War in 1897. In ensuing years staged film versions were produced of other current wars, supplying action which was so lacking in the actualities.<sup>15</sup>

Though these were to some extent based on previous practice in existing media (artists' impressions, tableaux, etc.), as far as cinema was concerned, staged war

films included much which was highly original. As we have discussed in previous chapters, stylistic elements included the following innovative practices: Méliès' films of the Greco-Turkish War employed the first articulated set in a film; fakes by Amet and Smith/Blackton during the Spanish-American War included the earliest ever scale-models in cinema history; Hepworth's symbolic representations about the Boer War included words appearing on screen, well before inter-titles were standard.

As well as being innovative, these films might well have influenced later filmmakers and companies, and helped to pave the way for new genres of films. An early observer of the film industry, Epes W. Sargent, considered that, 'the preparation of war pictures left a lasting imprint on the business, for it led to the serious film'.<sup>16</sup> By 'serious film' he was referring to other fiction genres, including important ones such as the trick film. A modern historian who has studied early fake films sees another possible influence. Discussing Edison's fakes of the Boer War, Jon Gartenberg has noted that some of these films create a sense of depth, with the soldiers charging across and towards us from the background of the field to the foreground. He suggests that this stylistic feature may be viewed in retrospect, 'as an early precursor of the chase film in which characters move diagonally through the frame'.<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, both the trick and the chase film are seen by film historians as important early fiction genres.

I would identify another possible influence, specifically from allegorical war films, on later cinema.<sup>18</sup> These productions – films of flags waving or Uncle Sam triumphant or proud Britannia – are noteworthy, not only as being early propaganda (as discussed above) but more generally they may be seen as pioneering exercises in presenting a 'point of view' on film, and quite an abstract one at that. While filmmakers had realized from the first that the new medium could record the external surface of the world in an accurate form, in these symbolic scenes, film was being used to express something more intangible; to enunciate particular opinions, viewpoints and abstract ideas (in this case mainly imperialist ideas), and in a powerful manner.

### **The war fake and the development of story films**

Of all the various influences, I would suggest that it was the path from fake to fiction which was most significant for film history. War fakes shared several elements with mainstream dramatised films of later years: an acted narrative, with characters performing roles in costumes; a storyline involving exciting action and conflict; both interior and exterior performance spaces, whereas nearly all acting in the pre-cinema period had been on stage. Significantly, fakes were a leading (possibly dominant) form of acted narrative film up to 1900, so they established quite a body of practice which could be drawn on.

There was some realisation among filmmakers of a connection between fakes and early dramatised films. This comes through in terminology. Sometimes the word 'fake' was applied not only to re-enacted news/war incidents, but to any

films shot with actors in a studio, such as trick films. For example, a writer in a trade journal in 1900 referred to Méliès' trick reels as 'fakes'.<sup>19</sup> A few years later another writer, in explaining to his readers how scenes in *The Great Train Robbery* (USA, 1903) had been made, told them that films of this kind were half 'fake' and half real, i.e. half shot in studio and half in genuine outdoor locations.<sup>20</sup> The term 'fake', in this writer's view, implied anything shot in an artificial manner (in a studio, with actors, etc).

One particular war fake was among the earliest films to incorporate the creative leap of editing, a practice which would help lead to the rise and dominance of acted films. The film in question, Williamson's *Attack on a China Mission*, was made up of several shots. This was in contrast to most fakes (and most other dramatised films) until then, which were almost always in one shot, taken from one fixed, mid-distance camera position. The problem with this one-shot format is that such films are often difficult to understand because so much is going on in the frame. As I have noted in chapter 10 with respect to the M&K Boer War fakes, the action in these one shot films is generally convoluted; there might be several characters on screen at the same time, doing different things in different parts of the frame. Such uncentered shots cannot draw our attention to specific, narratively important incidents or parts of the action, and so these kind of fakes are frequently confusing and difficult to comprehend at a first viewing. The description I gave in my Boer War chapter of *The Dispatch Bearer*, should serve to make the point, for this film has a very complicated narrative all in the one shot, which is simply not possible to grasp in a single viewing.

The idea to use multiple shots occurred to James Williamson (and to others at about the same time), and he put it into practice in a story of threat and rescue during the Boxer Uprising.<sup>21</sup> With *Attack on a China Mission* the war fake had in a sense reached its apotheosis, for though it was a staged war film, it had many of the hallmarks (multiple shots, etc) of a classical narrative fiction film. From this point on, other multiple-shot fiction films started to appear. Thus it is possible to argue that fakes had helped give rise to the future trend of story films. John Barnes writes, in his discussion of staged war films including Williamson's:

'As naive as some of these 'fakes' may have been, there is no doubt they provided filmmakers with the impetus to experiment with the dramatization of reality that was finally to lead to more complex forms of film narration such as we begin to witness, for example, in the films of Williamson and see more fully developed in *A Daring Daylight Robbery* of 1903.'<sup>22</sup>

### **The tidying up of genres and the fate of fakes**

Despite their influential character, staged war films (and indeed staged news films in general) were relatively short-lived as a film genre. From soon after the Boer and Boxer conflicts, the production of fakes and other staged films went into decline, say from around 1902. Though such films appeared after this in limited numbers – fakes were made of the Russo-Japanese War, for example – they

were never again produced in the large numbers of the heyday up to 1901. Why this decline? I have mentioned one reason – to do with trust and deception – in Chapter 2. In addition, though, a sea change was occurring in the balance of genres, with the industry increasingly categorising films as either fiction or non-fiction, and this, I will argue, meant that fakes simply didn't fit in.

We have just discussed one part of this process of genre realignment, as the multi-shot story film started appearing tentatively between 1900 and 1903. In this new form, the function of bringing drama to audiences – about any subject, including war – could be done entirely in fiction form, as fully-fledged filmic playlets, with no recourse to the controversial fake genre. Thus the drama role of fakes had effectively been shunted into the story film, meaning that the fiction side of filmmaking became increasingly separate.

An analogous change was also taking place in non-fiction, mainly through the improvement of equipment and skills. Lighter cameras and longer loads of film became available; panning heads made it easier to depict both large areas and fast-moving incidents; a greater variety of lenses was being introduced. Furthermore, cameramen were becoming increasingly skilful and professional. While the very earliest war cameramen were amateurs (Benett-Stanford or Villiers, for example) more professional operators soon came along, most notably Rosenthal and Dickson in the Boer War, and to some extent Paley (in Cuba) and Holmes (in the Philippines). While in the early days of war filming, such as at Omdurman, there had been an almost total failure to capture moving images from the war zone, by the time of the Boer War cameramen were at least managing to keep up with the troops, recording some images near the firing line, and a greater variety of other war-related images. So, while the difficulties of filming 'hot news' events in war zones and elsewhere had once seemed insurmountable, a few years later the problem was being seen as a little more solvable. This progress in actuality filming helped reduce the need for fakes to represent the conflict.

Perhaps the most important factor in this evolution of non-fiction was a growing appreciation among spectators and production companies of the intrinsic value of genuine footage; or the 'feeling for the photographic document', as Bazin put it (see chapter 1). This was probably all tied up with a public mood of impatience with fake films, and the atmosphere of deception which surrounded them (note my discussion of 'trust' in Chapter 2). A number of industry professionals lobbied for something more genuine, and films were increasingly valued which had a direct ('indexical') connection with real events – to the war or other happening – even if such films did not capture the news event itself, and even if they were technically somewhat deficient. One of the earliest firms to take this attitude was the Warwick Trading Company, under their far-sighted director, Charles Urban. The company's catalogue made this point rather well, at about the same time as their first films – far from perfect, but genuine – were coming back from the Boer War:

‘While every endeavour is made to adhere to the high photographic standard of our films, it is occasionally impossible to do so, especially among the war subjects from the front, as our operators are compelled to photograph many of the incidents under the most trying conditions and varying circumstances; but the few examples of indifferent quality are more than compensated for by the highly interesting events portrayed, all of which are absolutely genuine. On no condition will we sell faked or pre-arranged war subjects.’<sup>23</sup>

Warwick was saying, in short, that the genuine nature of these films more than made up for their defects. In ensuing years this attitude gained ground, and I would suggest that audiences became more understanding of the limitations of news and war filming. They therefore didn’t expect to see faultless or complete material from the war zone; they certainly didn’t anticipate seeing hand-to-hand fighting on screen.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the category of ‘related films’ which I have discussed above, became a staple of news coverage; and these somewhat unexciting films were compensated for in the cinema news programme with livelier images derived from more easily filmed news events, such as sports and pre-planned happenings. But in all cases, as far as spectators were concerned, the fact that the shots were genuine was often more important than that they were dramatic.

It seems then that, after its first decade, a new status quo had come into being in the film industry, in which the way that war was represented on screen was being transformed. In the first place, a multi-shot type of fiction film had been invented, which would dominate fiction filmmaking for years into the future (becoming the feature film). Meanwhile the actuality had acquired new life thanks to a combination of increasing professionalism among filmmakers, a better understanding of what could be achieved in practice, and a positive demand for authentic films. In effect, therefore, these two sides of the filmmaking firmament – fiction and non-fiction – were becoming more established in their aesthetic ways and more rigid and inflexible as categories. Staged war films in this new universe were an ill-fit, being both drama and news; they sat uncomfortably and looked increasingly out of place in the new well-ordered ranks of film types. The muddled-up edges where fakes had lurked in the past were being ‘tidied up’, and with little demand any more for such vague entities, these kind of films were quietly done away with.<sup>25</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter and thesis I have discussed the development and significance of early war films, and have suggested that these kind of films embodied two important phenomena in film history. Firstly, they were some of the earliest examples of film propaganda; and secondly, they pioneered some cinematically

highly innovative practices. One might therefore view these pioneering war films in both negative and positive ways. In the first sense, they could be seen as the parents of all the misleading 'films of persuasion' which followed for many years, from political advertising to Nazi propaganda. In the second more positive sense, these early war films could be appreciated as important 'test-beds' for several cinematic techniques which were of vital importance in films throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

The filmmakers responsible for these pioneering motion pictures, in leaving us this twin legacy, were reflecting two somewhat contradictory aspects of the age in which they lived; for while the period around 1900 was almost constantly wracked by military conflicts and colonial incursions, it was also characterised by unprecedented levels of invention, scientific innovation and technical advance. The cinema itself was a product of this inventive age, and the stylistic features which the war film helped to foment were therefore ultimately derived from this well of originality. But, as we have seen, on top of this fast-developing cinematic apparatus, the military preoccupation of the time meant that elements of propaganda were pervasive in many of these early war films. So, when as film historians we stop and admire the rapid early development of moving pictures, we should not overlook the fact that this extraordinary inventiveness was often embodied in films which were, as products of their time, ideologically retrograde.

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<sup>1</sup> A handbill for this show is in P. A. Carson and C. R. Garner, *The Silver Screens of Wirral: A History of Cinemas in Wallesey, Hoylake, West Kirby and South Wirral* (Birkenhead: Countyvise Limited, 1990), p.111. A similar phenomenon in which films of more than one war were exhibited together took place at the time of the Boer and Boxer conflicts (see my chapters on film exhibition of these wars). In these ways, war was becoming a kind of generic theme for film shows.

<sup>2</sup> By 'media politics' I mean the role of the war film in promulgating certain assumptions and viewpoints, usually related to imperialism, which in its extreme form is propaganda. By 'film aesthetics' I mean the stylistic means by which cinema represents facts, opinions and stories, and transmits this information to its audience.

<sup>3</sup> During the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913 (the next major conflicts after the Russo-Japanese War) the level of regulation of media representatives varied markedly between the various combatants, the Bulgarian authorities being the most strict. Incidentally, other conflicts in the interim included that in Somalia in 1903, the Ilenden revolt in the Balkans from the same year, and troubles in Morocco from 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> Some scholars have argued that propaganda can act to control and manipulate the behaviour of populations, though historian Philip M. Taylor is very sceptical about how propaganda's influence could ever be assessed or measured. Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the 20th Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). Taylor states in 'Propaganda from Thucydides to Thatcher' (on Taylor's web-site) that: 'The alleged historical functions of propaganda have been to promote homogeneity of thought and deed and to restrict the development of the individual's capacity to think and act for him or herself.' But in practice: 'We will never know for certain whether any given behaviour might have been different if more or less



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propaganda had been directed at the target audiences.' Interestingly, Taylor calls censorship 'the siamese twin of propaganda'.

<sup>6</sup> Something similar is said about advertising: that, contrary to a certain popular view, it doesn't make people purchase new products, but only affects which *brand* they buy of a product they probably wanted to buy in any case.

<sup>7</sup> J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism, a Study* (London: James Nisbet, 1902), p.227-28.

<sup>8</sup> Werner Sombart, *Krieg und Kapitalismus* (Munchen: Duncker & Humblot, 1913). Unlike some of his other works, this one has never been translated into English, therefore its influence in the Anglophone world (where foreign language skills are such a rarity) has been somewhat limited. Other scholars have come to similar conclusions as Sombart, though his remains the most elaborated treatment of this theme.

<sup>9</sup> Reese V. Jenkins, *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry, 1839 to 1925* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1975), p.50. This probably applied to other photographic companies too.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Royal, *The Romance of Motion Picture Production* (Los Angeles: Royal Publishing Company, 1920), p.9, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Musser, *Emergence*, p.225-6; similarly on p.241.

<sup>12</sup> A. C. Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Brown, 'War on the home front: the Anglo-Boer War and the growth of rental in Britain. An economic perspective', in *Film History*, 16, no. 1, 2004, p. 28-36.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth adding, although it is not within the date range of this thesis, that the Russo-Japanese war had an even greater galvanising effect on the motion picture business (in Japan), for such was the public's demand for pictures of the conflict that Japanese production companies made a major effort to film at the front: this effectively initiated the first strong development of the film industry in that country. See Hiroshi Komatsu, 'Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War 1', in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, ed. D. Desser and A. Nolletti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p.229-258.

<sup>15</sup> The motive in making such films was to fill a gap in the market at a reasonable cost when few genuine films were available, as A.C. Bromhead, the head of British Gaumont, recalled in later years (as we have quoted already in connection with the Boer War): 'Those who had not the means, or the enterprise, to send cameramen overseas... were content with such staged scenes as they could produce at home.' A.C. Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, no. 21, 11 Dec 1933, p.8.

<sup>16</sup> Epes W. Sargent, 'The growth of the industry', *The Nickelodeon* 1 Jan 1910, p.17-20.

<sup>17</sup> Jon Gartenberg, 'Camera Movement in Edison and Biograph Films, 1900-1906', in *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, ed. R. Holman (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), p.171. He is referring to, for example, films numbers 801 and 802 in Musser's Edison filmography.

<sup>18</sup> Allegorical war films are often relatively neglected in studies of early war films in favour of war fakes, yet I would suggest they were as important.

<sup>19</sup> OMLJ Dec 1900, p.154. By 'fakes', the writer meant trick films and not the French filmmaker's war re-enactments, and Charles Urban, whose company distributed Méliès' films in the UK, wrote in to criticise this usage, stating that the term 'fakes' should apply only to staged news and war scenes, which he also called 'counterfeit' films.

<sup>20</sup> 'The experiences of a newspaper photographer – by one of them', *Photographic Times Bulletin*, May 1905, p.203. This section was an aside in an article mainly about newspaper work. As the author explained, the station and baggage car scenes in *The Great Train Robbery* were, as he put it, 'taken in an outdoor gallery', because in the real locations there wasn't enough light. One could argue about how pejorative the term 'fake' was in this context of general story films; some people might have taken it purely as a descriptive term, meaning 'artificial' – i.e. these were, in Méliès' phrase, 'artificially arranged scenes', shot in a studio.

<sup>21</sup> Film historians call this division of a film into separate shots, 'shot articulation'. Another Brighton filmmaker, G.A. Smith, at about this time was practicing a variation on Williamson's multi-shot approach, by breaking up individual scenes into shots (so-called 'scene dissection'). Incidentally, exhibitors had already developed a multi-shot means of presenting war in film, by selecting individual shots (or lantern images) to make each point, and exhibiting them in the

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chosen sequence: in this way, at any given moment, they could draw the audience's attention to a significant subject or personality through the requisite image.

<sup>22</sup> Barnes, 1900 volume, p.109. An early spectator later noted that these fake war films really excited an audience, and some even were convinced that the films were genuine. He argued that such panache ultimately helped lead to 'Hollywood': '... the achievement was there; an audience had been persuaded to pay money to sit and watch these absurdities, had been bamboozled into accepting them seriously and even enthusiastically, and had been sent away vowing to return. The great figures of the film world, the Laemmles, the Foxes, the Schencks, and the Goldwyns, have, after all, achieved little more than this; only they have done it on a grander scale, and profited vastly thereby.' Edmund G. Cousins, *Filmland in Ferment* (London: Denis Archer, 1932), p.32-33. The fakes he saw included what was probably an Edison Boer War film.

<sup>23</sup> 'New Warwick Subjects', c. Jan 1900. This is a brochure at the back of Warwick's 1899 catalogue: held in the Urban Collection.

<sup>24</sup> In any case, post-production technique moved on, and was better able to gloss over 'missing' footage, with inter-titles and the like.

<sup>25</sup> What is more, whereas in the early era various hybrid and irregular forms were produced, including fusions of fiction and actuality, by the second decade of cinema, with some exceptions, genres were becoming more tightly demarcated.

## Appendix 1. DECEPTION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY WAR PHOTOGRAPHY

As we have seen, especially in Ackerman's work in the Philippines, early film cameramen sometimes set-up ('arranged') shots of troops in a war zone to improve the action or framing of the scene. This practice also has a considerable history in stills photography of war. The best known example comes from the American Civil War. At Gettysburg, in July 1863, Alexander Gardner took one of the most famous photographs of the war, *The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter*, which shows a Confederate soldier lying dead in a rocky ravine with his weapon beside him. It has now been demonstrated, states photographic historian Colin Harding, that Gardner dragged the body from where it originally lay, and posed it to create a dramatic composition, adding a rifle. Gardner's photograph is therefore certainly manipulated, but as Harding asks:

*'..does this make it any less truthful a statement regarding the horror and waste of war? Indeed, by "improving" on reality might it even be claimed that Gardner is serving the need of some "greater truth"?'<sup>1</sup>*

However, I suspect that this would not have been the view of many commentators at the time, had they known of the 'improvement'. This was not the only example during the US Civil War of the rearrangement and moving of corpses for photographs. And in addition, false captions were sometimes contrived, images retouched, and when engravings of battle scenes were published, additional bodies and debris might be added.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes too, more blatantly deceptive arranging was done, and perhaps the most vivid example of the practice – rarely mentioned in photographic history – took place during the Franco-Prussian War. Coming back from the front at Metz, the correspondent of *The Scotsman* newspaper observed what seemed to be a group of bandaged, wounded men. It made his blood boil, he wrote, to see them laid down on the wet ground, 'while photographers grouped their stretchers with a view to reducing them to the scale of *cartes de visite*'. But then, he added:

*'Judge of my amazement, when the picture was taken, to find the men rise up, discard their sham splints and bandages, and dance round their crutches in anticipation of the drink-money the photographers had promised them to make up this miserable sham.'<sup>3</sup>*

He adds that this was a somewhat unnecessary exercise, given that genuine examples of war's destruction and of wounded men and refugees were to be found aplenty. However, the photographer might have countered that the advantage of doing it artificially was that the bodies could be grouped in a more effective manner than one would find by chance on the battlefield. A similar case was reported from the Boer War. One of the gunnery officers in South Africa in June 1900, described how, during their lunch break, his unit

was snapped by 'a photographer, belonging to a well-known firm...in a most wonderful selection of striking attitudes'. As the officer relates sarcastically, this series included the following arranged pictures:

*'Charging a Kopje' (enemy left to the imagination), 'The Last Cartridge,' 'The Last Bugle-Call,' 'Carrying off the Wounded' (who were specially bound up for the occasion in handkerchiefs dipped in mud and wound round their heads) – altogether a magnificent and true series of pictures of the war!'*<sup>4</sup>

While such elaborate posing of live soldiers – in both Metz and South Africa – was probably unusual, more basic examples of battlefield 'arranging' or posing were probably more common, in which soldiers were photographed in appropriate poses to represent a general military scene or a particular battle. One form of this involved posing a group of soldiers to point their guns as if firing, the resulting picture supposedly showing them 'in action'.<sup>5</sup> There are instances of this in wars from the 1890s and later. Journalist George Musgrave who was in Cuba during the insurrection against the Spanish, reproduces in his book, for example, photographs of events claimed to be real, but which definitely look arranged.<sup>6</sup> Also in Cuba, a photograph of the Spanish-American War reproduced in *Leslie's Weekly*, shows Spanish soldiers posing in a trench as if fighting off the Americans.<sup>7</sup> This kind of posing was practiced in subsequent wars – certainly during the First World War – and indeed even up to the present day.

## Appendix 2. TELEPHOTO LENSES AND EARLY WAR FILMING

As I have discussed in the main body of my thesis, during the Boer War it became very clear that with modern weaponry, the battlefield was enlarging and new tactics were emerging, particularly in emphasising concealment. This new situation presented problems for photographers and cameramen, limited by using the somewhat basic cameras and optics of the time. In the large landscape of South Africa, in which the Boers (and often the British troops too) were hidden, conventional lenses, which took a wide field, were almost useless. The *British Journal of Photography* in the early days of the war, noted:

‘The lens, gaping to the horizon, has no power of selection, and loses the heated moment of the battle in the vast spaces of unoccupied ground.’<sup>8</sup>

One solution in this effort to photograph or film modern warfare was to use telephoto lenses, which were being pioneered in the 1890s by Dallmeyer, and this had indeed been proposed in the early days of the Spanish-American War. Initially the suggestion was made for comic effect: a cartoon of the time depicts a naval battle off Cuba being filmed by cameramen – and significantly they are equipped with telephoto type lenses.<sup>9</sup> [See illustrations for Chapter 5]. In the same month, the *British Journal of Photography*, noticing that the first films to be released relating to this war did not show action – titles such as s.s. *Olivette* sailing out of Havana Harbour (‘these... only depict incidents of the war, and are in no sense battle pictures proper’) – believed that nevertheless war films of genuine action might be secured, using telephoto lenses. The writer noted:

‘It will, we fancy, be a little difficult to secure cinematographic pictures of actual engagements by the lenses with which cinematographs are now supplied, unless they are fitted with telephoto attachments (by reason of the distance they necessarily must be from the spot), and that will render them slower.’<sup>10</sup>

Presumably what he means in the final remark is either that these lenses were somewhat cumbersome to use or that their f-stop value was less than a normal lens. Both are true, and meant that in the 1890s even stills photographers used these lenses with some trepidation. Ace photographer H.C. Shelly did use such a lens during the Boer War, but photographed only a small number of images with it: notably, Lord Methuen directing operations during a battle, and Boer positions taken from an observation balloon – in both cases shot from about a quarter of a mile away. According to Shelly and others, the latter images of the distant landscape were indistinct with heat haze.<sup>11</sup> However, the same is not true of the photograph of Methuen: I have found a reproduction of this, published in a periodical of the time, and it is fairly sharp and of quite good quality.<sup>12</sup> Probably the difference is partly to be

accounted for by the fact that Methuen was in the open, and I suspect closer, while the Boer positions would, of course, have been intentionally hidden.

The same problem of haze affected W.K.-L. Dickson, and he had similarly mixed results with a long lens. Dickson is the only film cameraman in this early era who definitely tried to use a telephoto lens to film warfare (the next instance is probably not until 1912). In Dickson's account of the war, he mentioned trying to use his telephoto to capture the effect of artillery shots as they hit their target, but he gave up due to 'the haze and the indistinctness which made it impossible to focus properly'.<sup>13</sup> This focussing problem is quite predictable technically, since focus becomes more critical the longer the focal length of the lens; and film cameras of this era didn't have reflex viewfinding, which would have made it more difficult still to maintain focus.<sup>14</sup> However, as with Shelly, the surviving results from Dickson suggest that he might not have been completely unsuccessful with the long lens. One of the most effective films of this war by Dickson, which survives, shows horse-drawn ambulances crossing the Tugela River after the battle of Spion Kop, filmed from the farther bank. It seems that no fewer than three versions of this exist, including one seemingly shot with a long lens or telephoto, which is not by any means unacceptably fuzzy, and details can be made out.<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned, I believe that Dickson was the only filmmaker to use such a lens for war camerawork at such an early date. However, various companies and exhibitors claimed their films were telephoto views. Such a claim first appeared during the Spanish-American War. The filmmaker Edward Amet made model-based fakes of naval battles of this war, and on several occasions it was stated by some commentators that the films were genuine, shot during the naval battle itself with a telephoto. One review of Amet's films began: 'The new telescopic lens is a triumph of modern photography. It is possible to obtain accurate pictures at very long range'.<sup>16</sup> It went on to praise this 'marvelous picture', which showed the American battleships 'in full action' as they bombarded the Spanish positions. People who saw these films at this time recall the showmen claiming they were genuine, shot from far offshore with 'a telescopic lens'. This implies that perhaps Amet's company had suggested to showmen that they spin this yarn about the lens (for more on this, see my Chapter 6 on dramatised Spanish-American War films).

A similar claim was made in Britain three years later – though about different events. An advertisement for a show run by Waller Jeffs in Hull includes the following text:

'The martial sound of the drums and the booming of cannon announcing the inauguration of Edison's animated pictures of the China and Boer wars taken by the latest and most wonderful invention, the telephoto lens, which enables our operators to photograph scenes four and five miles distant, and bring them life-size to the animated camera, thus reproducing the living incidents of actual warfare at your very doors.'<sup>17</sup>

Almost certainly, as with the Amet examples, this advertising patten was also mere boasting, and the films had not really been shot at the real place with a telephoto. Given that Jeffs and the other showmen involved were regular clients of Mitchell and Kenyon, it seems likely that the films involved could be M&K's staged war scenes, as well, perhaps, as one of the model-based fakes of this conflict (see my Chapter 13 on the Boxer Uprising).

The following month the films were shown in Manchester, drawing an enormous audience to the St James's Hall, attracted by 'the prospect of seeing some new and stirring animated pictures of the China and Boer wars'. Again the claim was made that the films were of the real events taken from far away using a special apparatus, though this time a sceptical journalist commented:

'One would have thought though, however, that a machine capable of photographing scenes four or five miles distant would have produced much more graphic views of the actual fighting.'<sup>18</sup>

One further instance from this era of a claim to have used a long lens to film a conflict comes from the Philippine War. The Warwick Trading Company stated of one of Rosenthal's films of the war that, 'This subject was procured with a long focus lens'.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the examples just cited, this is entirely credible, as Rosenthal filmed these scenes the year after filming the Boer and Boxer conflicts, so filming equipment had evolved by then (and Rosenthal was always keen on forcing the technical limits). The term 'long focus' is a relatively modest claim, for it could mean a focal length considerably shorter than a true telephoto.

### Appendix 3. ACKERMAN'S FILMS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND CHINA – FILMOGRAPHY

#### Filmography: Philippines

*This filmography lists 46 films shot by Ackerman from 1899 to 1900, of which 44 were made in the Philippines and two were filmed en route there. They are listed with my assigned numbers in rough order of filming, with the Biograph catalogue number [#]. Other information is: place of shooting; date of shooting, given as year/month/day; length given in feet of Biograph negative and/or [feet] of release (35mm.) print, whichever is known; and alternative title(s). (Original spelling mistakes are uncorrected).*

- 1) *Back from Manila.* [#?] (San Francisco, USA. 1899/9 ?). Length: [55].
- 2) *33rd Infantry, U.S.A in Honolulu.* [#1348] (Honolulu, Hawaii. 1899/9?). Length: 300. Alternative title(s): *33rd Infantry, U.S.A*
- 3) *Coolies Carrying Cargo; Port of Manila.* [#1349] (Manila. 1899/10- ). Length: 153. Alternative title(s): *Coolies carrying cargo ; Coolies at work*
- 4) *Co. "L" Thirty-Third Inf. Going to Firing Line.* [#1350] (Manila. 1899/11/1). Length: 160 or 164 [28]. Alternative title(s): *33rd Infantry going to firing line ; Going to the firing line*
- 5) *Blanco Bridge.* [#1352] (Manila. 1899/11- ). Length: 159. Alternative title(s): *Famous Blanco Bridge*
- 6) *Train with Red Cross Supplies, Manila.* [#1386] (Manila. 1899/11 ?). Length: 152. Alternative title(s): *Train bearing Red Cross hospital supplies*
- 7) *Panoramic View of Manila Harbor.* [#1353] (Manila. 1899/11- ). Length: 306. Alternative title(s): *Panorama of Harbor*
- 8) *Capt. C.W. Hobb's Battery Third Artillery.* [#1387] (Pampanga region. 1899/11/11). Length: 310 [53]. Alternative title(s): *Battery K, 3rd Artillery, going into action ; Going into action*
- 9) *Bridge of Spain; Manila;.* [#1380] (Manila. 1899/12/16). Length: 311. Alternative title(s): *Bridge of Spain ; Bridge of Spain - Center of Activity - Manila*
- 10) *The Escolta, Manila.* [#1351] (Manila. 1899/12/21 ; Deocampo says November). Length: 152. Alternative title(s): *The Escalta, Manila ; The Escalta: a busy street in Manila*
- 11) *Unloading Lighters at the Government Dock.* [#1354] (Manila. 1899/12/21). Length: 162. Alternative title(s): *Unloading Lighters ; Unloading lighters at Gov. Dock*



- 12) *The Call to Arms!* [#1381] (Manila? 1899/12 ?). Length: 311 [53].  
Alternative title(s): *Guadalupe [B]ridge: Comp. L. 37 Reg. Call to arms*
- 13) *In the Field.* [#1381?] (Manila? 1899/12 ?). Length: [53].
- 14) *Repelling the Enemy.* [#1383] (Manila. 1899/12 ?). Length: 311.
- 15) *Making Manila Rope.* [#1384] (Manila? 1899/12 ?). Length: 152.  
Alternative title(s): *Making Manila Rope - natives at work*
- 16) *Water Buffalo, Manila.* [#1388] (Manila. 1899/12 [one source says 1900/03/01]). Length: 312 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Water buffalo, captured from insurgents* [this longer title gives the shot much more point]
- 17) *The Market Place; Manila.* [#1385] (Manila. 1899/12/15). Length: 303.  
Alternative title(s): *Market Place Manilla [sic] ; Market Place*
- 18) *Bringing General Lawton's Body Back to Manila.* [#1389] (Manila? 1899/12/29?). Length: 312. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Lawton's remains being removed to cemetery ; Gen. Lawton's funeral*
- 19) *Gen. Lawton's Funeral in Manila.* [#1396] (Manila. 1899/12/30). Length: 455. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Lawton's funeral, Manila ; Funeral of Major-General Henry W. Lawton*
- 20) *Gen. Fred D. Grant and Staff.* [#1402] (Pampanga region? 1900/01/07). Length: 153. Alternative title(s): *Gen. F.D. Grant and Staff ; Brigadier-General Frederick D. Grant and Staff*
- 21) *Attack on Mt. Ariat.* [#1399] (Pampanga region. 1900/01/07 ?). Length: 308 [53]. Alternative title(s): *The battle of Mt. Ariat (Arayat) ; Battle of Mt. Ariat ; Gen. A.S. Burt. at Gen. Grant's orders taking charge, 25th Inf.*
- 22) *Twenty-Fifth Inf. Returning from Mt. Ariat.* [#1401] (Pampanga region. 1900/01/07 ?). Length: 312 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Back from battle ; 25th Infantry Returning from Mt. Ariat ; 25th Inf. Gen Burt & Grant returning from fight ; 25th Infantry (Back from Battle)*
- 23) *Gen. Fred D. Grant Inspecting Market-Place.* [#1397] (Pampanga region: Angeles. 1900/01/08). Length: 154 [27]. Alternative title(s): *Gen. F.D. Grant and officers inspecting market ; A military inspection*
- 24) *Responding to an Alarm.* [#1400] (Pampanga region. 1900/01). Length: 298 [53]. Alternative title(s): *The attack on Magalang ; Cap. H.G. Lenhauser's 2nd Bat. & Gen. AS Burt's 25th responding to alarm*
- 25) *The Train for Angeles.* [#1403?] (Pampanga region? 1900/01- ). Length: [27].
- 26) *Guarded Ox-Train Carrying Rations.* [#1403] (Pangasinan? 1900/01/11). Length: 151 or 157 [26]. Alternative title(s): *A Train Carrying Rations for U.S. Troops ; Under armed escort*
- 27) *Col. Jacob H. Smith and Seventeenth Inf.* [#1398] (Pangasinan.

- 1900/01/11). Length: 314 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Col. Jacob H. Smith, 17th Inf. Regd. ; The 17th Infantry, U.S.A.*
- 28) *Major-General Arthur Macarthur and Staff.* [#1404] (? 1900/01/12). Length: 154. Alternative title(s): *Major Gen. Arthur and Staff ; Maj. Gen. Arthur McArthur and Staff*
- 29) *A Filipino Town Surprised.* [#1461] (Dagupan [Calamba region, says another source]. 1900/01/30 [another source says 1900/03-04]). Length: 307 [53]. Alternative title(s): *3rd battalion of 13 Infantry charging insurgent trenches*
- 30) *Gen. Bell and Staff.* [#1458] (Pangasinan - Dagupan. 1900/01/31). Length: 153. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Franklin Bell and Staff ; Brigadier-General Franklin Bell and Staff*
- 31) *An Advance by Rushes.* [#1390] (Pangasinan. 1900/02/0 ?). Length: 147 [26]. Alternative title(s): *Comp. I in action - a real scrap*
- 32) *Aguinaldo's Navy.* [#1454] (Pangasinan - Dagupan. 1900/02/02). Length: 152 [27]. Alternative title(s): *Native boats on the run: Aguinaldo's Navy ['on the run' meaning sailing (not meaning chased by US)]*
- 33) *The Fighting Thirty-Sixth.* [#1460] (Pangasinan. 1900/02/04). Length: 308 [53]. Alternative title(s): *3rd battalion of famous 36th Infantry. Col. R. Grove and staff ; The Fighting 36th*
- 34) *Bell's Pack Train Swimming Agno River.* [#1455] (Pangasinan - Salasa [Salaea, says AFI]. 1900/02/05). Length: 312 [54]. Alternative title(s): *An historic feat ; Gen. Bell's pack train swimming Agno River ; An Historic Fleet*
- 35) *Into the Wilderness.* [#1449] (Pangasinan - near Sual. 1900/02/06). Length: 310 [51]. Alternative title(s): *General Bell's expedition ; Gen. Bell's expedition near Sual*
- 36) *Pack Train. Gen. Bell's Expedition.* [#1451] (Pangasinan - near Sual. 1900/02/06). Length: 154 [27] [or 15]. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Bell's expedition near Sual ; Into the wilderness! [1] ; Gen. Bell's Expedition*
- 37) *Breaking through Jungle. Gen. Bell's Exp.* [#1453] (Pangasinan - Sual? 1900/02/06). Length: 310 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Bell's expedition through the mountains near Sual ; Into the wilderness! [2]*
- 38) *Bell's Pack Train Breaking through Jungle.* [#1459] (Pangasinan - Dagupan. 1900/02/06). Length: 312 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Bell's expedition near Sual ; Into the wilderness! [3]*
- 39) *Lieut. Howell's Light Battery D.* [#1452] (Manila. 1900/02/18). Length: 311 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Lt. Howells' light battery D, 6th artillery, Laloma Church ; With the guns !*
- 40) *Water Buffalo Train.* [#1450] (Manila. 1900/02/28). Length: 314 [54]. Alternative title(s): *Slow but sure ; Bull train*
- 41) *Panorama of Water Front, Manila.* [#1462] (Manila. 1900/03/01). Length:

- 155 [28]. Alternative title(s): *Panorama of river front, Manila*
- 42) *Artillery in Action. Gen. Wheaton's Advance.* [#1457] (Calamba region. 1900/03/05). Length: 316 [55]. Alternative title(s): *A charge on the insurgents ; A Charge of the Insurgents ; On the advance with Gen. Wheaton* [though this title seems rather to be no. 1448]
- 43) *On the Advance with Gen. Wheaton.* [#1448] (Calamba region. 1900/03/05). Length: 311 [54]. Alternative title(s): *On the Advance of Gen. Wheaton ; On the advance with Gen. Wheaton, Manila* ['Manila' meaning Philippines, presumably]
- 44) *Gen. Floyd Wheaton and Staff.* [#1464] (Calamba region. 1900/03/06). Length: 294 [52]. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Wheaton's staff ; Major-General Lloyd Wheaton*
- 45) *Fourth Cavalry on the March.* [#1463] (Manila - Pasay. 1900/03/12). Length: 312 [54]. Alternative title(s): *4th Cavalry on the march ; After Aguinaldo*
- 46) *Fourth U.S. Cavalry; Philippines.* [#1456] (Manila - Pasay. 1900/03/12). Length: 154 [28]. Alternative title(s): *4th Cavalry in platoon formation ; The 4th Cavalry*

## Filmography: China

*This filmography lists 63 films made in China by Ackerman from 1900 to 1901 in the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising. They are listed in order of Biograph catalogue number [#] along with my assigned numbers, 1 to 63. Other information is: place of shooting; length in feet; and alternative title(s). Dates of shooting are less certain than for the Philippines, and so are not given.*

- 1) *Russian Sharpshooters.* [#1732] (Tientsin). Length: 147. Alternative title(s): *C Von Waldersee reviewing 9th and 10th Russian sharp shooters*
- 2) *Review of Russian Artillery.* [#1733] (Tientsin). Length: 165. Alternative title(s): *C Von Waldersee reviewing 2nd and 4th Russian artillery and 3rd Siberia*
- 3) *Von Waldersee Reviewing Cossacks.* [#1734] (Tientsin). Length: 33. Alternative title(s): *Von Waldersee Reviewing 1st Chila and Reg. Cossacks*
- 4) *Japanese Soldiers on the Taku Road.* [#1735] (Tientsin). Length: 192. Alternative title(s): *Japanese Soldiers on Taku Road*
- 5) *Capt. Reilly's Battery Limbering.* [#1736] (Pekin). Length: 138. Alternative title(s): *Capt. Reilly's Light Battery F Limbering for advance on Pekin*
- 6) *Capt. Reilly's Battery, Bombardment of Pekin.* [#1737] (Pekin). Length: 264. Alternative title(s): *Capt. Reilly's Light Battery F Bombardment of Pekin*
- 7) *Charge of Reilly's Battery.* [#1738] (Pekin). Length: 158. Alternative title(s): *Capt. Reilly's Light Battery F furious charge on gates of Pekin; Reilly's Battery, before south gate of Pekin; Reilly's Light Battery F*

- 8) *Street Scene Taku Road*. [#1739] (Tientsin). Length: 159. Alternative title(s): *The Taku Road [in Picture catal.]*; *Street Scene, Tientsin*; *Street Scene, Tientsin [China]*
- 9) *Street Scene Taku Road*. [#1740] (Tientsin). Length: 135.
- 10) *Street Scene Taku Road*. [#1741] (Tientsin). Length: 261.
- 11) *Von Waldersee and Staff*. [#1742] (Pekin). Length: 159. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Von Waldersee and Staff*; *Field Marshall C. Von Waldersee reviews English troops*
- 12) *Von Waldersee's Review*. [#1743] (Pekin). Length: 131. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Von Waldersee's Review*; *Field Marshall C. Von Waldersee reviews Bengal Lancers*; *Von Waldersee reviewing Bengal Lancers*
- 13) *The Bengal Lancers*. [#1744] (Pekin). Length: 141. Alternative title(s): *1st Bengal Lancers, Capt. Griffin*; *First Bengal Lancers on the march*
- 14) *First Bengal Lancers, Distant View*. [#1745] (Pekin). Length: 100. Alternative title(s): *1st Bengal Lancers, Distant View*
- 15) *Li Hung Chang, High Priest and Mandarins*. [#1746] (Pekin). Length: 193. Alternative title(s): *Li Hung Chang*; *Li Hung Chang in Pekin*
- 16) *Li Hung Chang and Suite. Presentation of Parlor Mutoscope*. [#1747] (Pekin). Length: 99. Alternative title(s): *Li Hung Chang*; *Presentation of Mutoscope to Li Hung Chang*
- 17) *Japanese Infantry on the March*. [#1748] (Tientsin). Length: 205.
- 18) *Japanese Artillery*. [#1749] (Tientsin). Length: 164.
- 19) *Japanese Infantry*. [#1750] (Pekin [or Tientsin]). Length: 183. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Japanese Infantry*; *Japanese assaulting a mud wall*; *Japanese assaulting mud wall, Pekin*
- 20) *British Light Artillery*. [#1751 & 1752] (Tientsin). Length: 190 & 219. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: British Light Artillery*; *3rd Bombay Cavalry and Royal Light Artillery*; *British Royal Light Artillery, Tien-Tsin*
- 21) *Bombay Cavalry*. [#1753] (Tientsin). Length: 135. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Bombay Cavalry*; *3rd Bombay Cavalry and Royal Light Artillery*; *Third Bombay Cavalry, Tien-Tsin*
- 22) *An Army Transport Train*. [#1754] (Pekin). Length: 194. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: An Army Transport Train*; *American Transportation Train*; *American Transportation Train, Tien-Tsin*
- 23) *Coolies at Work*. [#1755] (Tientsin [or Pekin?]). Length: 106. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Coolies at Work*; *Coolies loading junk*; *Coolies loading a junk, Pekin*
- 24) *Ruins of Tien-Tsin*. [#1756] (Tientsin). Length: 156. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Ruins of Tien-Tsin*; *Panoramic view of Tien-Tsin after bombardment*; *Panorama of Tien-Tsin after bombardment*

- 25) *Tien-Tsin*. [#1757] (Tientsin). Length: 149. Alternative title(s): *Panoramic view of Tien-Tsin French bridge; French bridge at Tien-Tsin*
- 26) *A British Donkey Train*. [#1758] (Tientsin). Length: 231. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: A British Donkey Train; Sikhs guarding donkey train; Sikhs guarding donkey train, Tien-Tsin*
- 27) *French Bridge, Tien-Tsin*. [#1759] (Tientsin). Length: 216. Alternative title(s): *French Bridge Pei-Ho river; French Bridge over Pei-Ho river, Tien-Tsin; The French Bridge*
- 28) *On the Pei-Ho*. [#1760] (Tientsin). Length: 164. Alternative title(s): *Pei-Ho River, Panoramic view; Panorama of Pei-Ho River at Tien-Tsin*
- 29) *Panoramic View on the Pei-Ho River: Opium Junks*. [#1761] (Tientsin). Length: 164. Alternative title(s): *Pei-Ho River, Panoramic view; Panorama of bank of Pei-Ho River*
- 30) *British Rajputs*. [#1762] (Tientsin [or Shanghai]). Length: 219. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: British Rajputs; 7th Rajputs "D.C.O." bayonet charge; Bayonet charge by Seventh Rajputs*
- 31) *Assault on the South Gate*. [#1763] (Pekin). Length: 264. Alternative title(s): *Sixth U.S. Cavalry assaulting South Gate of Pekin; 6th Cavalry Assaulting South Gate of Pekin*
- 32) *Market Scene Japanese Quarter, Hatomen St.* [#1764] (Pekin). Length: 153. Alternative title(s): *Market scene, Pekin; A Chinese Market[?]*
- 33) *The Forbidden City, Pekin*. [#1765] (Pekin). Length: 152. Alternative title(s): *Panorama of Forbidden City, Pekin*
- 34) *The Forbidden City*. [#1766] (Pekin). Length: 245. Alternative title(s): *Panoramic view courtyard, Forbidden City; In the Forbidden City, Pekin*
- 35) *Chinese Junks*. [#1767?] (Inland sea). Length: 181. Alternative title(s): *Japanese junks, inland sea; Japanese junks*
- 36) *Bolster Sparring, "Empress of China"*. [#1768] (Empress of China). Length: 380. Alternative title(s): *Bolster sparring*
- 37) *Presentation of Flags, German Infantry, Pekin*. [#1769] (Tientsin). Length: 148. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: Review of German Troops; Presentation of flags to 5th and 6th Infantry, Asiatic Corps; Review of German Troops*
- 38) *Review of German Infantry Corps; Pekin*. [#1770] (Tientsin). Length: 224. Alternative title(s): *The War in China; Presentation of flags to 5th and 6th Infantry, Gen Von Lessel*
- 39) *The German Contingent*. [#1771] (Tientsin). Length: 175. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: The German Contingent; Presentation of flags to 5th and 6th Infantry, Gen. Von Lessel; Gen. Von Lessel and staff, Pekin*
- 40) *C.P.S.S. "Empress of China": Crew Lowering Boats from Cradles to Deck*. [#1772] (Empress of China). Length: 127. Alternative title(s): *A boat drill in*

*mid ocean*

- 41) *C.P.S.S. "Empress of China": Crew Taking in Boats and Making Fast.* [#1773] (*Empress of China*). Length: 249. Alternative title(s): *After a Rescue at Sea*
- 42) *C.P.S.S. "Empress of China": Capt. Archibald's Crew Leaving Deck for Quarters.* [#1774] (*Empress of China*). Length: 175. Alternative title(s): *Crew of a Pacific Liner*
- 43) *6th U.S. Cavalry in a Wild Charge.* [#1775] (*Tientsin [or 'Yang Tsin']*). Length: 96. Alternative title(s): *Sixth U.S. Cavalry Charging*
- 44) *6th U.S. Cavalry, 2nd Squad St. Col. Wint with Colors.* [#1776] (*Tientsin [or 'Yang Tsin']*). Length: 160. Alternative title(s): *Second squad, Sixth U.S. Cavalry*
- 45) *6th U.S. Cavalry, Skirmish Line.* [#1777] (*Tientsin [or 'Yang Tsin']*). Length: 289. Alternative title(s): *Sixth U.S. Cavalry, Skirmish Line*
- 46) *Charge of Cossack Cavalry.* [#1778] (*Pekin*). Length: 64. Alternative title(s): *Cossack cavalry doing a resistless charge*
- 47) *Cossack Cavalry.* [#1779] (*Pekin*). Length: 256. Alternative title(s): *Gen. Levovitch staff and cossack cavalry; Gen. Livevitch and Cossack cavalry, Pekin*
- 48) *Squad of Men Clearing the Road.* [#1780] (*Pekin*). Length: 29. Alternative title(s): *Squad of Men Clearing Road, south gate Pekin; Squad of men charging round South Gate, Pekin; The War in China: The Evacuation of Pekin*
- 49) *Street in Shanghai.* [#1781 [or 82]] (*Shanghai*). Length: 143. Alternative title(s): *A Side Street in Shanghai*
- 50) *Street Scene in Shanghai.* [#1782 [or 81]] (*Shanghai*). Length: 204. Alternative title(s): *Nankin Road, Shanghai*
- 51) *Street Scene, Shanghai.* [#1783] (*Shanghai*). Length: 206. Alternative title(s): *Street Scene in Shanghai. The Bund*
- 52) *Shanghai from a Launch.* [#1785] (*Shanghai*). Length: 328 as shot, 292 as edited ('corrected'). Alternative title(s): *In Old China*
- 53) *Shanghai from a Launch, Panorama.* [#1786] (*Shanghai*). Length: 262. Alternative title(s): *Shanghai from a Launch*
- 54) *General Chaffee in Pekin.* [#1787] (*Pekin*). Length: 442. Alternative title(s): *The War in China; Maj. Gen Adna R. Chaffee and Sixth Cavalry, Pekin; Departure of 14th Infantry from Pekin, China*
- 55) *The Evacuation of Pekin.* [#1788] (*Pekin*). Length: 241. Alternative title(s): *The War in China: The Evacuation of Pekin; Departure of 14th Infantry from Pekin, China; Departure of Fourteenth Infantry from Pekin*
- 56) *The 9th Infantry, U.S.A.* [#1789] (*Pekin*). Length: 536. Alternative title(s): *9th Infantry, U.S.A. leaving Temple of Agriculture, Pekin; Ninth Infantry, Pekin*
- 57) *The Fourth Ghorkhas.* [#1791] (*Shanghai*). Length: 234. Alternative title(s):

*4th Ghourkas bayonet exercises; Bayonet Drill; Fourth Gourkhas, Shanghai*

- 58) *The 14th Sikhs*. [#1792] (Shanghai). Length: 325. Alternative title(s): *The 4th Sikhs; 14th Sikhs marching; The Fourteenth Sikhs, Shanghai*
- 59) *Charge by 1st Bengal Lancers*. [#1793] (Shanghai?). Length: 217.  
Alternative title(s): *Charge by the 1st Bengal Lancers; 1st Bengal Lancers; Charge by First Bengal Lancers; A cavalry charge [Niver]*
- 60) *1st Bengal Lancers*. [#1794] (Shanghai). Length: 162. Alternative title(s):  
*The War in China: First Bengal Lancers; First Bengal Lancers*
- 61) *1st Bengal Lancers*. [#1795] (Shanghai). Length: 170. Alternative title(s):  
*First Bengal Lancers, Shanghai*
- 62) *Second Queen's Rajputs*. [#1796] (Shanghai). Length: 510. Alternative title(s): *2nd Queen's Rajputs and 4 Gourkas marching; Second Queen's Rajputs, Shanghai*
- 63) *The Fourth Goorkhas*. [#1797] (Shanghai?). Length: 279. Alternative title(s):  
*The War in China: The Fourth Goorkhas; 4th Gourkhas; The Fourth Gourkhas*

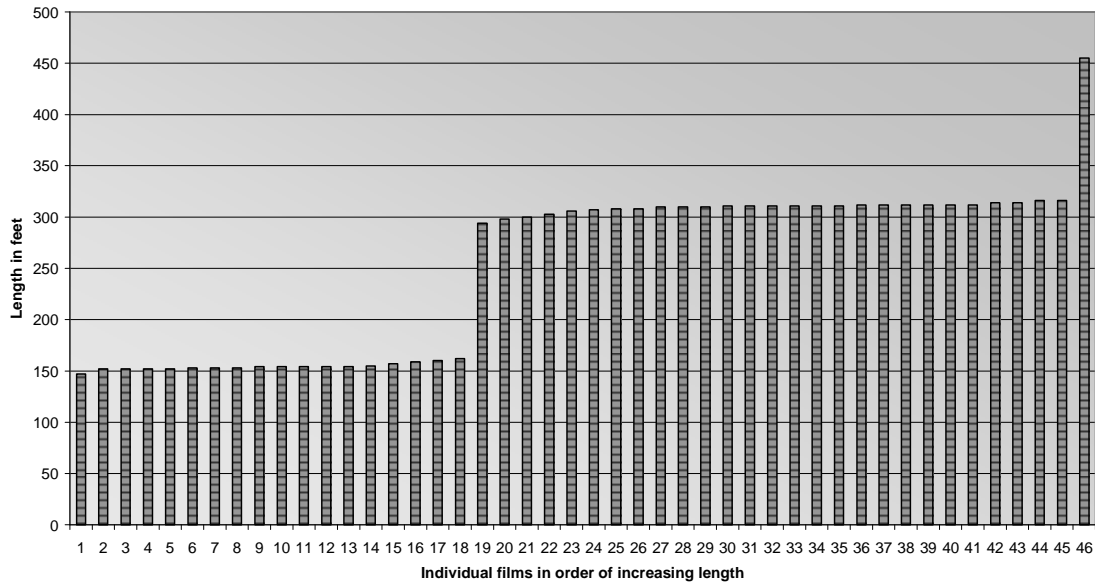
### **Different patterns of film lengths in the Philippines and China**

The graphs below represent Ackerman's films shot in (A) the Philippines, and (B) China. In these graphs each column corresponds to one film, the vertical axis representing the length of that film in feet. The films are listed in order of increasing length so as to show more clearly the striking differences between lengths of Ackerman's films in the two countries, (i.e. not in the same order as in the filmographies above).

For his assignment in the Philippines Ackerman mainly shot films of either about 150 ft. or about 300 ft., and the graph shows these two plateaus. But in China there is a fairly smooth curve from the shortest film to the longest film, with no favoured lengths, and a greater range from shortest to longest films (29' up to 536').<sup>20</sup> Why this difference between the two assignments? Was Ackerman using a different camera, or had his instructions changed? Perhaps, a year on, it was not considered so important to have films at standard lengths, but if not, why not? An answer to these questions may only come when all the data from the Biograph register in MOMA and other sources are analysed numerically, a relatively simple task which could and should be undertaken.

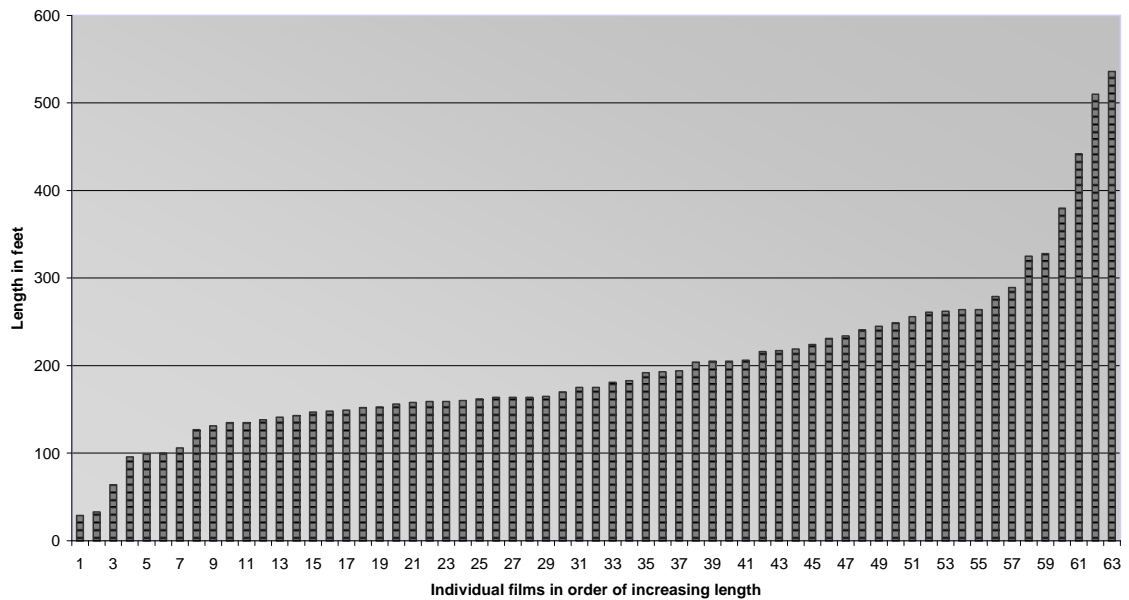
## A. Philippines

Ackerman's Philippine films, 1899-1900



## B. China

Ackerman's China films, 1900-1901





#### Appendix 4. WINSTON CHURCHILL'S PLAN TO FILM THE BOER WAR

While almost every aspect of the career of Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965) has been examined in detail, his contacts with the cinema have been rather overlooked, including his plans to film the Boer War.<sup>21</sup> Churchill encountered the new medium of cinema when he took part in Lord Kitchener's Nile Expedition in 1898, for he wrote of war correspondents arriving in the Sudan, 'equipped with ice machines, typewriters, cameras, and even cinematographs'. (As we have seen, Frederic Villiers and John Benett-Stanford – and perhaps René Bull – brought film cameras to the Sudan.) The cinema had evidently entered Churchill's consciousness by the time of this campaign, because after he took part in the famous charge of the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman, he used a filmic image to describe his impressions of the experience, writing: 'The whole scene flickered exactly like a cinematograph picture; and, besides, I remember no sound, the event seemed to pass in absolute silence'.<sup>22</sup>

The following year the Boer War broke out, during which Churchill made his name as a daring war correspondent, being captured by the Boers and then making an audacious escape. What is less well known is that, back in Britain before leaving for the front, he had planned to film the war. This 'cinematograph scheme' was a joint venture with his friend Murray Guthrie, M.P.<sup>23</sup> Each of them was to pay half the expenses of sending an operator out with camera and films, the total costs estimated at not more than £700. In a letter to Guthrie (see Box) of 4 October 1899 Churchill speaks positively about their 'venture', as if he really thought it might happen, later adding that, 'I have no doubt that, barring accidents, I can obtain some vry strange pictures.'

But he soon found out that they would face competition, for by chance he had booked on the same ship to South Africa (the *Dunottar Castle*) as Biograph's W. K.-L. Dickson and his crew, departing on 14 October. Apparently Churchill travelled on the same boat train from London as the crew, for he noted in a letter to Guthrie written on the train that the Biograph Co. had already 'sent out a machine'.<sup>24</sup> Churchill seems rather to have got cold feet at this stage, and feared that all the theatres would be 'pledged to the American Coy', though he added that, 'even then I might make a lecturing tour' using the films. Churchill did indeed lecture after the war, but using lantern slides rather than films as illustration.<sup>25</sup> His plan to film the Boer War seems to have come to nothing.<sup>26</sup>

On board the *Dunottar Castle* he probably would have realised in any case that the process of filming was not as straightforward as he had supposed. He records in his account of the campaign that he noticed Dickson and his crew filming on the ship, and observed that their machine was 'cumbrous' and slow to work. The crew tried to film a ship which they passed, but because the Biograph camera took so much time to set up, 'the chance of making a moving picture was lost for ever', as Churchill wrote.<sup>27</sup>

**Box:**

**Winston Churchill's letters about the scheme**

On 4 October 1899 Churchill wrote from London to his friend, Murray Guthrie:

My dear Murray,

I sail on the 14th inst. for S. Africa: of the other possibilities you are as good a judge [as] I am. About the Cinematograph scheme: I do not expect it would require more than £700 altogether: and I am willing to join with you in the venture on the following simple terms:

Each to pay half the expenses: You to make all arrangements & do all business here: I all that is necessary in South Africa.

My own idea is that the expenses would not be vy great. (Machine 50. Expert 200. Transport & Feeding in S.A. 100. Passage out & home 50 = 400) The division of labour seems to me a fair one: and if you think the game is worth the candle in interest, in enterprise & in prospect of profit, I beg you to write to me. It is not necessary that the machine & expert should start when I do: though I suppose the sooner the better.

Yours sincerely, Winston S. Churchill

On 14 October in the boat train to Southampton, Churchill wrote another letter to Guthrie:

My dear Murray,

I see that the American Biograph Coy have already sent out a machine. This consideration will not of course escape you. I trust entirely to your business knowledge, and if you think the venture sound after your enquiries, I shall be delighted. But do not think yourself pledged to me in any way. Judge the situation for yourself and if you decide to send the machine & expert, Jack [Churchill's brother] will find the money for my half share & I beg you to write to him. I most sincerely hope you will find that the chances are in favour of success.

The expert must go out under his own name & report himself to me on arrival. Jack will know the address. I have no doubt that, barring accidents, I can obtain some vy strange pictures. My only fear is that all the Theatres will be pledged to the American Coy. But even then I might make a lecturing tour.

If you wire to me Standard Bank — Capetown 'Biograph coming' I shall know that the business is settled. And you may be sure, I shall do my best to win my money — and yours.

Your sincere friend, Winston S. Churchill<sup>28</sup>

## Appendix 5. BOER WAR CELEBRITIES ON SCREEN

### The first 'film stars'

Just as there are a number of quite well-defined genres or sub-genres of fiction films, there have always been sub-genres in non-fiction too, from the early days of cinema. One of these is the 'celebrity view', a scene in which a famous person is portrayed going through some action (often this was specially arranged for filming purposes by the cameraman). The genre is especially interesting from a film historical point of view because in a sense (as Martin Loiperdinger has argued) these filmed celebrities may be seen as forerunners of the 'stars' in later fiction filmmaking.<sup>29</sup>

Vanessa Toulmin has examined this phenomenon in respect of the Boer War, notably in the films of Mitchell and Kenyon (M&K), and identifies a number of individuals who feature prominently.<sup>30</sup> Toulmin finds that while certain outstanding individuals in the lower ranks were portrayed, the main subjects were the military commanders. The leading names in the M&K films were Generals Roberts, Kitchener and Buller, and to a lesser extent Baden-Powell and Methuen. In what follows I essentially use the model advanced by Toulmin, though with the addition of some different material from various sources (including from the NFA). I also add one important element, in that I also look at films of the Boer leaders: Generals such as De la Rey, and most significantly, President Kruger. Kruger was especially interesting in this respect, for though he was the *bête noir* of the British public, he was admired by the rest of the world: he was much filmed when he came to Europe, his image becoming a rallying point for the Boer sympathisers.

## THE BRITISH LEADERS

### Celebrity in general

By the turn of the century the phenomenon of the 'celebrity' was already well-established and the various media were used to featuring certain people very prominently. Politicians, performers, writers, military leaders were all the subject of quite personal articles, interviews and photographs. These 'celebrities' achieved this status in three main ways: either by virtue of their social position in society, or by their achievements, or both. War leaders fell into this latter category: they were celebrated for their given service rank, and also for their military success. During a war they would be featured more often in the media, in this way ascending the celebrity ladder (especially if they were victorious).<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the best personification of this phenomenon in this era is from the USA, in the shape of Admiral Dewey, hero of the battle of Manila Bay, but British Generals enjoyed a similar boost during the Boer War.

As some indication of this, in the Spring of 1900 at the height of British success in South Africa was turning, it was reported that the sales of images of war leaders or war heroes had for the first time outstripped sales of pictures of actresses.<sup>32</sup> By this stage photographs of generals were featured in

periodicals, in magic lantern shows, advertising, and in the music halls.<sup>33</sup> The generals were not only celebrated, they were for a time almost above criticism, even when unsuccessful, at least according to a visitor to London during the Boer War. This French journalist noted that when images of war leaders were projected in music halls, at a time when the British army 'was suffering defeat after defeat' (perhaps he means 'Black Week' in December 1899), there was no recrimination: '... never was there a jeer, never a hostile cry heard in the hall. The audience cheered the unfortunate generals with all their hearts'.<sup>34</sup>

It is certainly clear from my own researches that such moving images were received by audiences of the time generally with just such enthusiasm. In what follows I will look at the cinematic portrayal and reception of three commanders: Buller, Roberts and Kitchener. Vanessa Toulmin has noted perceptively some variations in how these and other Boer War leaders were received by the public of the time and in films: Buller was always highly popular with the people; Lord Roberts was popular and media savvy too (and both were met with enthusiastic crowds during their public appearances); Kitchener on the other hand came across as more distant, was never a friend of the media, and was received more formally by the crowds and by film audiences. In what follows I will show that these differences translated into the film medium, for the three men were portrayed on film, and the films then received by audiences, in divergent manners.

### **General Buller**

General Redvers Buller was the first commander in South Africa during the Boer War. He suffered a series of reverses from November 1899 through to the new year, and was replaced by Lord Roberts who assumed overall command. Buller was demoted to command the Natal front alone, though modern historians suggest that he actually did rather well in his final six months in the war. But the controversy about his initial command never dissipated and he was dismissed from the Army in the Autumn of 1901 at the instigation of Roberts.<sup>35</sup>

Buller was first seen on screen in connection with the war as he departed from Southampton, 14 October 1899. This departure was recorded by the Biograph company, under head cameraman W.K.-L. Dickson in a couple of views. It was also filmed by Warwick whose film survives in the NFTVA as *General Buller Embarking on the Dunottar Castle*. Interestingly this catches Dickson in shot, watching as Buller embarks (showing incidentally that one of Dickson's assistants, rather than Dickson himself, was operating the Biograph camera). A series of four films of the departure of Sir Redvers was also released by Fuerst Brothers, showing him embarking, inspecting the ship, bidding farewell from the bridge, and the ship leaving dock.<sup>36</sup> Versions of these departure films were extremely popular at this time, bringing forth 'rounds of cheering' in East Anglia.<sup>37</sup> And similarly at the other end of the country in Exeter the scene of 'General Buller's Departure' was the top film for a couple of weeks.<sup>38</sup>

During the voyage to South Africa, as we have seen in my earlier chapter, Dickson tried to film Buller, and tried again during the campaign in Natal,

though with limited success, the General being very camera shy. However, it would seem that, after his disappointing experiences in South Africa, and a year after he had departed Britain with such fanfare, the General suddenly became more accessible to the cameras. His return to Southampton in November 1900 was filmed by Biograph and shown at the Palace Theatre the same night.<sup>39</sup> By this time, Buller, despite his patchy record in South Africa and his effective demotion in the military hierarchy, had become the hero of the masses in Britain, especially in army districts. One observer noted the passion of the working people near Aldershot, a leading garrison town, for Sir Redvers: 'he is their hero: not Roberts'.<sup>40</sup> A film made of Buller's welcome home in this town captured the veneration. The General was first given an official presentation and then, in an extraordinarily casual act for this era (though presumably arranged in advance) was taken out of his carriage by the local firemen and led by hand along the route. This part of the proceedings was filmed by Walter Gibbons' cameraman. It showed Buller, in surprisingly informal demeanour:

'The General comes towards the camera and when just in front raises his hat in response to the tremendous cheers of the crowd, thus a splendid portrait is obtained, which is greeted with rounds of applause at each performance at the London Hippodrome.'<sup>41</sup>

But Buller was by now a spent force, for his first unsuccessful weeks in command in South Africa were never forgotten by some of his Army rivals. In October 1901 Roberts engineered his dismissal from the British Army, for alleged indiscipline.<sup>42</sup> But this dismissal was seen by large parts of the general public as unfair and undeserved, and it seems to have served only to increase the public sympathy for Sir Redvers. Public feelings were seen most intensely in the music halls and film shows.

At the Palace Theatre in late October – i.e. soon after the news of his sacking – Biograph threw upon the screen, *General Buller arriving at the Cape* (a film which had presumably been shot in November 1899). The *Era's* reporter noted that, '... as the well-known figure was represented stepping across the gangway the house cheered him to the echo'. The packed house roared, 'Buller! Tommy Atkins!!' (a conflation of Buller with the pet term for British soldiers, 'Tommy Atkins'). At another music hall, the Royal, George Gray was using the same conflation in his song, 'Buller Atkins', which was 'received with the wildest enthusiasm', the singer being encored again and again.<sup>43</sup>

Buller's final appearance as a British military man was at Aldershot a short while later, and he was filmed by Gaumont at this event, while supervising Infantry training. The film description noted the particularly human qualities of the General which the shots expressed:

'...a close view of him is obtained as he walks across in front of the camera. Another view of the popular General is obtained while he is standing among a group of officers, and being life like, kindle[s] much enthusiasm among his many admirers.'<sup>44</sup>

By this time in late 1901 the General had become virtually an object of veneration at the halls. In Liverpool an entire life story of Buller was presented at the Prince of Wales Theatre in the form of a pictorial lecture by Lindon Travers, entitled 'How Buller Won the Victoria Cross'. Illustrated by many graphic pictures of the ex-General's 40 year military career, this show, '...completely carried away the people, Buller's name being cheered again and again to the echo...'<sup>45</sup> It seems that Roberts' action in having Buller dismissed had backfired on him, by increasing Buller's popularity – and what's more in diminishing Roberts' own. A quick change artist performing in December found that, when made up as General Buller he was cheered, while as Lord Roberts he had to retire 'amid much hissing'.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, a couple of weeks later in Exeter, Buller's home town, pictures (films?) of Sir Redvers received loud 'Huzzas', whilst those of Roberts, his replacement, 'came in for boos and hisses'.<sup>47</sup>

### **Lord Roberts**

It seems that Roberts had shot himself in the foot over Buller, though until the Buller debacle he had himself been popular with the public. This was due not least to his manipulation of the media to his own advantage. Field-Marshal Lord Roberts indeed was one of the first military men who were skilled in this way, and one historian has shown how well he managed his image in the traditional, especially print, media.<sup>48</sup> It seems from my and Toulmin's research that he was equally savvy regarding the new medium, cinema.

Being newly-appointed commander in chief, Roberts – or 'Bobs' as he was commonly known – was an immediate magnet for the cameras, and he was first filmed in relation to the Boer War on his departure from England on 23 December 1899 (on the *Dunottar Castle*). Films of this event were released by Fuerst brothers and by Warwick, and the latter survives, shot from shipboard, showing Roberts and officials walking up the gangway, preceded by Lady Roberts.<sup>49</sup> Roberts' arrival in Cape Town was also filmed (again by Warwick). There is no particular indication that he had manipulated the filming on these occasions, though he certainly didn't object to being filmed (unlike Buller, in the early stages) and probably Roberts realised that such images of himself would be in great demand. Indeed so it proved, for Warwick's film of the commander's arrival in Cape town was, 'one of the most popular of the war-pictures' – in the words of G.A. Smith who developed multiple copies of this one title.<sup>50</sup>

As the campaign proceeded, indications of Roberts' influence on media coverage become more apparent, particularly in his handling of ceremonies. These he arranged for maximum visual impact, such as the surrender of Kroonstad, and at such events he ensured a prominent role was reserved for himself.<sup>51</sup> It was to an extent up to the cameramen how they recorded these events, as it was up to the press as to how they commented on Roberts' command, but the Field-Marshal pursued a subtle strategy here too: he was rarely domineering in regard to the press, and relatively light on censorship, and so was popular with the correspondents. Thus the very freedom which he gave the journalists and photographic reporters helped to ensure he got a 'good press'.

After the taking of Pretoria, and once installed at the British Residency in Pretoria, Roberts was filmed several times by Dickson (see Chapter 9), who had a special expertise in these kind of celebrity shots. Several of these appearances were specially 'arranged' for the camera. One film was set up to depict Roberts receiving despatches. Another scene had a double appeal, for it showed Roberts meeting Colonel Baden-Powell, hero of the siege of Mafeking, who was almost as much of a celebrity as the Field-Marshal. Though Dickson implies that this was a major scoop for himself, in fact several still photographers also were in on the act. A journalist who was there described this media frenzy:

'At every corner they [Roberts and Baden-Powell] were subjected to heavy camera fire. As they dismounted they had to submit to a volley of machine-photography; and I suspect the London music-halls have shown the field-marshal and the keen-eyed, thin-faced man with the cowboy hat, with the well-known "Denver poke" in the crown, come strolling down across the canvas screen.'<sup>52</sup>

This shot of the two celebrity commanders was indeed later shown in London – at the Palace Theatre – and presumably at Biograph's other venues. I estimate that some half dozen of Dickson's films depicted Roberts, which is quite a high number considering that only about 30 or so from South Africa were released. A song of the time about 'Biograph pictures' of famous people referred to Roberts appearing on the screen ('To country and duty devoted, revered far and wide in the land'), suggesting that his filmed image really was being seen widely.<sup>53</sup>

About a year after he had left the UK, Roberts returned, and was filmed on his arrival and welcome home. The film cameramen kept him in their focus, and in the following couple of years he was recorded as he took part in various ceremonies, and as he presented medals to those who had served in the Boer War: some of these films, notably those by M&K, still survive.<sup>54</sup>



Fig. 1. A multi-image lantern slide about the Boer War. Significantly, the first two images after the title slide are 'war celebrities': Roberts and Kitchener

## Lord Kitchener

The third British celebrity commander of the Boer War, Kitchener, came to South Africa as Lord Roberts' Chief of Staff, but then assumed overall command when Roberts departed at the end of 1900; thereafter he instituted harsh measures to put an end to Boer resistance. He was never as immediately popular as the other two leaders whom I have covered, though was probably admired (and certainly feared) more than either. As Vanessa Toulmin has observed,

'Kitchener never inspired the form of loyalty and devotion accorded to 'Our Bob' either by his troops or the British public. His image was more severe, stern, not loveable like Roberts and he was revered for his strength and resolution.'

In South Africa Kitchener was filmed less frequently than the other two commanders. During the first part of the war this was because he was number two to Roberts, rather than overall commander (he was seen with Roberts in Rosenthal's film of the surrender of Kroonstad). Then by the time he took over command, it was the latter stage of the war and film cameras were no longer covering hostilities. The absence of cameras indeed might have been partly Kitchener's doing, for he mistrusted journalists (and had rigidly controlled them during the Sudan conflict).

However, after his return from the war, Kitchener was quite extensively filmed. He was after all coming back as the man who had (following a gruelling struggle) won the Boer War, so the public interest was considerable. The first opportunity for filming was when he arrived in Southampton on the 'Orotava' on 12 July 1902.<sup>55</sup> From Southampton railway station Kitchener and Generals Sir John French and Sir Ian Hamilton departed for London in a specially decorated train. Kitchener then travelled in a procession through Hyde Park. His arrival and subsequent itinerary were filmed by the Hepworth and Gaumont companies (see Box), and M&K's operator recorded part of the proceedings; probably other companies did too. The M&K and Hepworth titles survive as *Lord Kitchener's Return* and *Lord Kitchener's Arrival at Southampton* respectively.<sup>56</sup>

These films were of considerable public interest, one music hall journal stating of their reception in Leeds: 'Lord Kitchener's return is, of course, the chief film of interest, and every night this subject comes in for a most hearty reception'.<sup>57</sup> The Gaumont version, had it survived, would have been of especial interest, for it contained a relatively close view of Kitchener, the catalogue describing it as: 'The celebrated portrait of the General half filling the screen. The best animated portrait ever taken.'<sup>58</sup> Even more notably, the normally stern General was actually smiling in some shots (see Box).

In addition to the three major figures I have discussed, a number of lesser military figures were also filmed in this period and some of these films survive. Sir George White was recorded disembarking at an English port in April 1900, invalided home after his failure in South Africa (IWM 1025). A jerky film by



Hepworth manages to catch the camera-shy Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain departing England for the Cape to sign the peace treaty in 1902: he is shown as he strides from the train to the ship (NFTVA). M&K filmed the visit of Lord Methuen to Bristol in 1902, and the company also filmed a couple of scenes of lower ranking soldiers who had distinguished themselves during the war: Private Ward, V.C., and Lieutenant Clive Wilson.

**Box:**

**The smiling commander**

Two reviews of films of Kitchener's return

'Splendid pictures of the arrival of Lord Kitchener and Generals French and Hamilton, were secured by Messrs. Hepworth and Co., of Cecil Court, W.C. Their cameras were on many excellent positions on the route, and the operators in charge were successful in getting admirable likenesses of the distinguished subjects. Commencing with the disembarkation from the "Orotava," Lord Kitchener and his staff are shown passing up and down the quay at Southampton, inspecting the Guards. Then the carriage containing his lordship is seen entering the beautifully decorated railway station, and in the last part of this particular film a splendid photograph of the special train, drawn by a bedecked engine, and bearing a portrait of the General, is obtained, showing the train emerging from the station. The next film begins by showing the arrival at Paddington, and the procession from beginning to end passes towards the camera. The concluding portion of the film is devoted to a splendid piece of animated portraiture, wherein Lord Kitchener faces the camera for some seconds and salutes. Altogether it is [a] most stirring series of photographs, and these films should remain in the list of topical subjects for many weeks to come. For music hall proprietors, as well as for fair work, this subject is eminently suitable.' (MHTR 18 Jul 1902, p.40, col.1)

'The erroneous idea that Lord Kitchener has never been known to smile, is pleasantly disproved by the animated photographs of the famous General's arrival at Southampton, which were secured by Messrs. L. Gaumont and Co. On several occasions when directly confronting their cameras, the distinguished soldier favoured the instrument with a good-natured smile, which was clearly and sharply recorded. In the series made up for projection, the first picture depicts the "Orotava" coming alongside the dock. Lord Kitchener is then seen descending the gangway, and his reception and review of the guard of honour is strikingly shown. For several minutes the General stands before the camera, conversing with Colonel Stackpool, and the Mayor of Southampton. Then his train is shown departing for London. The whole film is stereoscopic to a very striking degree, and the portraits are always most distinct.' (MHTR 1 Aug 1902, p.82, col.1)

## THE BOER LEADERS

### **Kruger: loved in Europe, hated in Britain**

Though the Boers were scarcely filmed in South Africa during the war, on a couple of occasions late in the day their leaders came to Europe, and this was a rare opportunity for film companies to cover the Boer side in the conflict. The two occasions were, firstly in the Autumn of 1900 when President Kruger fled South Africa in the wake of British advances; and secondly when the Boer leaders came to Europe in 1902 after signing the peace treaty. The film companies covered both these visits with thoroughness.

When British forces took Pretoria in June 1900, President Paul Kruger had already left his capital. Some time later he was brought from Africa to Europe on a Dutch warship, the *Gelderland* (public opinion in Holland had forced the Queen to arrange this).<sup>59</sup> He was to enjoy unprecedented adulation in various European countries.

Throughout this visit to Europe there was extensive coverage from the visual media, beginning with his arrival in Marseilles; indeed this event was effectively a 'media scrum'. One report mentions 'hordes of photographers' who were present in the port to record his arrival.<sup>60</sup> These included several film cameramen, and various companies later released versions of the events. Warwick issued two films showing Kruger's landing in Marseille harbour on 22 November, and two views of his ensuing procession through the streets. Pathé issued a long film about the Marseilles arrival. Nöggerath's cameraman also filmed the events.<sup>61</sup>

A drawing published in a periodical at this time illustrates three cameramen and their cameras set up near the dock, awaiting Kruger's arrival. [see Fig. 2] These cameras include what seems to be a Warwick instrument, and, most prominently, two huge Biograph machines. This was highly unusual to have two of the company's cameras covering an event, and testifies to the importance of the occasion for Biograph. One of the cameras was being operated by Biograph's French representative, and the other by the company's leading operator, W.K.-L. Dickson himself (pictured standing above the others in the centre).<sup>62</sup>

Dickson was as ever working with an assistant on this assignment, Emile Lauste, and they had departed London over a week earlier in order to arrange matters for this shoot in good time.<sup>63</sup> A newspaper stated that thanks to the films that Dickson and his colleagues were taking, audiences would be able to witness Kruger's arrival in Europe, 'to vastly better advantage than thousands of the people who actually were on the scene when he came ashore'.<sup>64</sup> This was quite possibly correct, for Dickson was very skilled in filming this kind of occasion, and unlike some other cameramen, he was not content with merely filming events haphazardly as they happened, but liked to set the scene up.

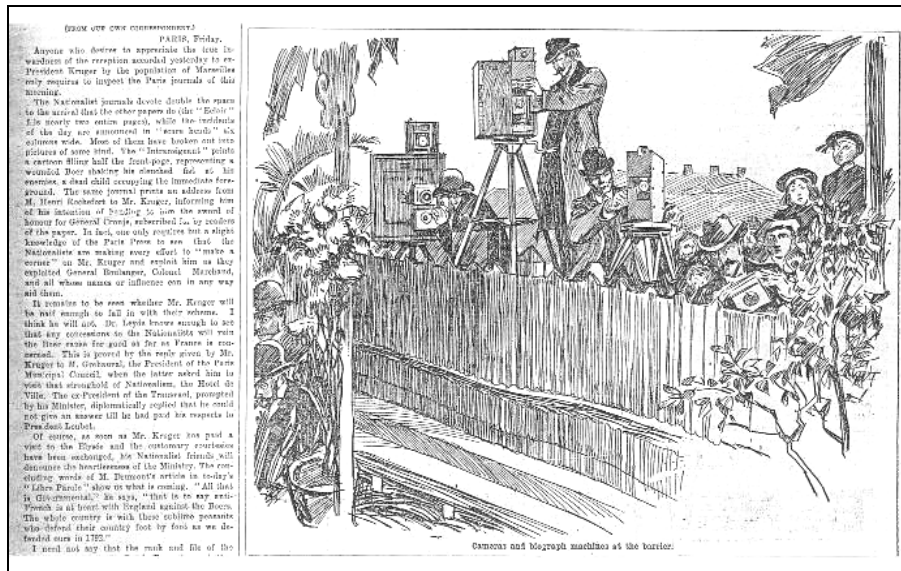


Fig. 2. Cameramen, including Biograph's men, preparing to film Kruger's arrival in Marseilles (*Daily Graphic*, 24 Nov 1900)

He was well practiced at persuading celebrities to pose for his camera, having dealt with several big names including the Pope, British Generals, Admiral Dewey, as well as the world's royalty. Apparently on this occasion too he expended considerable effort to persuade the taciturn Kruger (or 'Oom Paul' as he was known) to be filmed. As a photographic magazine reported: 'The preliminaries would have daunted anyone with less tact and patience [than Dickson], and it was only after about half an hour's palavering that Oom Paul somewhat unwillingly gave his assent'.<sup>65</sup> As a result, Dickson managed to obtain a shot of, what was described as, 'Paul Kruger and his suite' in Marseilles. It is not clear what exactly this depicted; possibly it was a re-enacting of the arrival.

The following day Kruger boarded a special train to convey him to Paris, the train making stops at various towns *en route*, and in each town he was greeted warmly and cheered by the populace. At Lyons 25,000 people gathered to see him, and when he reached Paris there were over 50,000 well-wishers at the station.<sup>66</sup> The Biograph company filmed Kruger in Paris, the President being recorded as he was leaving the Hotel de Ville (the film survives in the NFM).

Interestingly, it may be that the actual Biograph camera which filmed these scenes in Marseilles or Paris survives. A Mutagraph (Biograph) camera is preserved in the Cinémathèque française, and on one of the film boxes the words 'Pres. Kruger' are written. The company is not known to have filmed Kruger on any other occasions, so it might refer to this French filming.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps – and this is pure supposition – the words were written on the film box to ensure that this unique film of Kruger was not mistaken for anything else, and would be safely delivered to the lab for development.

In December 1900 several Biograph Boer War films were shown at Cambrai in France, with the Hotel de Ville title being the evening's featured and final film: Kruger was applauded enthusiastically by the audience who requested that the film be shown again.<sup>68</sup> This fervour was a regular reaction in Paris and the rest of France to films of Kruger (also to the man himself, of course).<sup>69</sup> When the film of Kruger's Marseilles visit was shown in one French town, it 'roused the patriotic enthusiasm of the spectators who responded to the celebrated man's waves [as shown in the film] with cries of "Long live the Boers!"'<sup>70</sup> Kruger films were also screened in Germany in late 1900, and quite probably the audience reaction was just as positive as in France.<sup>71</sup>

After his French visit, Kruger travelled to the Netherlands where he was filmed by Nöggerath's cameramen in Amsterdam and on the balcony of the Hotel des Indes in The Hague. Later he was filmed in Rotterdam (26 June 1901) and Dordrecht.<sup>72</sup> These films and others of Kruger were widely shown in Holland.<sup>73</sup> Much like the British commanders in the UK, Kruger in the Netherlands became a kind of early film star. In the Dutch fairground cinema shows Kruger was ever the hero. A foreign visitor, probably American, recorded a visit to one Dutch fair late in the Boer War (or possibly even after it had ended), and noted: 'We saw the Boer War in a cinematograph and applauded Kruger and Cronje with the Dutchmen, and heard them hiss Kitchener and Lord Bobs'.<sup>74</sup>

Kruger remained in exile until his death in 1904, for after the war ended in 1902 the British, back in control, were certainly not going to let him return to South Africa: the ex-President was widely blamed for instigating the war. In fact throughout the conflict Kruger had been a particular object for hatred and derision in Britain – the exact opposite of the near reverence with which he was regarded in Holland and elsewhere. In Britain Kruger was regularly insulted in cartoons, and his image was pelted in fairground stalls. Interestingly, the hatred was far more for Kruger than for the rest of the Boer population. A music hall writer, predicting what subjects would appear on the halls in 1901, stated that 'there will be very little jibing at the Boers', who had been 'misguided' into starting the war: the real villain was Kruger, who 'will not be spared'. The writer predicted that the Transvaal leader would be energetically ridiculed, for, 'Obviously the ex-President's personal appearance lends itself very readily to comic caricatures, and the comedians will make the most of their opportunity'.<sup>75</sup> (Kruger was bearded and stocky, resembling an Old Testament preacher, some people thought).

On British screens Kruger fared no better than in music halls. For example, in a lantern show in Sussex in May 1900, 'Kruger's and Cronje's visages were greeted with hisses and cries of "Rats."<sup>76</sup> At this stage of the war, before Kruger had visited Europe and been filmed there, moving images of the President were rare. As a result, Warwick's view of 'President Kruger getting out of his carriage', filmed before the war, was in 'enormous' demand in Britain.<sup>77</sup> Presumably it too would have been received with hisses.

### **The Boer Generals on film**

At the end of May 1902, the Boer War finally came to an end, and the British and Boer representatives in South Africa signed a treaty and terms of surrender. No film cameramen were on hand, and the only film version was Gaumont's staged 'representation', *Signing Peace at Pretoria* (as mentioned in chapter 10). However, just a few weeks later the Boer leaders came to Europe, including a visit to Britain. This was a first opportunity for the British people, or at least their media, to catch a glimpse of the elusive Boer generals. Unlike Kruger, these men who had held out against the might of the Empire for so long were widely admired in Britain, and there was great interest in seeing them for the first time. The day before the Generals were due to land a music hall paper proclaimed:

'The arrival in this country of the Boer leaders to-morrow [16 August] will be an event of national interest, and Messrs. Gaumont and Co. have secured the exclusive rights to take animated photographs of the landing of the party.'<sup>78</sup>

The word 'exclusive' was inaccurate, because at least one other company, R.W. Paul's, was filming the arrival in Southampton, and according to one recollection there were as many as four film companies there.<sup>79</sup> These companies and their cameramen comprised: Gaumont itself (cameraman, A.C. Bromhead), the Warwick Trading Co. (cameramen, Charles Urban and John Avery), R.W. Paul (cameraman, Jack Smith) and the Hepworth company (cameraman, Cecil Hepworth). The fact that for all companies but Paul's, the head of the firm was acting as cameraman (Messrs. Bromhead, Hepworth, and Urban), suggests that this was seen to be a very important event.

However, the cameramen had their work cut out, for this assignment on 16 August was a somewhat tricky and complicated one. The Boer Generals – Botha, Delarey and De Wet – were due to arrive on the Castle liner 'Saxon', and meanwhile at another nearby wharf the British top brass were quartered on the 'Nigeria': Lord Kitchener, Lord Roberts and the colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain.<sup>80</sup> What's more, a naval review at Spithead would take place in the afternoon. It would be a busy day. Bromhead later recalled:

'I went down overnight with a camera and an assistant to film the lot. The first arrival was the "Saxon" and the only rival cameraman found prepared for this event was my friend, Captain Jack Smith, representing Paul. We both found, however, that we were not going to obtain a picture of the Boer leaders from the position allotted to us. We certainly got the "Saxon" arriving, but when she came alongside, the deck was 25 or 30 feet above us and no Boer leaders were visible. Smith and I consoled and both told each other that we were giving it up. Neither of us mentioned the "Nigeria", perhaps hoping that each other did not know about it. I shouldered my camera and made a little detour and then found my way to the "Nigeria" – Smith had done the same, so we both met there again... When Kitchener disembarked, Hepworth, Paul, Avery, Urban and myself were lined up behind a rope.'<sup>81</sup>

Smith also remembered this day in later years, including a variation on this anecdote of rivalry between himself and Bromhead.<sup>82</sup> However, Bromhead's and Smith's recollections contain some discrepancies. The implication from Bromhead's telling is that because the deck of the 'Saxon' was out of sight, neither cameramen managed to film the Boer Generals. But actually, the film of the event shot by Smith survives (see description below) and does show the Boers. This either means Bromhead mis-remembered, or, perhaps the Boer leaders were filmed at the 'Nigeria', for this is where they were taken after disembarking the 'Saxon', to meet the British leaders (Kitchener et al).<sup>83</sup>

The results of Bromhead's and Smith's efforts were released by the Gaumont and Paul companies, each nearly a hundred feet in length.<sup>84</sup> Paul's version is in four shots/set-ups, showing the Southampton quayside with a large crowd around. The first view is from across the heads of onlookers at quayside, with another cameraman in foreground who looks round at us, and moves his camera to the left: the presence of this other cameraman suggests that there might indeed have been several operators jostling for position on site.<sup>85</sup> Then the Boer Generals walk down the gangplank onto the Southampton quayside, tipping their hats. They are seen in closer view, walking along dock, led by policemen. Then three British officials pass and there is a jump-cut to the Boer party with two spectators shaking a Boer leader (de Wet?) by the hand.<sup>86</sup> This film is interesting in showing the warm reception for the Generals, which is confirmed by the detailed reports in newspapers of their arrival (and of their subsequent visit to London where they were cheered 'with wild enthusiasm').

After their visit to Britain, which must have been an uneasy experience despite the evident admiration of the British people, the Boer leaders travelled on to the more comfortable climes of the Continent. First they went to Holland and then to Germany and France, being welcomed enthusiastically everywhere. In Holland they were filmed on several occasions: arriving in The Hague and Rotterdam, and in Amsterdam, the latter film surviving.<sup>87</sup> In addition, Gaumont released views of the Boer Generals arriving in Paris.<sup>88</sup>

## Appendix 6. 'HORROR AND CARNAGE' : EARLY OPPOSITION TO FILMING WARFARE

When one examines the early history of war filming, with its strong tendency to generate moving images of imperial and militaristic propaganda, it would be all too easy to believe that this was the only point of view at this time. Certainly some historians have gained this impression, and perceive such attitudes – glorying in blood lust – even where the evidence is slim. Historian Kristen Whissel quotes from a writer in *Leslie's Weekly* of January 1900 who noted that, with cinematograph operators at both the Boer and Philippine conflicts, 'we are promised some vivid, soul-stirring pictures of actual, grewsome [sic] war'. Whissel tells us that this phrase means that *Leslie's* commentator, 'expressed desire for' such pictures.<sup>89</sup> Actually this is not a valid interpretation of the phrase, for this 1900 writer was merely reporting a prediction that such 'grewsome' pictures would probably materialize, but took no view on whether this would be a good thing or not.

While in general one would think that commentators and many ordinary people in this era would not particularly have minded seeing war portrayed, and indeed glorified on screen – and the large audiences for early screen warfare testify to its popularity as a subject – this can be overstated, and there were some who took a different view. While this was a militaristic era it was not a homogenous one, and militarism was tempered with other trends of the age, such as the desire for social reform and progressivism, and there was a large pacifist lobby. In this regard, the following 'anti-war' sentiments which I have uncovered – in relation to the early possibilities of showing warfare on screen – make some interesting reading.

### **'The true horrors of war... graphically presented'**

The first example of this kind of opinion which I have found dates, surprisingly, from before the first filmed war had even broken out. The Greco-Turkish War began in mid-April 1897, and that very month there appeared in a British photographic journal, *The Photogram*, a letter suggesting that films be used for the discouragement of war.<sup>90</sup> The letter was headed, 'The Kinetograph in War', and the writer was an artist and social commentator who gloried in the name of Evacustes A. Phipson.<sup>91</sup> Phipson began by expressing the wish that,

'It is to be hoped that the powers of the Kinetoscope will not be confined to the reproduction of ordinary scenes for amusement merely, but that Kinetograms of genuine scientific interest and value will also be taken, especially of events which are of rare occurrence.'

This was in effect a call for 'news films' (an interesting early reference to this possibility). Phipson hoped that 'in all future cases of any extraordinary phenomenon, which can by any means be anticipated... some competent kinetographer will be in attendance'. He mentioned such incidents as explosions or volcanic eruptions, and, 'above all, the encounter of two armies at battle'.<sup>92</sup> Phipson concluded this part of his argument on a moral note:

‘Now anybody can imagine what a battle is like as well as an artist, and if not, every picture gallery in Europe is full of such scenes, none of which, except perhaps M. de Neuveville's [sic] Franco-German war paintings, have much verisimilitude. What we want is to know exactly what it really is, and possibly if the true horrors of war were graphically presented to all there would be more chance of its being abolished.’

This remained a lone opinion as far as I can discover, with no other writer expressing this view that screening films of warfare might help to eliminate it. I have however, found several other instances in the following three years or so of the converse point of view: i.e. that by screening films of war one was pandering to the blood lust, and such subjects should neither be filmed nor shown.

The first tones of disquiet appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* newspaper in September 1897. The writer mentioned a film of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons boxing match – or ‘animatographic fight’ as he called it – which had recently been shown at the Royal Aquarium in London (the fight had been filmed in America in March). He was alarmed at the ‘appalling possibilities’ opened up by this example, in that other violent incidents might be filmed, or even fomented for filming purposes, to provide sensational entertainment: ‘Revolutions, wars, battles, murders, and sudden deaths will all be fostered for the same purpose’.<sup>93</sup>

#### **‘We can hardly imagine anything more ghastly’**

In March the following year a similar point of view was expressed in the *Photographic News*, and indeed this periodical published variations on this opinion over the next couple of years – these presumably being the beliefs of the editor.<sup>94</sup> At this stage, however, the journal or its editor seemed to view the prospect of war on screen with equanimity. In reporting fears that battles in future might be filmed for later showing in music halls (which he’d read in a contemporary newspaper), the *News’* man pointed out that actually films of war – the Greco-Turkish War – had already been shown. And besides, he added, this objection was an irrelevance, for this era of the 1890s was ‘the age of realism’, so realistic representations of war were going to happen anyway!<sup>95</sup>

However, as the Spanish-American War erupted in the Spring of that year, 1898, the *Photographic News* changed its tune. The journal started by noting that many of the films so far released related to the war had merely shown troops preparing and the like, and that there hadn’t yet been a chance to capture real fighting on film. But if such films were secured, the *News* earnestly hoped, they should not be shown:

‘For ourselves we can hardly imagine anything more ghastly than a music-hall audience sitting gazing at an animated photograph of two bodies of men engaged in killing each other as fast as they can. To us the idea is ghastly, and we hope such exhibitions, should they be attempted, will not be permitted. Indecency is rightly stamped out of our



entertainment, so should also be the lust of horror and carnage, a vice just as bad in its way as any other.<sup>96</sup>

Early the following year the *Photographic News* returned to this theme, in criticising a contemporary writer for his prediction that films of 'battles in progress' would be shown in future. The *News* sincerely hoped that this would not come to pass:

'...it is bad enough to have to read about the horrors of war; but that to sit and contemplate the "animated" representation of the carnage would be pandering to the most terrible of all human passions – the blood lust.'<sup>97</sup>

In the summer of 1900 the commentator in the *Photographic News* made a further impassioned statement, his most detailed yet. It was prompted by reports that a couple of cameramen were on their way to film aspects of the Boxer crisis in China hostilities. Already disgusted with the numerous films of preceding wars, this was the last straw for the *News*' man:

'During the past three or four years photography has overfed the public appetite for scenes of carnage and destruction. Of the Chino-Japanese War, the Greco-Turkish War, and the Spanish-American War, and the Boer War, unnumbered photos were taken for public exhibition. It may be an old-fashioned notion on our part, but we are not in love with the idea that our music-halls and other places of amusement should be turned into permanent scenes of exhibition for war photographs. [i.e. films and slides] Regarded in its most favourable aspects war is a horrible thing. If it brings out some of the best instincts of human nature it richly illustrates some of the worst. An intelligent interest in the progress of a campaign is a laudable thing to be encouraged among the public, but there should be a limit to the sordid cravings of those entrepreneurs who make the display of gruesome war photographs the double means of pandering to the grosser side of the public appetite and of earning dividends for their shareholders.'<sup>98</sup>

## Notes to Appendices:

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<sup>1</sup> Harding adds: 'Today, the possibilities presented by digital imaging make this issue more pertinent than ever. In March 2003, Brian Walski of the Los Angeles Times succumbed to the temptation to "improve" one of his photographs. Using photo manipulation software he combined elements of two of his photographs taken during the Iraq war so as to create a more dramatic image. Only after publication was it noticed that several civilians appear twice...' Colin Harding, NMPFTV website.

<sup>2</sup> See Dino A. Brugioni, *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and Manipulation* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 1999), p.31-3.

<sup>3</sup> 'The war', *The Scotsman* 31 Oct 1870, p.3. Cited in 'Sham war photographs', BJP 11 Nov 1870, p.537. This took place about 25 October; two days later Metz fell to the Prussians. The incident is interesting by comparison with what other photographers had done in different conflicts, for while here at Metz the photographer used sham bodies, in the American Civil War Gardner moved bodies, while in the Crimea Fenton avoided photographing bodies at all.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas T. Jeans and Charles N. Robinson, *Naval Brigades in the South African War, 1899-1900* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1901), p.133-34. For this piece of arranging, the operator photographed the Naval Brigade as well as their Highland escort.

<sup>5</sup> Villiers notes that many photographs of war are faked by 'posing men in the act of deadly conflict many miles from the scene of action'. Raymond Blathwayt, 'Fresh from the Front... a Talk with Mr. Frederic Villiers', *Daily News*, 19 April 1900, p.7. And see Gus Macdonald, *Camera: A Victorian Eyewitness* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1979), p.85-6. Macdonald also relates Gardner's behaviour in moving the dead soldier to photograph him.

<sup>6</sup> George C. Musgrave, *Under Three Flags in Cuba: A Personal Account of the Cuban Insurrection and Spanish-American War* (London; Cambridge, U.S.A.: Gay & Bird, 1899), p.74, 154.

<sup>7</sup> LW 11 Aug 1898, p.101.

<sup>8</sup> 'Ex cathedra', BJP 9 Nov 1900, p.705.

<sup>9</sup> Reproduced in *The Photogram* May 1898, p.153.

<sup>10</sup> 'Cinematography and the war', BJP 6 May 1898 p.293. The writer added that smokeless powder would aid the cinematographer considerably, by reducing the haze on the battlefield. This is contrary to the practice of filmmakers from this period onward who used smoky powder as a good way of giving a visible sign of a shot being fired (see my Chapter 1).

<sup>11</sup> AP 21 Dec 1900, p.490-92, and H.C. Shelley, 'Photography in war', PJ 31 Jan 1901, p.156-167, especially p.163.

<sup>12</sup> Published in *The King* 13 Jan 1900, this was stated to have been taken with a telephoto from a quarter of a mile away.

<sup>13</sup> *The Biograph in Battle*, p.75. See also introduction by Richard Brown in W.K-L. Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle: Its Story in the South African War* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1995), p.iii; and see Barnes 1900 volume, p.144.

<sup>14</sup> My guess is that it would have been even more difficult to adapt telephotos to fit onto smaller film cameras (and also then to focus), as the film area is so much less than for either the Biograph camera or stills cameras for which the lenses had been developed. Also film emulsions were not particularly fast in this era. See W. K-L. Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle: Its Story in the South African War* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901). There is an ad for Dallmeyer telephoto lenses in Dickson's book. His comments are reported in David Levy, 'Re-Constituted Newsreels, Re-Enactments and the American Narrative Film', in *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study*, edited by R. Holman (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), p.248.

<sup>15</sup> This film, a version of *Battle of Spion Kop*, was shown at the NFT, October 1999.

<sup>16</sup> *NY Clipper*, 2 July 1898. Quoted in Musser, *Emergence*, p.256.

<sup>17</sup> Advert for a show that Waller Jeffs was managing at the Assembly Rooms, Hull, for A.D. Thomas. From the *Hull Daily News*, 19 Apr 1901, p.4. This was sent to me by Jonathan Burrows, who added that, as Jeffs and Thomas were regular Mitchell and Kenyon clients, 'I wonder if they could be talking about the latter's staged war films here?' I think he may be right. See what may be the same ad for Edison Boer and China war films, claimed to have been taken using a telephoto lens, in John H. Bird, *Cinema Parade; Fifty Years of Film Shows* (Birmingham: Cornish Bros., 1947), p.71.

<sup>18</sup> 'Edison's Animated Pictures at the St. James's Hall', *Manchester Evening News*, 7 May 1901, p.5. The writer noted that the hall had been very full of spectators, and added that

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pictures depicting the funeral procession of the late Queen and of the Boer war were the best. Reference from NFA.

<sup>19</sup> Warwick Trading Co. 1901 catalogue supplement, c. Aug 1901, p.237-241.

<sup>20</sup> There are a couple of anomalies in film lengths: footage of *Shanghai from a Launch* was given in Biograph's register with two different lengths: length as shot and length as edited. For my graph I have used the former (328 ft.) *British Light Artillery* was listed with two different lengths, 190 & 219 – I have taken an average of the two.

<sup>21</sup> His full title in later years was Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill.

<sup>22</sup> Winston Churchill, *The River War : The Sudan, 1898* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899-1900), v.1, p.364; v.2, p.142.

<sup>23</sup> Guthrie was MP for Bow and Bromley from 1899 to 1906.

<sup>24</sup> His second letter to Murray (14 Oct) about filming is headed 'In the train', and presumably it was the same 'boat train' as Dickson's group were on.

<sup>25</sup> A letter from Churchill to Wolseley, 4 Oct 1900, states that he was to give a lecture on the war at St James Hall the Tuesday after 26 October. Wolseley Collection, Hove Library. (This letter is missing, but the summary indicates the content). Churchill presented the lecture, 'The war as I saw it', in various locations in November, illustrated with slides (including one showing his own arrival in Pretoria). From cuttings in a scrapbook in the Wolseley collection, including from *Yorkshire Post* 16 Nov 1900 and *Morning Post* 31 Nov 1900.

<sup>26</sup> Guthrie himself visited South Africa later, though to inspect hospitals rather than to make films. See Murray Guthrie, 'The South African war hospitals', *Nineteenth Century*, Sep 1900, p.510-20. He went to Pretoria in early June, and also to Bloemfontein.

<sup>27</sup> Winston Churchill, *London to Ladysmith Via Pretoria* (London, 1900), p.8. Another mention of Churchill during the trip to South Africa is in W. K-L. Dickson, *The Biograph in Battle : Its Story in the South African War, Related with Personal Experiences, Illustrated from Photos and Sketches by the Author* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), p.173-74; and in *Black and White Transvaal special*, 10 Feb 1910, p.5 there is a photo showing Churchill arriving by ship at Durban.

<sup>28</sup> Both letters, Churchill to Murray Guthrie, are in Randolph S. Churchill and Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill. Vol.1: Youth, 1874-1900* (London: Heinemann, 1966), p.1054-55.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Loiperdinger has remarked on this phenomenon with respect to the many early films of the Kaiser, and I have found an equivalent in Biograph films, particularly those directed/photographed by W.K.-L. Dickson. Loiperdinger calls the Kaiser Germany's first film star. See Martin Loiperdinger, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II: Der Erste Deutscher Filmstar', in *Idole des Deutschen Films : Eine Galerie Von Schlüsselfiguren*, ed. T. Koebner (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1997), p.41-53. Stephen Bottomore, "'Every Phase of Present-Day Life": Biograph's Non-Fiction Production', *Griffithiana*, no. 66/70, 1999/2000, p.147-211.

<sup>30</sup> Vanessa Toulmin, 'Militarism in the Edwardian Age', chapter 8 of *Electric Edwardians: The Story of the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection*, ed. V. Toulmin (London: BFI, 2006), p.239-279.

<sup>31</sup> One might add a fourth way of gaining celebrity status, and that was and is through the deliberate manipulation of the media by the celebrity himself: there is some evidence that Roberts did this, as I shall discuss below.

<sup>32</sup> This was reported in AP 13 Apr 1900, p.282, credited to an article by 'Dagonet' (i.e. George Sims) in the periodical, *Referee*.

<sup>33</sup> A lightning sketch artist at this time was sketching the personalities and events of the war including Buller and Lord Roberts, the latter of which could be finished in less than 60 seconds. Frank Foulsham, 'Instantaneous War Pictures', *Royal Magazine* 3, no. 18, Apr 1900, p.491-94. The artist was Rossi Ashton, an ex-soldier, whose lightning sketches also included a scene entitled 'One for Majuba', depicting a Highlander bayoneting a Boer, which was greeted by the audience with 'howls of enthusiasm'.

<sup>34</sup> Gustave Téry, 'L'enthousiasme populaire au cinématographe', *Ciné Journal*, 14 Oct 1911, p.17. Originally in *Le Journal*. (My translations). Téry added that as explanation for this stoicism, people in Britain said that final success was not in doubt. In addition to the images of the Generals, he notes that the latest war news was also displayed on the screen.

<sup>35</sup> Military historians, such as Pakenham, suggest that after his reverses Buller changed tactics, having learned in effect how to fight a modern war, with the proper use of cover, a 'creeping' bombardment, etc. Buller was still in charge of a third of Britain's fighting force at this time, and was certainly not the incompetent leader as he has sometimes been painted (by Symons and others).

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<sup>36</sup> 'War films', PD Nov 1899, p.120.

<sup>37</sup> The *Eastern Daily Press* in January 1900 reported: 'The view of the embarkation of Sir Redvers Buller for South Africa on October 14th brought forth rounds of cheering. The scene displaying the troop-ship, Roslin Castle, leaving for South Africa met with a similar greeting.' Quoted in Stephen Peart, *The Picture House in East Anglia* (Lavenham: Terrence Dalton, 1980), p.12.

<sup>38</sup> The film was shown by Poole's in November 1899. By the last week of the three-week run the Buller film had been ousted by a film of the "Fitzimmons and Jeffries prize fight". Alex Rankin, 'The History of Cinema Exhibition in Exeter 1895 - 1918'. U. Exeter, 2001, chapter 1.

<sup>39</sup> AP 16 Nov 1900, p.381. This source notes that the film had been shot on Saturday morning last (10 November?) The journal added that this promptness between filming and showing meant that the film medium had virtually become, 'an illustrated supplement to the evening newspapers'.

<sup>40</sup> E.D. MacKerness, *The Journals of George Sturt, 1890-1927* (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), p.326-9.

<sup>41</sup> Gibbons' ad, *Era* 17 Nov 1900, p.30. *General Buller Home Again. The Welcome at Aldershot*. [1097]. Length 75ft. This was claimed as the only film of the event.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Cardinal; Sphere, 1991), p.457. An M&K film, *General Bullers' Visit to Manchester*, was probably filmed just before his sacking, in Summer 1901.

<sup>43</sup> 'Music hall gossip', *Era* 26 Oct 1901, p.20. This gives details of both the film show at the Palace Theatre on 'Thursday night', and to Gray's song.

<sup>44</sup> *Showman* 15 Nov 1901, p.152. It was also shot by Biograph, whose version is listed in the Barnes 1900 volume, p.150.

<sup>45</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 26 November 1901, p.5; *Liverpool Daily Post*, 26 Nov 1901, p.5, col.4. References from the NFA. The show was by the North American Animated Photo Company.

<sup>46</sup> *Carlisle Journal*, 10 Dec 1901. Reference from NFA. Buller continued to find support in the music halls, states Dave Russell, "'We Carved our way to Glory": the British soldier in music hall song and sketch, c. 1880-1914', in John M. Mackenzie (ed.), *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950*, p.58.

<sup>47</sup> The *Devon Weekly Times*, 27 Dec 1901. Cited in Alex Rankin, 'The History of Cinema Exhibition in Exeter, 1895 - 1918'. PhD, U. Exeter, 2001, chapter 2.

<sup>48</sup> Heather Streets, 'Military Influences in Late Victorian and Edwardian Popular Media: The Case of Frederick Roberts', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8, no. 2, August 2003, p.231-256.

<sup>49</sup> Fuerst bros. film is mentioned in BJP Suppl. 5 Jan 1900, p.8 as Departure of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts for South Africa; in the NFTVA is held Warwick's *Lord Roberts Leaving for South Africa*.

<sup>50</sup> Smith told his interviewer that he was developing many copies of this film at that moment. See V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of 'Living Picture' Making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488.

<sup>51</sup> Though it must be said that his idea of using the small flag made by Lady Roberts at these surrenders wasn't a very media-savvy one, as it didn't show up on camera (see my Chapter 9).

<sup>52</sup> James Barnes, *The Great War Trek. With the British Army on the Veldt* (New York: D. Appleton, 1901), p.322-23. Incidentally, a similar description of this filming is found in Barnes' article in *The Outlook*, 1 Sep 1900. Baden-Powell had come unannounced to meet Lord Roberts, and stayed only a day in Pretoria.

<sup>53</sup> 'At the Top of the Tree, or Biograph Pictures' by Harry B. Norris was published in 1900 by Frank Dean and Co, London, Jos W. Stern in New York, and W.H. Paling and Co. in Sydney. It is held in the Music Department of the British Library.

<sup>54</sup> M&K films which feature Roberts include: *Lord Roberts' Visit to Manchester* (1901), *Lord Roberts Presenting Medals to Boer War Volunteers in Liverpool* (1901), *Visit of Earl Roberts and Viscount Kitchener to receive the Freedom of the City, Liverpool* (1902). Other films with Roberts are in the IWM: IWM 1081 shows Roberts disembarking from a ship, while IWM 1080 shows him riding past in a procession.

<sup>55</sup> The *Illustrated London News* (ILN) of 19 July published a detailed series of illustrations of Kitchener's return.

<sup>56</sup> The surviving material in the NFTVA (108ft and 54ft) does not seem to match the reviews exactly. It shows: Lord Kitchener walking on Southampton quayside accompanied by officers,

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then in an open carriage with General French passing through decorated streets (Southampton?), next we see a train with the letter 'K' and a portrait of Kitchener steaming out of the station. There is also a scene of Lords Roberts and Kitchener departing from the Harley Institute.

<sup>57</sup> *Music Hall and Theatrical Review* (MHTR) 18 Jul 1902, p.47. However, the following sentence suggests that these films of Kitchener were not entirely what the audience were after, for the journal added, 'But comic and local pictures are the ones which are the most appreciated'.

<sup>58</sup> Film no. 10B, *Lord Kitchener at Southampton, 1902*. Length, 100 ft. Listed in *Gaumont Elgé catalogue, Jan-June 1903* (issued Oct 1903), p.4.

<sup>59</sup> The ship was almost captured by the British at one point, thanks to the new Marconi wireless, but managed to make it to Europe. Jay Stone and Erwin A. Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (Lanham ; London: University Press of America, 1988).

<sup>60</sup> Archives Nationales: 81 AP4 d<sup>2</sup>-10, file 'Boers, 1900'. This is a 17 page account by Rimbaud of the arrival. (It is cited in research fichier, no.77.829, re Boers: international agitation).

<sup>61</sup> Warwick film nos. 7207 and 7208: *Era* 15 Dec 1900, p.32. Nöggerath showed a film described as 'Arrival of President Paul Krüger at Marseilles on 22nd November 1900' (letter from G. Donaldson, 1 Feb 1993). Pathé issued : *Arrivée de Krüger à Marseille* (35 m. or 115 ft). Film no.536 in Henri Bousquet, *Catalogue Pathé des Années 1896 à 1914: Vol 1, 1896-1906* (Charente/Bures sur Yvette: Henri Bousquet, 1996), p.859 ; from Pathé's 1903 catalogue.

<sup>62</sup> The picture is captioned, 'a line of cameras and Biograph machines' at the barrier. *Daily Graphic* 24 Nov 1900, p.13. My identification of cameramen on the picture come from markings on Biograph's own copy of the cutting pasted into their scrapbook – held at the Seaver Center. Another picture in this same periodical shows one of the Biograph cameras set up on a far pier of the docks, while 'Waiting for Mr Kruger', as the caption states. Strictly speaking these images do not actually show the occasion when Kruger was filmed, but rather the day before, Wednesday 21 November, when Kruger was expected but his ship was delayed: the cameramen were waiting (says *D. Graphic* p.14, col.2).

<sup>63</sup> On 13 Nov 1900 Dickson left the UK for Marseille, to film Kruger's arrival, and returned to England on 30 Nov. From Emile Lauste's diary entries, a transcript of which was kindly supplied to me by Frank Gray of SEFVA.

<sup>64</sup> 'Pictures of important events quickly presented', *The Sun* (NY) 25 Nov 1900, Section 1, p.2. This notes of the proposed Marseille filming: 'Within ten days thousands of people here in New York will witness the arrival of the former President of the South African Republic to vastly better advantage than thousands of the people who actually were on the scene when he came ashore. In other words spectators in New York, thousands of miles away will be placed right up in the front row among the officials and within the very holy of holies of police reservations.'

<sup>65</sup> AP 7 Dec 1900, p.442.

<sup>66</sup> The 'Kruger mania' was intense in France by this time, and numerous Kruger souvenirs were available in the capital, including statuettes, sheet music, postcards, even waxworks were on show. See H. Daragon, *Le Président Kruger en France* (Paris: Daragon, 1901), p.30 and passim ; see also *Daily Graphic* issues, especially 23 Nov.

<sup>67</sup> This Mutagraph camera (for 68mm film) is no. AP-95-1434 in the apparatus collection, Cinémathèque française. See photos in *The Will Day Historical Collection...*, in 1895 hors série, Oct 1997, p.197. Incidentally this cannot refer to Dickson's Boer War filming in South Africa, as has been suggested, because the cameraman did not film Kruger at this time. Information from Laurent Mannoni.

<sup>68</sup> This information comes from programmes in the Lauste Collection, SEFVA. Incidentally, these programmes are made up of several subject-based series, each with several films. One show from March 1900 had a dozen or so of Biograph's Transvaal War films, and the show of Dec 1900 included 16 war-related views, including the Hotel de Ville title. Regarding Biograph's Boer war screenings in Holland, see Mark van den Tempel, 'Als Daguerre dat eens kon aanschouwen...' *Jaarboek Media Geschiedenis* 8, 1997, p.66.

<sup>69</sup> Gaumont released a film of Kruger arriving in Paris, which, as their catalogue stated, depicted 'the enthusiasm of the crowd and the cheers that they voiced'. L. Gaumont et Cie.: *Collection Elgé* (catalogue of unknown date), p.58 (last page), film 401, *L'arrivée du Président*

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*Kruger à Paris* (16.50m); and also see French Gaumont catalogue, Jan 1903, p.36. Courtesy Sabine Lenk. The film's description reads: 'Cette bande prise après la sortie de la gare montre l'enthousiasme de la foule et les ovations qui sont faites. Le Président passe rapidement en voiture au milieu d'une foule compacte.'

<sup>70</sup> This refers to a screening at the Grand Biorama, Foire des Innocents, Limoges, in Dec 1900. See Pierre and Jeanne Berneau, *Le Spectacle Cinématographique à Limoges, de 1896 à 1945* (Paris: AFRHC, 1992), p.34. According to *Courrier du Centre* 18 Dec 1900, the film in question, which was entitled, *L'Arrivée du Président Krüger à Marseille*, 'soulève l'enthousiasme patriotique des spectateurs qui répondent par des acclamations de "Viv les Boers!" aux saluts de l'illustre vieillard'.

<sup>71</sup> The Kruger films were the subject of Pathé's first ad in *Der Komet*. See *Der Komet* no.819, 1 Dec 1900, p.27, which stated, 'Just appeared, three outstanding films: President Krüger's Arrival in Marseille and Paris. Price 200 Marks'. Films of Kruger in Paris, described as 'actuelle Aufnahme', were a feature attraction at the Hansa Theater, Hamburg. *Hamburger Fremden-Blatt* 1, 4 and 6 Dec 1900 (courtesy Deac Rossell).

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Donaldson, 1 Feb 1993; and information from NFM's research department. The Rotterdam scene is in *Intocht Boerengeneraals uit de Boerenoorlog te Amsterdam*, held in the NFM. Karel Dibbets suggests that Kruger became 'the first hero' of the cinema in Holland.

<sup>73</sup> See website [www.cinemacontext.nl](http://www.cinemacontext.nl).

<sup>74</sup> Nina de Garmo-Spalding, 'Behind the Dunes', *New Catholic World* 78, no. 466, Jan 1904, p.509-519. She notes that they saw the fairs ('kirmess') everywhere and loved them, with merry go rounds etc, though finally tired of them. She states that fairground 'ornate booths' were clustered at the base of Haarlem cathedral, which is possibly where they saw the cinematograph show. Unfortunately she doesn't give the date of their visit to Holland.

<sup>75</sup> 'The pantomimes of 1900-1', MHTR 21 Dec 1900, p.405.

<sup>76</sup> This was a show of 'limelight views' by Charles Tee entitled, 'With the Flag in South Africa'. *Mid Sussex Times* 8 May 1900. Cutting in the Tee collection, Brighton Public Library.

<sup>77</sup> G.A. Smith stated that for films with any connection with the war 'the demand was enormous', mentioning 'President Kruger getting out of his carriage, scenes in Johannesburg, scenes of embarking and disembarking troops, of manoeuvres of cavalry and infantry'. V.W. Cook, 'The Humours of 'Living Picture' Making', *Chambers Journal*, 30 June 1900, p.488.

<sup>78</sup> 'Showmen's notes', MHTR 15 Aug 1902, p.117.

<sup>79</sup> The claim of four companies comes in Bromhead's article of 1933, quoted below.

<sup>80</sup> The Boer Generals' full names were Louis Botha, Koos De la Rey, Christiaan De Wet. Their arrival as well as the Coronation Naval Review were reported with full page spreads in the ILN 23 Aug 1902.

<sup>81</sup> Bromhead also notes that the cameramen had been allotted strict places behind this rope, with sentries to prevent their moving. He adds 'Things were very different then from present day conditions, and even when permission was reluctantly given to take a picture, efforts seemed to be made to prevent one getting a good view.' From Alfred Claude Bromhead, 'Reminiscences of the British Film Trade', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society*, no. 21, 11 Dec 1933, p.12. Elsewhere Bromhead notes that 'We took our film at nine in the morning, and at three it was shown at the Hippodrome'. See A.C. Bromhead, 'Survivors' tales', *Titbits* 12 Jan 1929, p.575. However this article is full of misinformation, for he confuses filming the Boer leaders' return with filming Kitchener's return the previous month.

<sup>82</sup> See Jack Smith, 'One-reel production in one day', *Kinematograph Weekly* 17 June 1926, p.58. Smith's recollection, in contrast to Bromhead's, was that this attempt to mislead the rival was in connection with filming the Spithead review, not the 'Nigeria': 'After the disembarking, we started to pack up, and each led the other to believe he was going to return to London, but both had in their minds the taking of a picture of the review of the fleet'. He adds that they both independently made an arrangement to film the review from a launch, only to find when they met in the launch that the rival was doing the same. Bromhead in the *Titbits* article also describes competition with Smith on 16 August over filming the review that afternoon. This was a foretaste of the fierce 'newsreel wars' which would occur in the teen years and beyond, when cameramen would try to 'spike' their rivals.

<sup>83</sup> The *Times* report states that the Boer leaders appeared on the gangway of the 'Saxon' about 10.15 am and from there were escorted by police to the 'Nigeria', where they met the British leaders for a few minutes. Then they returned to the 'Saxon' for a short while before

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taking the train for London. As Bromhead mentioned above, both he and Paul were there to film at the 'Nigeria'.

<sup>84</sup> R.W. Paul's was entitled *Arrival of the Boer Generals Botha, DeLarey and De Wet* and the NFTVA's print of it is 97ft long. Gaumont's was entitled *Arrival of the Boer Generals at Southampton*. This appears in the company's *Elgé catalogue, Jan-June 1903* (issued Oct, 1903), p.5, film no. 18B, and was 95 ft long, so probably was in several shots too, like Paul's.

<sup>85</sup> The camera of the operator seen in shot has a detachable square film box on top and a panning handle. Incidentally, all of Paul's film is shot from slightly above head height.

<sup>86</sup> The *Times* report (18 Aug) of the landing mentions the two police inspectors seen in shot, who were there to help the Boer leaders. The *Times* also confirms the British public's admiration for these Boer visitors.

<sup>87</sup> The arrivals in the first two cities were probably filmed by Nöggerath: letter from G. Donaldson, 1 Feb 1993. The NFM preserves a segment from a compilation film *Intocht Boerengeneraals uit de Boerenoorlog te Amsterdam*, depicting the group of Generals coming past camera, shot in September 1902, possibly on the 11<sup>th</sup>, because a spread in ILN depicts the Generals at the Station, Amsterdam on that date (ILN 20 Sep 1902).

<sup>88</sup> French Gaumont catalogue, Jan 1903, p.36 and p.66. The Paris visit was in mid October.

<sup>89</sup> Kristen Whissel, 'Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: The Battle Re-Enactment at the Turn of the Century, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West to the Early Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 3, Aug 2002, p.225-243. This example underlines the dangers in scholars jumping to conclusions based on a 'broad-brush' view of an historical period.

<sup>90</sup> 'The Kinetograph in War', *The Photogram* 4, Apr 1897, p.127. As the letter appeared in the April issue, it was probably written the month before – i.e. even before the war.

<sup>91</sup> Evacustes A. Phipson (1854-1931) was born Edward Arthur Phipson, but adopted a more American first name. He was a competent painter in watercolours towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the founder of a colony in South Australia. The author of a book, *Art Under Socialism* (1895), he was active in social issues, and a man of strong opinions, who commented publicly on a host of issues including economics, taxation, pronunciation, simplified spelling, feminism, children's rights, and... war filming.

<sup>92</sup> Phipson stated that 'I am glad to find that the recent artificial railway collision in Texas was kinetographed'. I have not found details of this incident. But he also noted with regret that '...so far as I know not a single instantaneous photogram of an actual battle scene in the late Chino-Japanese war was published in any of the illustrated papers, although there were any number of comparatively uninteresting views, such as of soldiers preparing for battle, marching along the street, and so on, as well as imaginary pictures of the fighting, from sketches taken by hand'.

<sup>93</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, 25 Sep 1897, p.2.

<sup>94</sup> The editor of the *Photographic News* at this time (between 1896 and 1900 according to some sources) was Edward John Wall (1860-1928). While there is no record of his having strong social opinions, his predecessor as editor at the journal certainly did. Thomas Bolas, as well as being an expert on photography, was a well known socialist, who published on this theme as well as on camera arts, and he collaborated with Wall on one book. I guess that either Wall shared/ 'inherited' Bolas' social views, including an anti-war stance, or perhaps Bolas was still writing editorials for the *News*. Pacifism was strongly linked to socialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>95</sup> PN 18 Mar 1898, p.162 (reprinted in *The Photographer* Apr 1898, p.57). The fears had been expressed in a 'daily contemporary' (unnamed) which also objected to war photographs in magazines.

<sup>96</sup> PN 20 May 1898, p.314.

<sup>97</sup> PN 3 Feb 1899, p.66. In addition to the predictions which I have mentioned that wars would be filmed as they happened in years to come, a similar one appeared in the *American Annual of Photography* 1900, p.102. This suggested that in future 'the vitagraph man and the phonograph man' would be on hand to record battles, and 'in the coming century we shall see and hear all the details of fierce battles reproduced in the theatres to after-dinner audiences'.

<sup>98</sup> 'Biograph-ing the Chinese War', PN 3 Aug 1900, p.481.

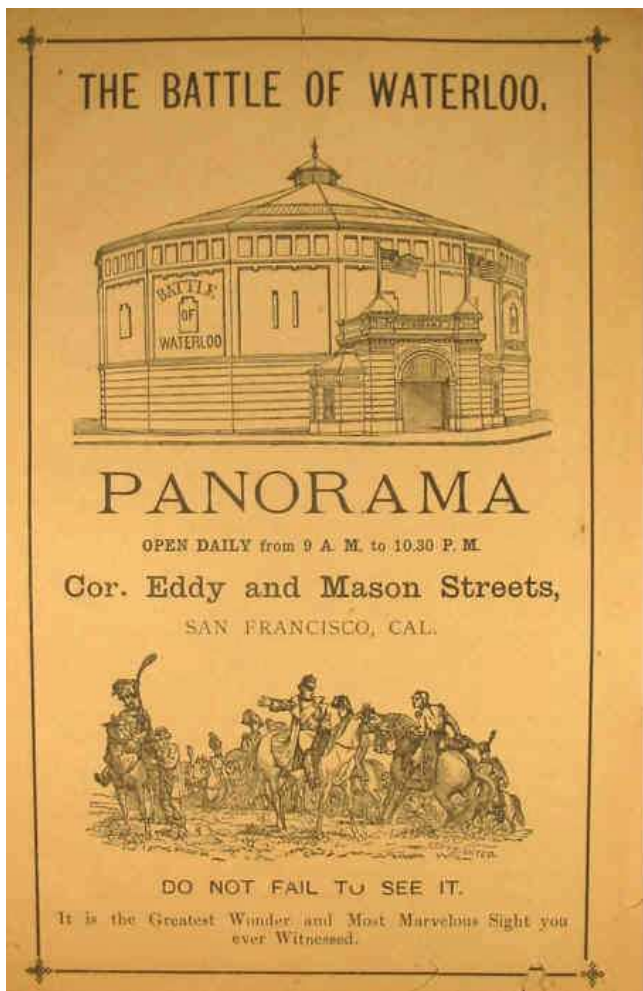


Fig. 1. Many panoramas, such as this from 1885, were about wars and battles.



Fig. 2. A panorama painting of a battle (early 19<sup>th</sup> century).

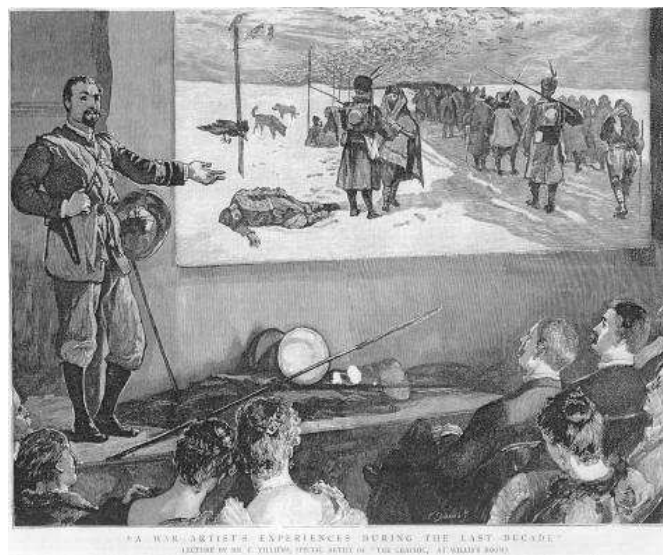


Fig. 3. Frederic Villiers (dressed in his war correspondent attire) giving a lantern lecture in 1887, probably on the Plevna campaign. (ILN?)





Fig. 4. Unlike most photographs, paintings could capture the heat of battle in dramatic style. (Denis Dighton, 'Battle of Waterloo' (1815). NAM)

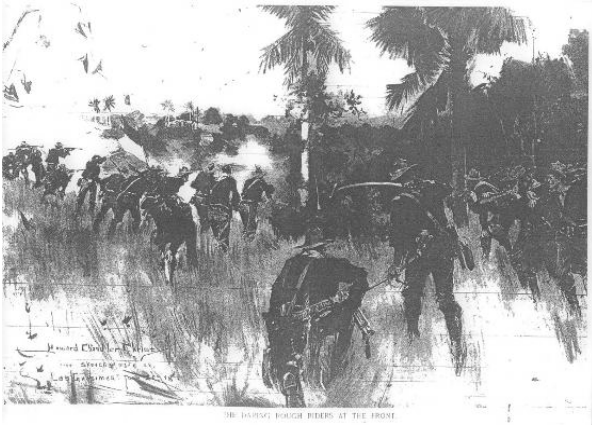


Fig. 5. Similarly, magazine artists stressed the drama and moments of action, as in H. Christy's view of Americans advancing in the Spanish-American War. (LW 8 Sep 1898)



Fig. 6. Artists could show key moments of action which no camera had caught. The destruction of the *Maine*, February 1898. (LW 3 Mar 1898)

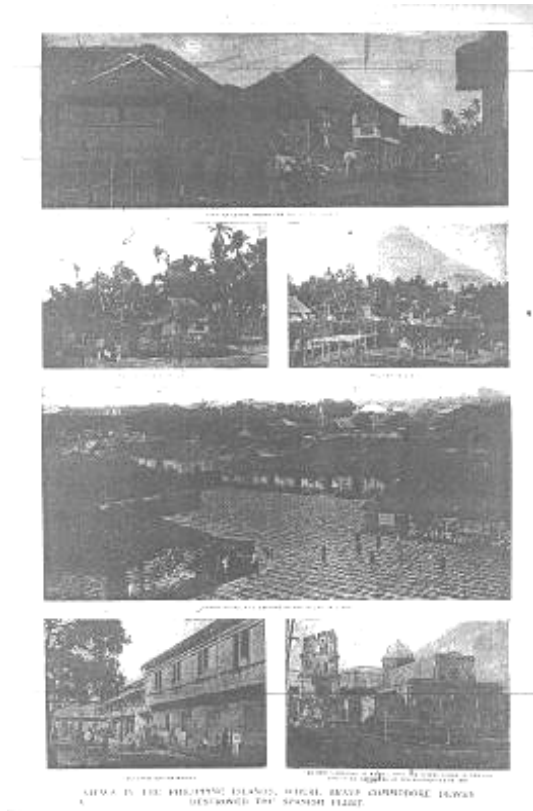


Fig. 7. Critics suggested that the use of photographs in periodicals, by contrast, simply made the pages ‘black with unintelligent photos’. This page of photographs of the Philippines appeared just after Dewey’s naval victory at Manila Bay. (LW 12 May 1898)

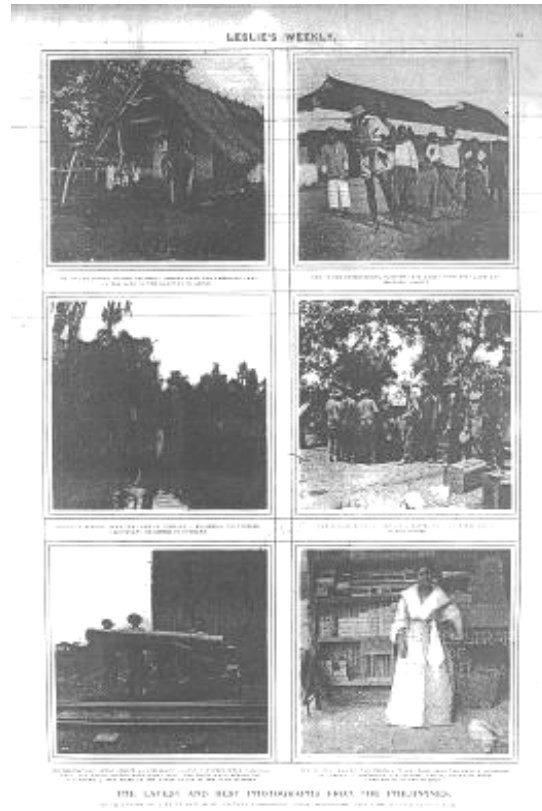


Fig. 8. News from the Philippines was again represented in this way (photographs showing the background or context) at the time of the outbreak of war between Philippine nationalists and America. (LW 20 Jul 1899)



Fig. 9. Other visual media represented warfare in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The opening slide from a mass-produced war-related slide set (c.1900).



Fig. 10. Nineteenth century painters sometimes employed symbolism in war subjects – especially about Napoleon. (Jean-Pierre Franque, ‘Allegoric sur l’etat de la France avant le retour d’Egypte’, 1810. Louvre)

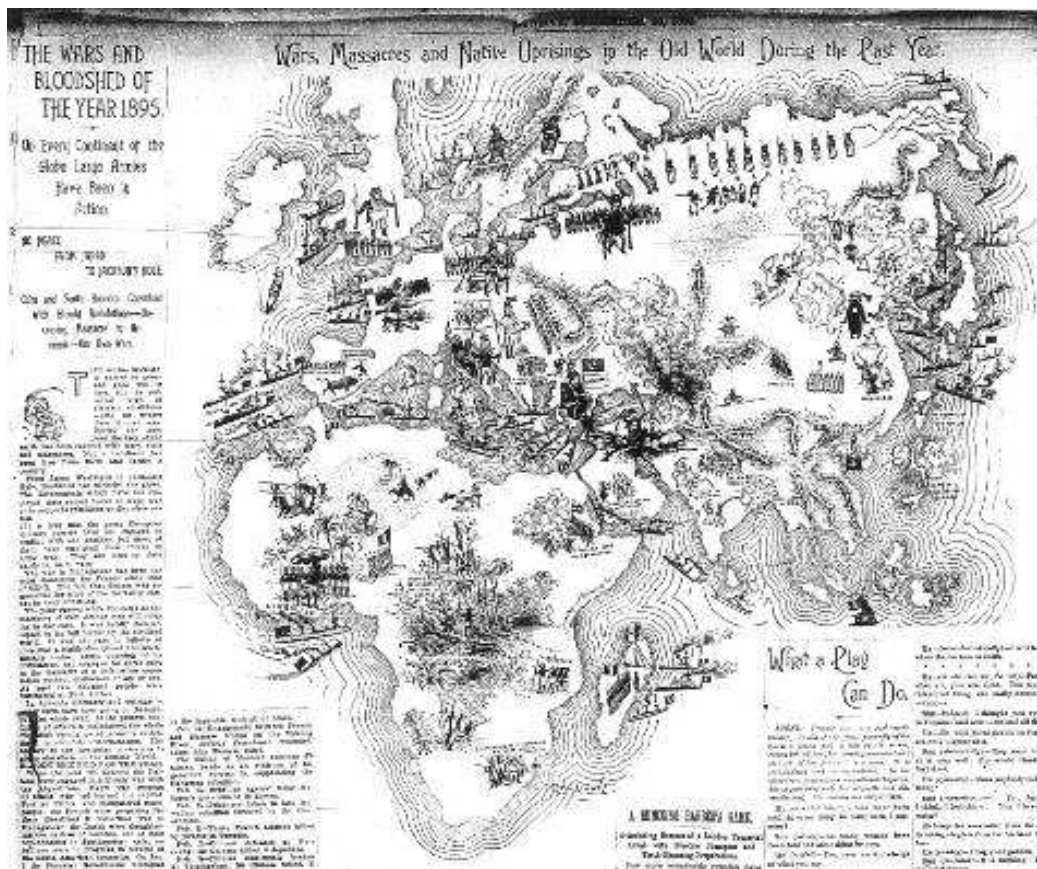


Fig. 1. The cinema was born into a world of conflict. These maps showing where wars, massacres, uprisings, riots, etc had taken place during the past year, were published just as the Lumière brothers were preparing to give their first public film shows. (New York World 15 Dec 1895)  
Map 1. The Old World



Fig. 2. Map 2. North and South America.



Fig. 3. 'Remember the Maine'.

Leslie's Weekly cover of 17 March 1898, featuring the then ubiquitous figure of Uncle Sam.



Fig. 4. Uncle Sam also

figured in this allegorical war film of 1898, by filmmaker Edward Amet.

**"GENUINE WAR FILMS"**  
(CHINA ORISIS).

The following Films of the Departure of the Transport Jelunga for China were taken by Special Permission of the Admiralty, granted to us only, and are, therefore, unique:—

199. **UP TO THE EAST.** Length, 160ft. 2s.  
200. **BLUEJACKETS FOR CHINA.** Length, 76ft. 2s 10s.  
201. **DEPARTURE OF THE JELUNGA.** Length, 60ft. Price, 2s 10s.

The three Films joined together make a most Magnificent Up-to-Date Show.

**"FAKED WAR FILMS"**  
(CHINA ORISIS).

A Series of Four Highly Sensational and Stirring Scenes of the Chinese Crisis, showing Boxer Barbarity, as follows:—

191. **ATTACK ON A MISSION STATION.** Length, 57ft. Price, 2s 7s.  
192. **ATTEMPTED CAPTURE OF AN ENGLISH NURSE AND ORPHLINS.** Length, 60ft. Price, 2s.  
193. **ASSASSINATION OF A BRITISH GENTRY.** Length, 61ft. Price, 2s 1s.  
211. **THE CLEVER CORRESPONDENT.** Length, 54ft. Price, 2s 14s.

**JOHN WRENCH and SON,**  
40, GRAY'S INNS ROAD,  
LONDON, W.C.

Telegraphic address, "Optigraph, London."  
Telephone, No. 1,611, Holborn.

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**HUGHES'S MOTO-PHOTOSCOPE DOUBLE-ACTIONED REVERSING CINEMATOGRAPH.**  
Note.—Does not tear or injure Films.

An Innovation for Showmen. Superb Mechanism, Brilliant Steady Pictures, 50ft. Silent, Safe, Flickerless. Magnificent Results. Simplicity itself. Pictures simply reversed by turning the Handle the other way. Illustrated Particulars, 1d.

**STREET CINEMATOGRAPHS,**  
**WINTER or SUMMER.** A Great Success. A Palpable Hit. A Huge Draw. HUGHES'S PATENT PHOTO-SCOPE. Single or Duplex Street Cinematograph, Twenty and Forty can see at one time. Further Improvements Special Screened Sight-holes. Far beyond anything yet attempted. Pictures approaching Limelight, out-of-doors, cost only 1d. Hour. Greatest Money-taker of the Nineteenth Century. Prices, 22s 10s and 23s 10s. Illustrated Particulars, 2d. Illustrated Cinematograph List Post Free, 6d.

**W. O. Hughes, Brewster House, 82, Mortimer-road, Ringland, N. Specialist in Optical Projection. Established over Thirty Years. 200 War Views in Transport for the Lantern, 1s 5d each (Coloured). A Great Addition to Cinematograph Shows.**

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**GENUINE CHINESE FILMS.**  
**GENUINE WAR FILMS.**  
**GENUINE WAR FILMS.**  
**FAKED WAR FILMS.**  
**FAKED WAR FILMS.**  
Comic and General Subjects.  
Comic and General Subjects.  
The Latest Success,  
**ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP.**  
76ft. long, in Forty-five Tableaux.

Send for my Up-to-Date Lists.

**PHILIPP WOLFF,**  
40, STRAND, LONDON,  
PARIS, NEW YORK, BERLIN.  
Telegrams, "Isilmex, London."

Fig. 5. Ads by two film companies using the term 'faked war films' (in contrast to 'genuine war films'), demonstrate that this was a contemporary term, and not merely later, historical usage. (*The Era*, 4 Aug 1900.)



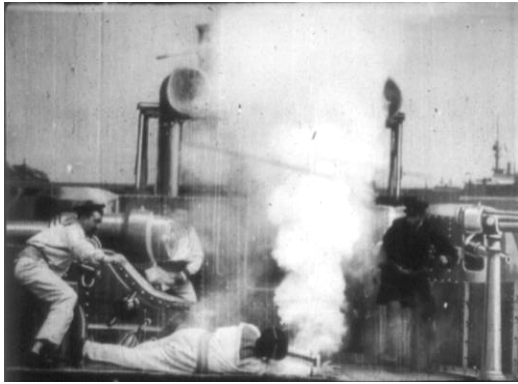


Fig. 5. *Combat Naval en Grèce* (Méliès, 1897). (CNC and NFTVA)

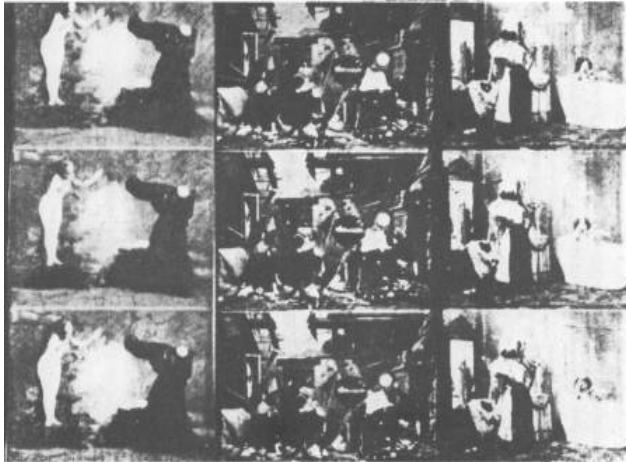


Fig. 6. Frames from three Méliès films of 1897, including (centre) the interior scene of battle (sometimes screened by showmen as the Greco-Turkish War). (*Photograms of the Year*, 1897).



Fig. 7. A frame from a surviving print of the same Méliès film. (CNC).



Fig. 8. De Neuville's painting of the Franco-Prussian war, 1870-71. The similar setting and action suggest that the Méliès film (Fig.7) is of this war, and not of the Greco-Turkish War.



Fig. 1. The drama of battle. The charge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Lancers during the Battle of Omdurman, from a sketch by Maud in the *Illustrated London News*.

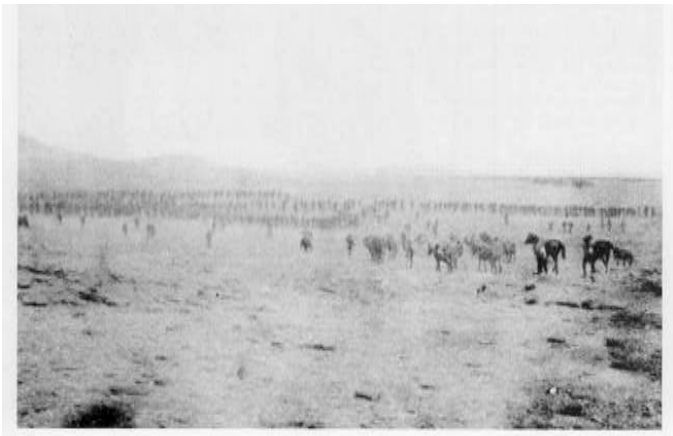


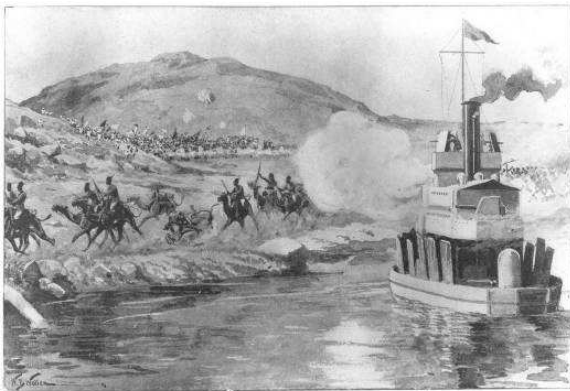
Fig. 2. A photograph taken during the battle. It shows the distant formations of troops and smoke rising from the battlefield (but captures none of the drama of the drawn representation).



Fig. 3. War correspondents during the Sudan campaign, including (centre) René Bull and Frederic Villiers. The tent was apparently Villiers' own design.



Fig. 4. Villiers' bicycle being wheeled across the desert. (A previously unpublished image from the NAM).



OUR BOATMEN IN THE HARBOR. THE STEAMSHIP "MELIK" SAVING THE EXILED POPULACE FROM THE ASSAULTS OF THE DERVISHES.  
From "Pictures in our Personal History" by J. Villiers.  
 These Pictures of the Melik were sent to the Editor of the Standard.

Fig. 5. Villiers' sketch of the *Melik* in action against the Dervishes. (ILN 1 Oct 1898)



THE BATTLE OF OMDURMAN. THE BATTLEFIELD NEAR OMDURMAN. THE BATTLEFIELD NEAR OMDURMAN. THE BATTLEFIELD NEAR OMDURMAN.

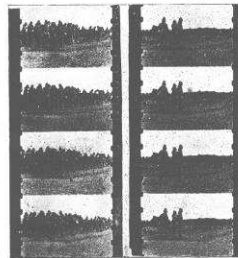
Fig. 6. Another view of the battle, this from the *Melik* itself, and therefore probably from a sketch or description (albeit uncredited) by Villiers. (ILN 24 Sep 1898)



Fig. 7. J.M. Bennett-Stanford.

"A Film from the Front."

WE have recently had occasion to call attention to the new and popular films which Mr. Philip Wolf is constantly publishing, and we are pleased to have the opportunity of illustrating this, by now very popular, "Cinderella" film. The illustrations speak



for themselves, and description is unnecessary. We have ourselves used these films in public entertainments with great success, especially among the juvenile section of the audience. A still more recent film which, owing to the circumstances under which it was taken, has a great amount of interest attached to it, is a film taken on the battlefield of Omdurman. We give below a letter which Mr. Wolf sends us, written by the operator, proving conclusively that the film is a genuine one.

"Sir,—The cinematograph film that you have just taken by me on the battlefield of Omdurman.

Fig. 8. The only surviving frames from Bennett-Stanford's Omdurman film are in a rare photographic journal. (PD Nov 1898)

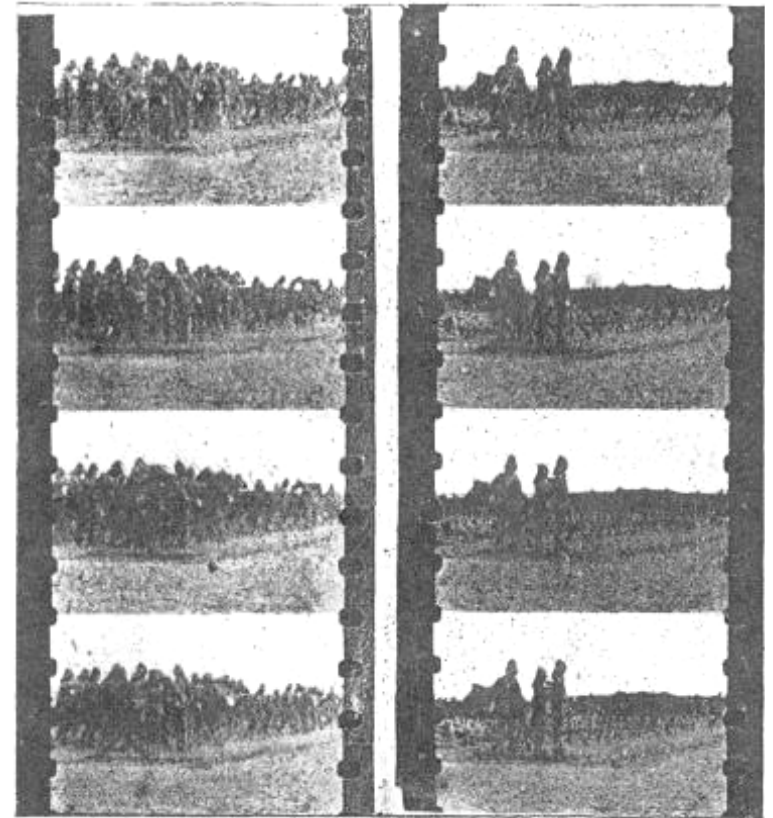


Fig. 9. Detail.



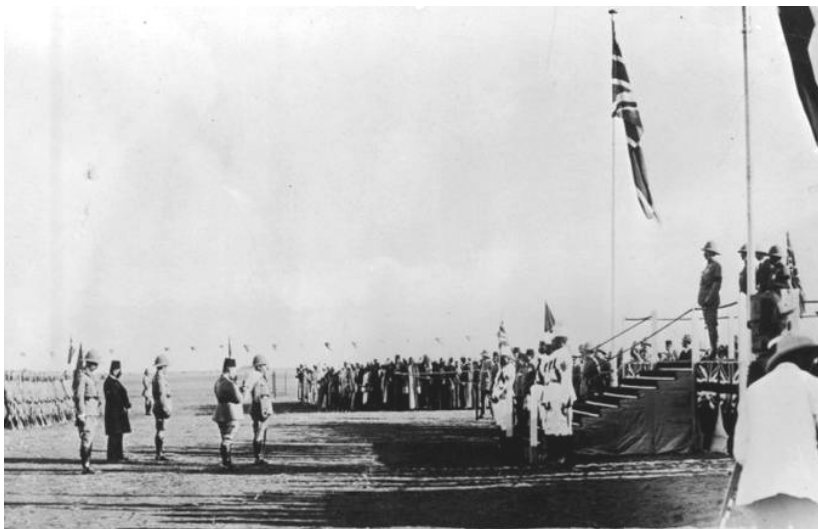


Fig. 10. A ceremony in the Sudan – probably just after the Battle of Omdurman. A man standing on the extreme right edge of the picture (in a white jacket) seems to be operating a film camera. (Hulton/Getty) See detail in adjacent column.



Fig. 11. Detail. Note the rectangular box of the camera (beyond his hat), and the leg of the tripod to his left.



Fig. 12. The Scots' Guards marching through Cairo, either before or after the Battle of Omdurman. (NFTVA)



Fig. 13. Another part of the same film.



Fig. 1. The latest war news displayed on notice boards outside the offices of the *Journal* and the *Tribune*, New York City. (*Graphic* 21 May 1898)

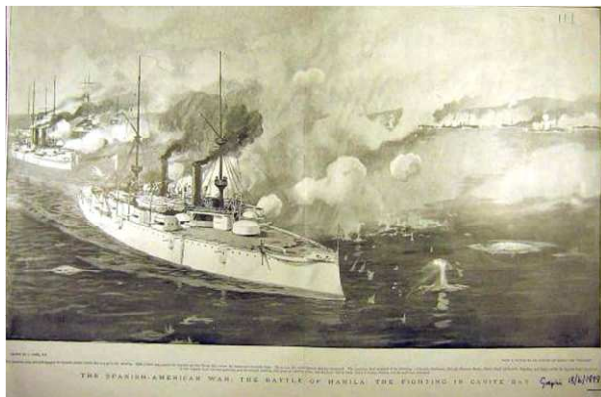


Fig. 2. Artist's impression of the Battle of Manila Bay (*Graphic* 21 May 1898)



PHOTOGRAPHS FROM A REEL CONTAINING NINE HUNDRED VIEWS OF A CHARGE BY AMERICAN TROOPS IN CUBA DURING THE LATE WAR.

Fig. 3. Frames from an unidentified film (Biograph?) of US troops in the war in Cuba. (*Quaker*, 1899)

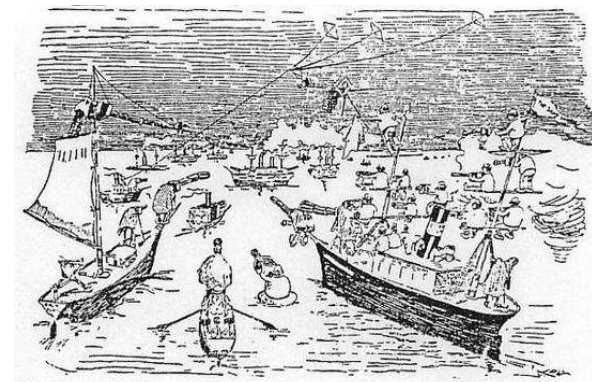


Fig. 4. In this cartoon, cameramen call out to the US fleet: 'Hold on! Don't let the battle begin until we are ready'. (*Photogram* May 1898; apparently from the *NY World*)

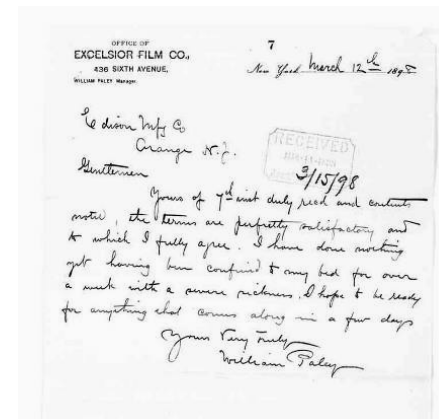


Fig. 5. William Paley to the Edison Manufacturing Company, March 1898, agreeing to their terms and stating that he had been sick. (ENHS)

7

RECEIVED  
 APR. 20 - 1898  
 ENHS

COPY.

New York, April 20, 1898.

Messrs. F. E. Maguire & Co.,  
 Lord's Court Bldg.,  
 New York City.

Gentlemen:-

For and in consideration of \$500.00, receipt of which is herewith acknowledged, I agree to go to Key West and Havana and take position on one of the "Journal's" yachts, and to take animated pictures of the hostilities at that point. It is specifically understood that the \$500.00 herein mentioned is an advance against negatives and royalties of any films I may make at this or any other time for the Edison Mfg. Co. I agree in the event that peace is declared, and that no further interest is likely to be shown in war pictures, to return to New York at the earliest possible period, and to return such unexpended balance of the \$500.00 herein mentioned as is possible for me to make, it being understood that I only desire reasonable living expenses during this trip.

I also agree to use my best efforts to keep F. E. Maguire & Co. fully aware of what I am doing, of subjects taken, together with proper descriptions in connection therewith, and to send the negatives to the Edison Mfg. Co. at the earliest possible moment.

Very truly yours,  
 Signed, *J. B. Poley*

Fig. 6. Poley to Edison's representative, 20 Apr 1898, agreeing to film the war for an advance of \$500. (ENHS)



Fig. 7. Poley filming at Tampa as troops prepare to embark for Cuba (transport ships are docked beyond the rail line). (Photoplay, 1917)

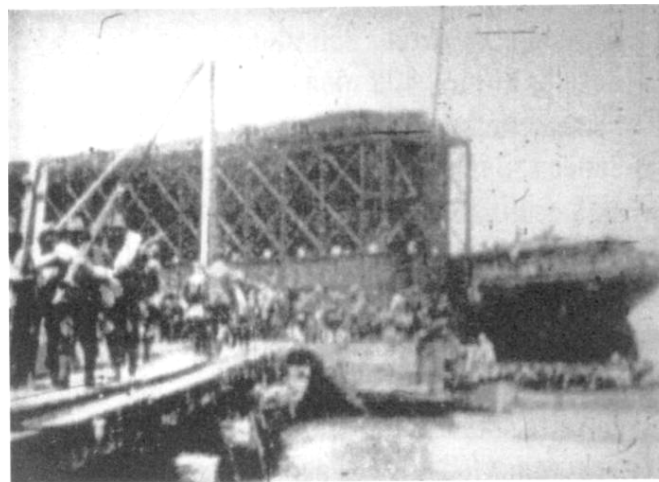


Fig. 8. Frame from Poley's film of US troops coming ashore at Daiquiri, Cuba. (Library of Congress)

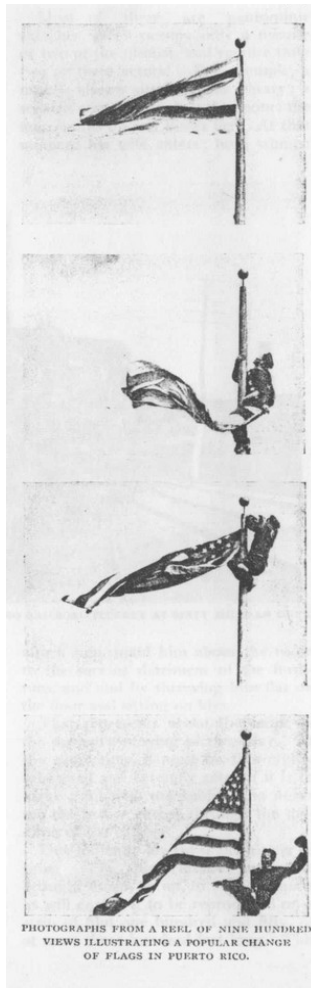


Fig. 1. Frames from one of several 'flag films' made during the Spanish-American War. (*Quaker*, Oct 1899)



Fig. 2. Frame from Edward Amet's allegorical film, *Freedom of Cuba* (1898). Note that Cuba is portrayed as a child.



Fig. 3. Production still of Amet's fake war film of 'soldiers' off-duty in camp. (Lake County Discovery Museum [LCDM])



Fig. 4. Photograph taken during the filming of Amet's *Battle of San Juan Hill* (LCDM)

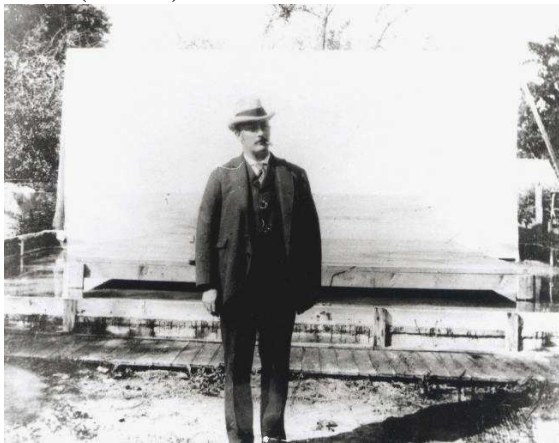


Fig. 5. Amet at pool and backdrop used for filming his fakes. Presumably photographed years after the war. (LCDM)

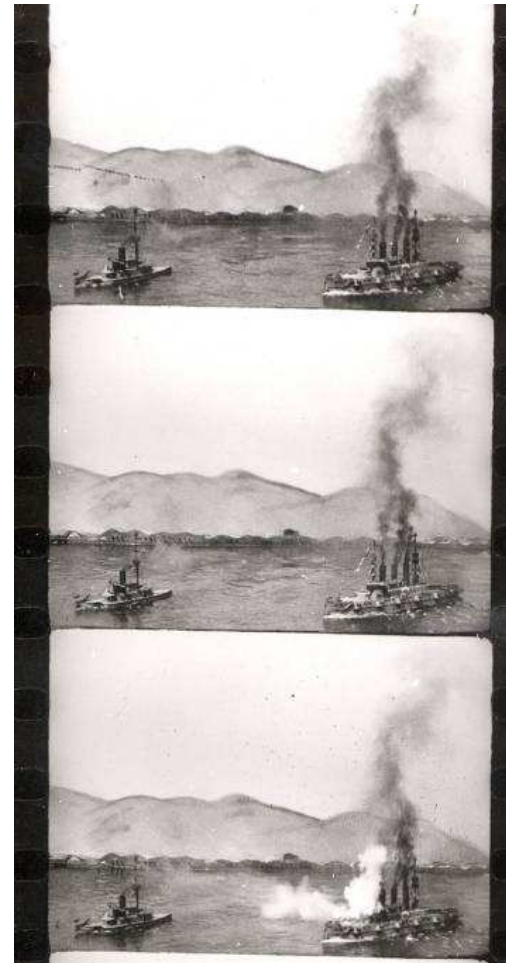


Fig. 6. Frames from Amet's *Battle of Matanzas*. (LCDM)



Fig. 7. A theatre at the

Omaha Exposition, 1898, showing film of the Battle of Matanzas (presumably Amet's fake version). (Nebraska S.H.S.)

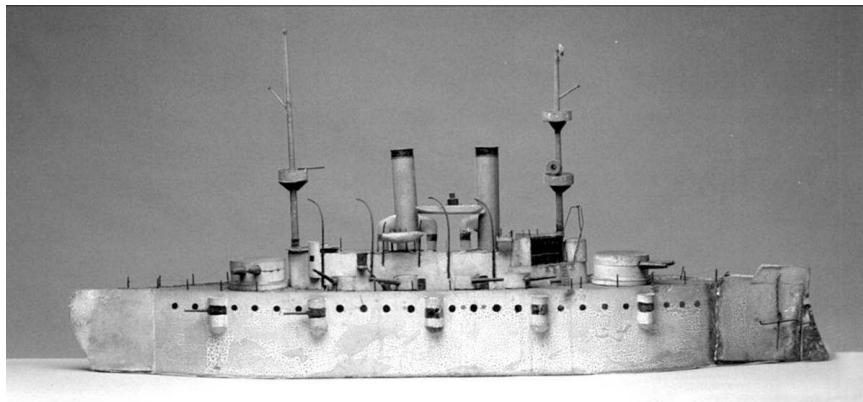


Fig. 8. Model of 'USS Olympia', allegedly used for Amet's war filming. (LCDM)

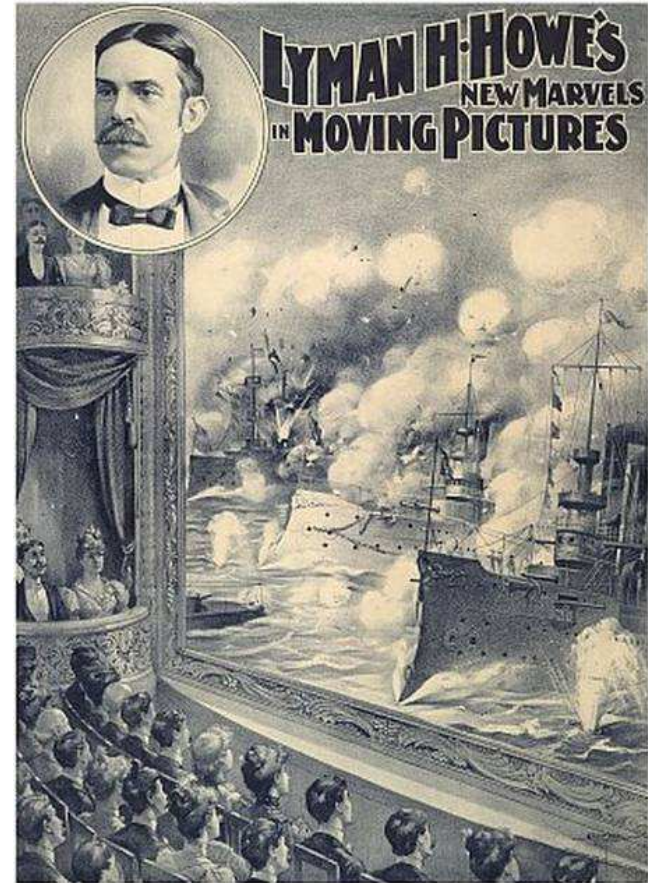


Fig. 9. Poster advertising Lyman Howe's show: the film being projected was probably one of Amet's model-based fakes.



Fig. 1. The war frenzy in America. A music-hall audience cheering as the manager announces the latest war news. (*Graphic*, 14 May 1898)



Fig. 2. A 'war show', possibly somewhere in the mid-West. ('Magniscope', states one sign, referring to Amet's projector which was being used).

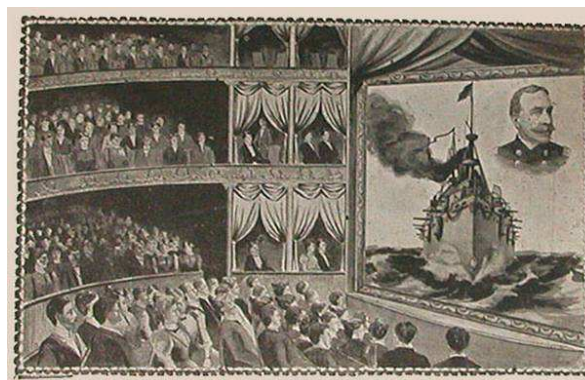


Fig. 3. A show (at the Lyceum?) featuring a montaged (lantern) image of Admiral Dewey and a US battle ship.



Fig. 4. Kleine’s catalogue, 1902, suggested combining war films and lantern (‘stereopticon’) slides.

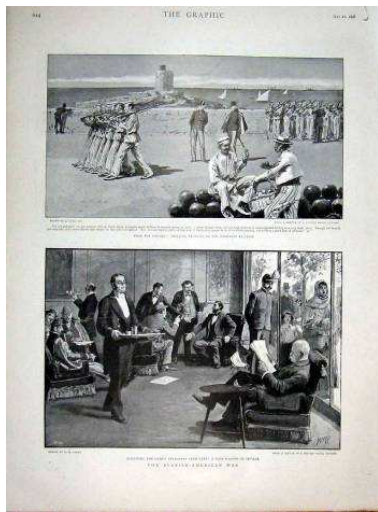
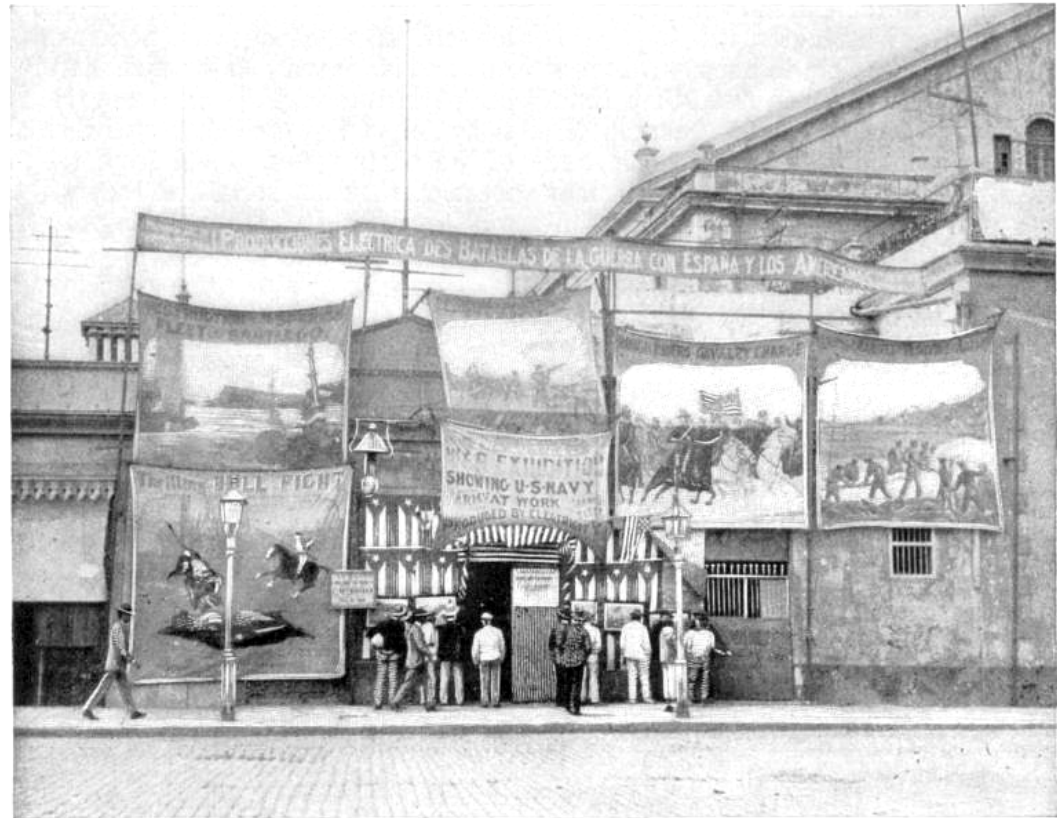


Fig. 5. In Spain there was great interest in the war, but relatively little ‘war fever’ compared to the USA. (*Graphic*, 21 May 1898)



A CINEMATOGRAPH EXHIBITION OF WAR SCENES, BULL FIGHTS, ETC., IN HAVANA.  
SCENES IN CUBA UNDER THE AMERICAN MILITARY OCCUPATION.

Fig. 6. Exterior of a film show in Cuba the year after the conflict – including, interestingly, several war-related films. (*Munseys*, 1899)



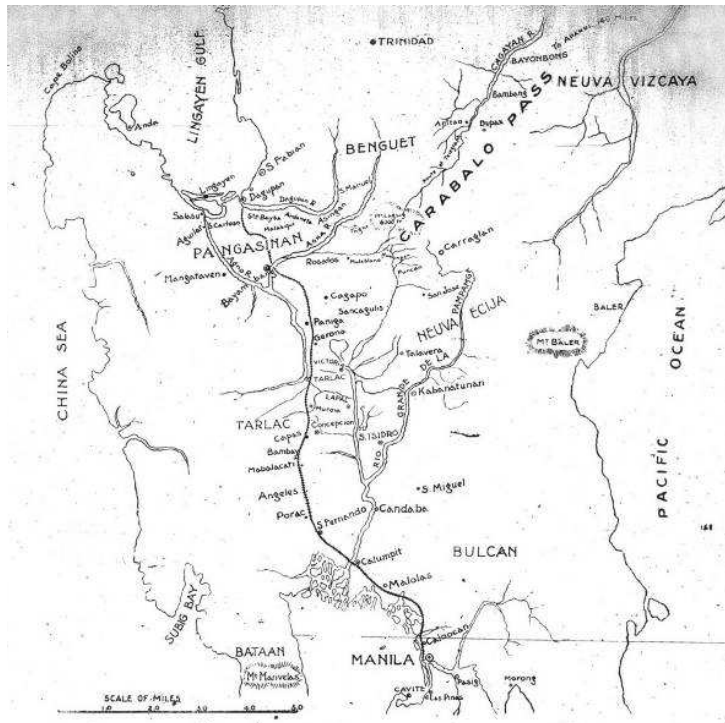


Fig. 1. Map of the central part of Luzon. Virtually all of the filming of the Philippine War took place between Lingayen Gulf to the north and Manila and Cavite to the south (roughly following the line of the railway). (LW)

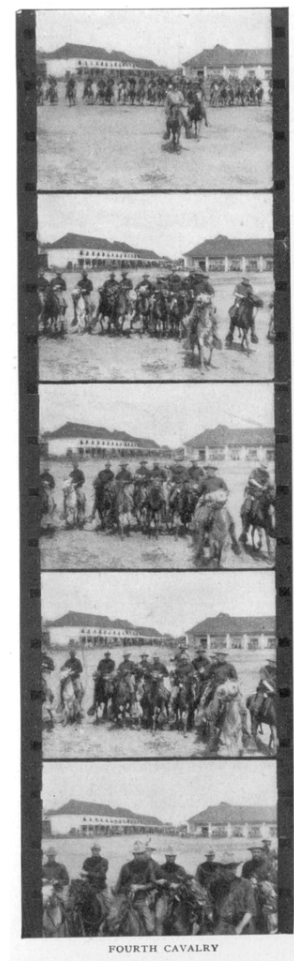


Fig. 2. One of Burton Holmes' films, showing American forces in the Philippines, 1899, charging past camera. (BH Lectures, 1901)



Fig. 3. Joseph Rosenthal with local people during his filming assignment in the Philippines in 1901. (Warwick Trading Co. catalogue, 1901)



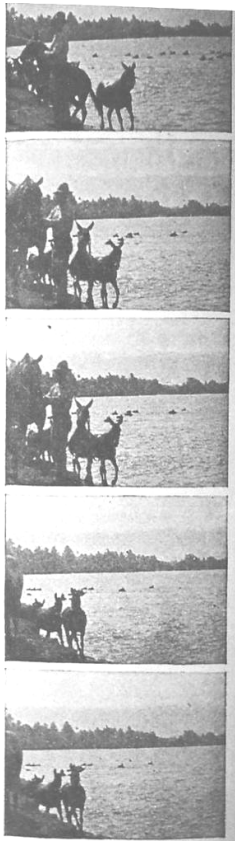
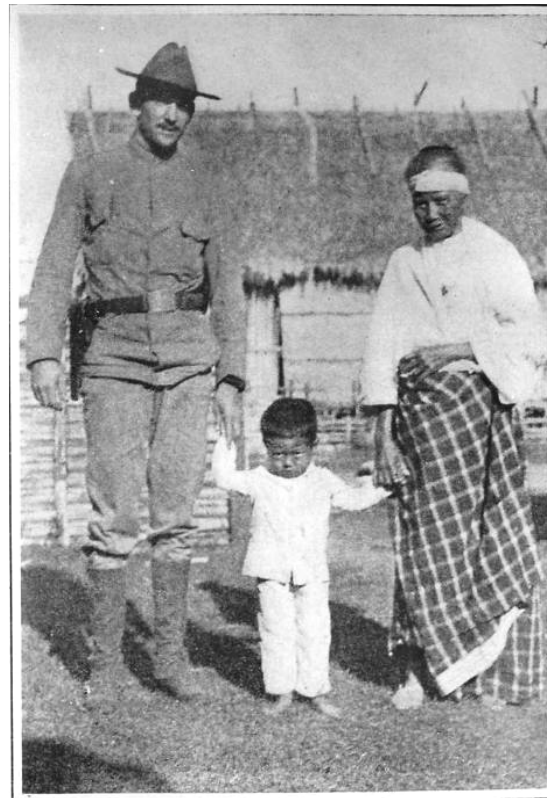


Fig. 7. Frames from one of Ackerman's 'arranged' films, re-enacting a march by General Bell's troops (and their mules) through the mountains of Pangasinan province. (*Everybody's*, 1901)



THE SON AND MOTHER OF AGUINALDO, RECENTLY CAPTURED. C. FRED ACKERMAN, "LESLIE'S WEEKLY'S CORRESPONDENT ON THE LEFT"-(SEE HIS STORY ON PAGE 106.)

Fig. 8. C. Fred Ackerman posing with Aguinaldo's son and mother who had been captured by American forces. (LW 10 Feb 1900)

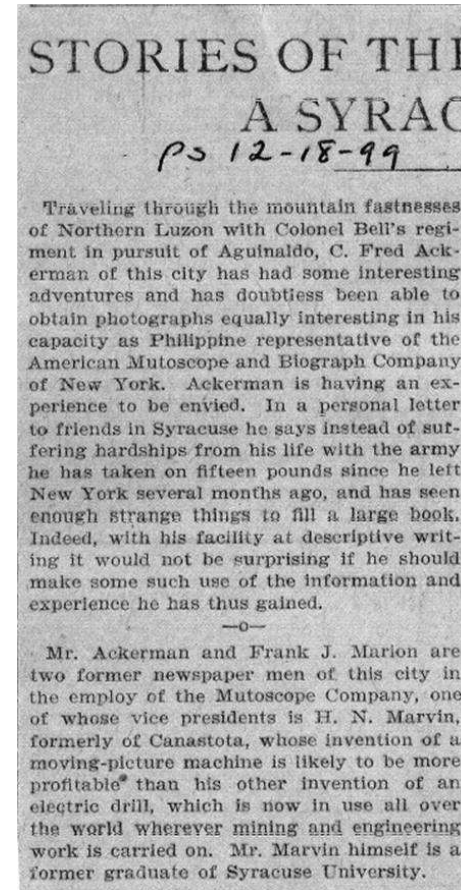


Fig. 9. Newspaper article about the adventures of Ackerman while filming the Philippine War. (*Post Standard*, Syracuse, 18 Dec 1899)



Fig. 11. Details. Note the significant words, ‘Our new possessions’, including ‘the Philippines... Hawaii and Porto Rico’. The picture to the right probably represents the Philippines.

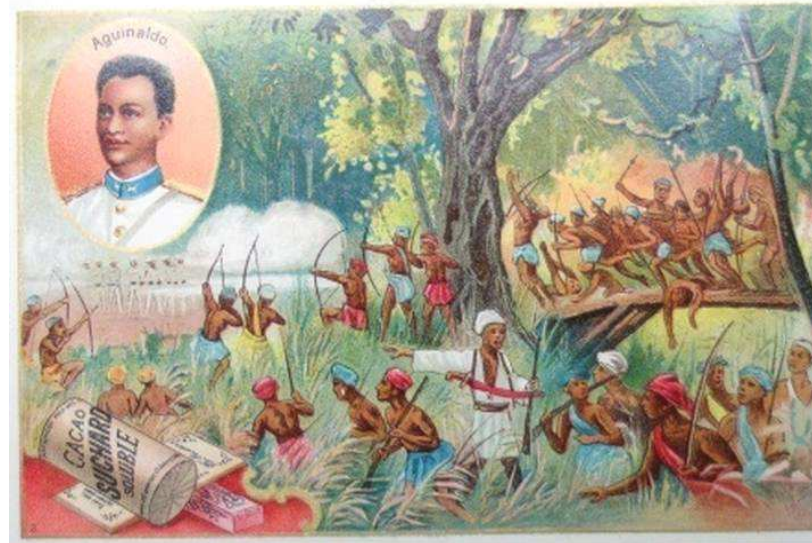


Fig. 10. Poster advertising a lantern show with some films (c1900), partly about America’s new colonial conquests. (LoC)

Fig. 12. A card from a commercial series by Suchard. Note the depiction of the Filipino fighters as semi-savages, using bows and arrows – actually very far from the truth. (Courtesy Martin Loiperdinger)



Fig. 1. Artists as well as cameramen experienced a new, kind of 'invisible' warfare in the vast battlefields of South Africa. Melton Prior sketching the battle at Nicholson's Nek. (ILN 30 Oct 1900)

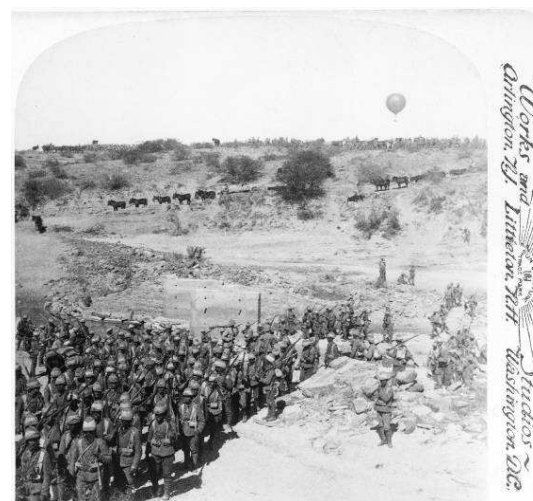


Fig. 2. Because of the long distance nature of this conflict, most photographers at the Boer War could only record troop movements and the like, rather than battlefield action. (Underwood)



Fig. 3. In order to gain a sense of action under fire, some photographers (and film cameramen) 'arranged' troops artificially for their cameras. (Anon)



Fig. 4. Surgeon-Major Beavor, soldier and Boer War cameraman.



Fig. 5. Beavor's film of his regiment, the Scots' Guards, entering Bloemfontein, March 1900. (NFTVA)

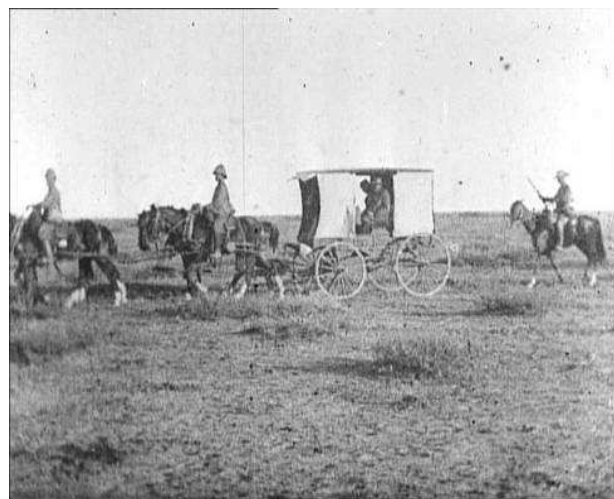


Fig. 6. Beavor's film of captured General Cronjé being taken away in a cart, Feb 1900. (NFTVA)



Fig. 7. Artist Mortimer Menpes drew Cronjé on the same occasion (and indeed saw Beavor filming the captured General).



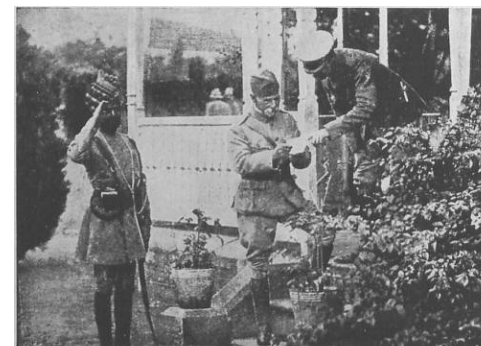
MR. DICKSON AND HIS STAFF, WITH THE BIOGRAPH OUTFIT, PROCEEDING TO THE BATTLE FIELD IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Fig. 8. The Biograph crew in their camp. Dickson is standing near to the left cart wheel. (LW 1 Mar 1900)



AFTER GETTING OUR PICTURES WE RETURN TO CHIVELLY.

Fig. 9. The Biograph camera set up on the battlefield. (*The Biograph in Battle*)



Lord Roberts and his Indian orderly. The Commander-in-Chief has just received a dispatch.

Fig. 10. Dickson's 'arranged' shot of General Roberts in Pretoria receiving a dispatch.



Fig. 11. Joseph Rosenthal, cameraman for the Warwick Trading Co. (WTC), was feted by the British press (and not only in Jewish publications) on his return to England.



Biroscope Equipment—Pack Horse.  
Methods of accumulating photographic lenses, such as flying columns.

Fig. 12. Detail of the same: Rosenthal with the basic filming kit that he had developed for mobile work.



Fig. 13. Edgar Hyman also covered the war for WTC, and was photographed on the same occasion as Rosenthal.





Fig. 1. Lantern

slide from a set about the Boer War. (Private collection)



Fig. 2. Ibid. The themes of such slides – courage, sacrifice, nobility, etc – were also found in films of the war.

## Reproductions of Incidents of the Boer War.

— ◆ ◆ ◆ —  
*(Arranged under the supervision of an experienced military officer from the front).*

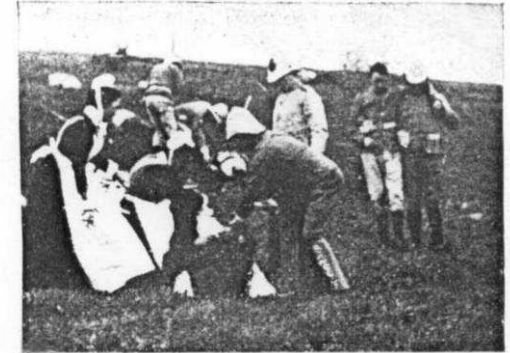


Fig. 3. Robert Paul made a series of fakes about the war – based on expert advice, he claimed. (Paul catalogue)



Fig. 4. Frame from one of Paul's surviving fakes, *Attack on a Picquet*. (MACE)

ADVERTISEMENTS.

---

**Local Films**      Hundreds  
Now Ready.      Now Ready.

6d. Per Foot.

New Comic Films always coming out.

THE

**BOER WAR FILMS**

In the BIG SHOWS are our make.

~~~~~

Look out for New Gags, we are  
doing them.

~~~~~

*The well-known Kenyon's Penny-in-the-Slot-Business  
will from January 1st, 1902, be carried on by us, and  
Exhibition Proprietors may look out for some new money  
making ideas.*

---

**Mitchell & Kenyon,**

Norden Film Works,  
22, Clayton Street,  
BLACKBURN.

Fig. 5. M&K's Boer War fakes were on sale a year and more after the conventional phase of the war had ended, testimony to their popularity. (*Showman's Yearbook*, 1902 [Bodleian])

**BOER ATROCITIES.**

*To the Editor.*

DEAR SIR,—I lately received by post a circular from one of our leading makers of cinematographic films, containing details of what they call one of their latest films. It is headed "Boer Atrocities," and it reads as follows:—

"The opening of this picture shows a Transvaal mine with a sentinel on guard, and Boer commandant in foreground. Three other Boers appear, bringing with them a captured British soldier, whom they search, and find concealed beneath his tunic a Union Jack, the sight of which drives them mad; the commandant seizes the flag, and covers it with abuse. The British soldier, infuriated, attempts to recover it, but in the struggle is thrown to the ground and shot in cold blood. The Boers retire, evidently pleased with their dastardly act, leaving only the sentinel. Another 'Tommy,' attracted by the sounds of firing, crawls on hands and knees to the spot where his comrade lies dead, and perceiving the flag lying by his side, reaches over to it, and reverently lays it on the dead body. He then looks round and observes the sentinel, who turns on hearing his approach; but before he can raise an alarm the Britisher draws a revolver from his belt, and shoots him dead. Seeing that he has aroused the other Boers, he fires his remaining cartridge into a box of dynamite, blowing to atoms everything around. When the smoke clears away a scene of devastation meets the eye, which gradually fades, being replaced by a tableau representing Britannia with a giant Union Jack as background, which gradually rises half way, and shows the British Fleet sailing defiantly on the high seas."

Perhaps some reader can inform me what good the issue of such films can do? In my opinion the issue of such has only a demoralising tendency, for it is false. It is a made-up scene, a playing to the gallery, and a means of instilling hatred in the heart of the young under the guise of what many are pleased to call patriotism. It is to be hoped that films of this character will not find a place in the Englishman's repertoire.

Yours, etc.,  
**FAIRPLAY AND HONESTY.**

Fig. 6. Letter of complaint to a trade journal about the demonisation of the Boers in Gaumont's fake war film, *Boer Atrocities*. (OMLJ, Nov 1901)



Fig. 7. A modern day view of Buttes-Chaumont park in Paris. It was probably in this hilly location that the Pathé series of Boer War fake films was shot.

EPISODES OF THE TRANSSVAAL WAR		
521	1. Capture of a Boer spy	65
522	2. Execution of the same	50
Camp..... 523	3. Capture of a Gun by the Boers	65 1 12 6
Candide..... 524	4. A Skirmish at Glencoe and Repulse of the Boers	65 1 12 6
Canette..... 525	5. Assault on a Hill at Glencoe	65 1 12 6
Canoeas..... 526	6. Boer position taken near Mafeking	70 1 5
Caniche..... 527	7. Capture of Guns on the Tugela by the Boers one bursting.	65 1 12 6
Cinif..... 528	8. Episode during the Battle of Modder River	70 1 5
Canne..... 529	9. Episode during the battle of Spion Kop	65 1 12 6
Canon..... 530	10. Boers take up the offensive	65 1 12 6
Chagrin..... 531	11. Explosion of a Mine	65 1 12 6

Fig. 8. Pathé's series, as listed in their British catalogue.

**EDISON FILMS WHEN USED ON THE : : : : EDISON PROJECTING KINETOSCOPE**  
 GIVE THE BEST RESULTS. Edison's Improved Projecting Machines are now the best in the world. SEND FOR ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE.

**NEW BOER PICTURES**  
 ORDER BY WIRE.

**CHARGE OF BOER CAVALRY** - - - - - 50ft., \$7.50.  
 Shows a wild charge of Mounted Boers up a steep hill. The action of the picture is spirited, and photographically, it is an excellent film. The opening scene shows a horse milking with the Boer cowboy in the distance, galloping rapidly to the front. They cross the crest of the ridge just as the film ends.

**CAPTURE OF BOER BATTERY** - - - - - 100ft., \$15.00.  
 By the Cavalry Highlanders. In the foreground are two machine guns manned by the British burghers. Smoke effects are fine. The Highlanders are seen in the distance, approaching rapidly, easily distinguished by their kilts and bare legs. They sweep all before them, leaving the guns smoking and shattered as they pass the firing Boers.

**BOERS BRINGING IN BRITISH PRISONERS** - 75ft., \$11.25.  
 Boers are on horseback, and pass over the top in slow marching order with their prisoners, who trudge along on foot, looking very dejected.

**ENGLISH LANCERS CHARGING AT MODDER RIVER, 75ft., \$11.25**  
 This scene shows the British Infantry and Cavalry attacking the Boers and being repulsed. Very stirring.

**BOER COMMISSARY TRAIN TREKKING** - - - 25ft., \$4.00.  
 Shows a four-wheeled wagon train moving down a mountain road.

**RED CROSS AMBULANCE ON THE BATTLE FIELD, 100ft., \$15.00**  
 Shows an ambulance drawn by two spotted horses galloping across the field, escorted by Red Cross Nurses, who pack up the dead and wounded of both sides and bring them off.

**BATTLE OF MAFEKING** - - - - - 75ft., \$11.25.  
 This scene shows the Boers attacking the British; and after surrounding and killing the greatest part of them, they capture the remainder.

**PARADE ON N. Y. SPEEDWAY MAY 5, 1900** - - 150ft., \$22.50. | **RACING ON N. Y. SPEEDWAY MAY 5, 1900.** - - 150ft., \$22.50  
 We also have a SHOW, length 15, \$15.00. | Showing New York Millionaires racing their horses. \$15.00.  
 The most wonderful version of Cinderella. (50ft., \$7.50.)

**EDISON MANUFACTURING CO., ORANGE, N. J.**  
 NEW YORK OFFICE : : 135 FIFTH AVENUE.  
 Write for New Supplement.  
 NEW TRANSSVAAL SUBJECTS NOW PREPARING.  
 The price of Films is \$7.50 for 50ft. lengths. Longer lengths in proportion. Thirty new subjects ready.

**STORY OF THE SILVER SLIPPER** (50ft., \$7.50.)  
**OFF FOR THE POLICE** (50ft., \$7.50.)  
**WIFE FOR THE FIGHTING** (50ft., \$7.50.)  
**BURRO PACK TRAIN BY RAIN ST. DAWSON CITY.** (50ft., \$7.50.)  
**ON THE RIVER** (50ft., \$7.50.)  
**TWO OLD FALS, The Finniest Pictures Ever Made.** (50ft., \$7.50.)

**THE NEW KISS**..... 50  
**THE MAULERS**..... 50  
**CHING LING FOR OUTRIGGER**..... 50  
**THE BROTHERS CONQUEROR**..... 50  
**THE BULL FIGHT**..... 50  
**FAUST AND MARRIAGE**..... 50  
**THE MESSIAH**..... 50  
**THE ARTIST'S DREAM**..... 50  
**UNCLE JOSE'S SHIRTLEAF**..... 50

**UNCLE JOSE IN A SPOOK HOTEL**..... 100  
**SNOW BELLING SCENE**..... 50  
**PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE BAY**..... 50  
**THE FISHING AT THE BEACH**..... 50  
**KAL PALACE**..... 175  
**GRAND SWAMP**..... 175  
**Brushed from Life**..... 100  
 We also have a good list of lengths.

Fig. 9. Ad by Edison Mfg. Co. (NY Clipper, 12 May 1900)

**LUBIN'S FILMS ARE THE BEST FILMS**  
 ON ANY MACHINE.  
**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.**  
 All orders received during the month of May will be subject to a discount of ten per cent. Order now and get the benefit of this liberal offer.

**FOREIGN FILMS AT THE SAME PRICE AS AMERICAN FILMS.**  
 Having made special arrangements with the Foreign Film Manufacturers, we are now prepared to furnish FRENCH, ENGLISH and GERMAN subjects at the same price as our films. Send for list.

**NEW BOER WAR FILMS NOW READY.**  
 SAPIO Film, from 50 to 500 feet, a brilliant subject. Alladin and the Wonderful Lamp, from 50 to 350 feet. BULL FIGHT, from 50 to 550 feet. CINDERELLA, 400 feet, and 100 other new films. Send for list.

**TAKE NOTICE.**—We take new means of calling the attention of prospective purchasers to motion pictures that are only toys and fit for home use only. We do not recommend them for PRACTICAL EXHIBITIONS. Write to us for special terms for our wonderful CINDERELLA, WIFE and WIFEHOY STEREOPTICON COMBINED, the only practical life motion picture machine in the world. Lightest in weight, easiest to run, simplest in construction and practically noiseless.

Fig. 10. Lubin ad, which appeared just below Edison's. (NY Clipper, 12 May 1900)



Fig. 1. The Boer War was widely represented in the visual media, including in advertising.



Fig. 2. Special displays of war news appeared outside the offices of the *Illustrated London News*. (*Illustration*, 5 May 1900)

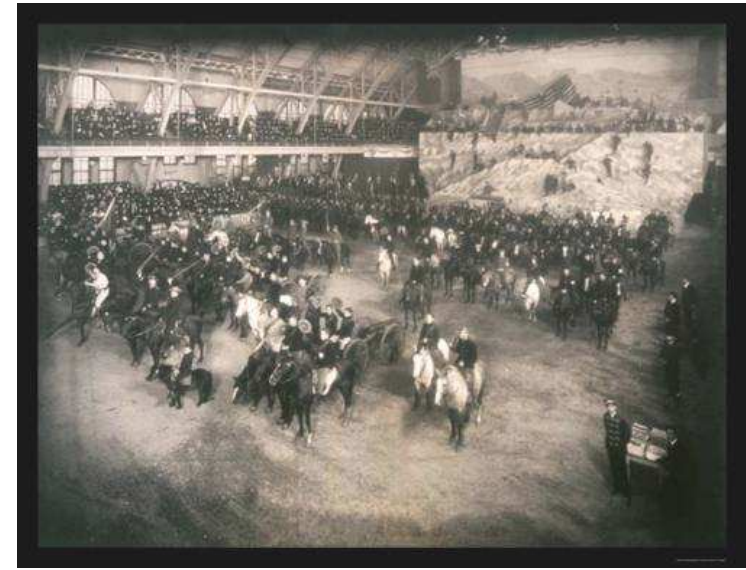


Fig. 3. For years after the war, there were stage productions and pageants referring to the events, such as this live show in Chicago in 1905.



Fig. 4. Lantern slide makers produced Boer War slides in a wide variety of formats, styles and genres: photographic, life model, and (as here) drawn.



Fig. 5. There was widespread popular support for the war in Britain. The relief of Mafeking, for example, was celebrated with near hysteria – here pictured in Portsmouth. (*Graphic* 26 May 1900)



Fig. 6. As well as filming at the front, cameramen filmed departing troops, sometimes in near close-up. (*Today*, 23 Nov 1899)



Fig. 7. Detail.



Fig. 8. War films were shown everywhere in Britain. (NAM) From Banff...



Fig. 9. ...to Birmingham.

In continental Europe there was overwhelmingly a pro-Boer and anti-British sentiment.

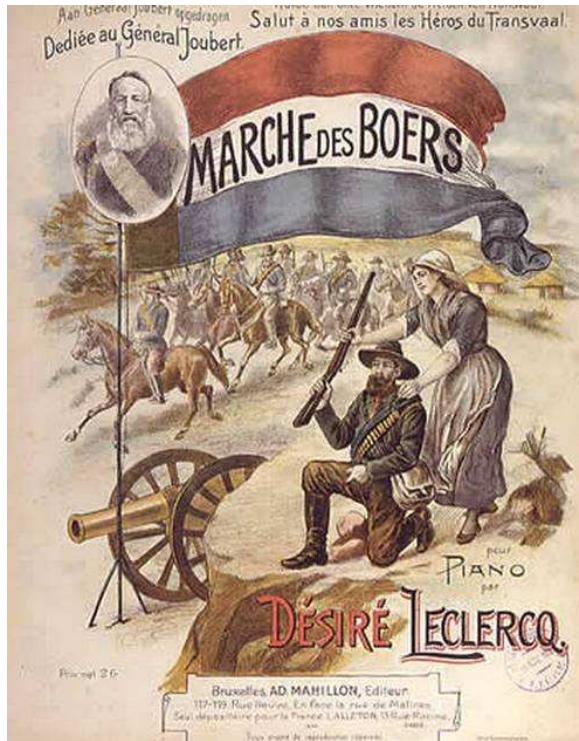


Fig. 10. The Boers were feted in popular culture with the same fervour that the British backed their own side.

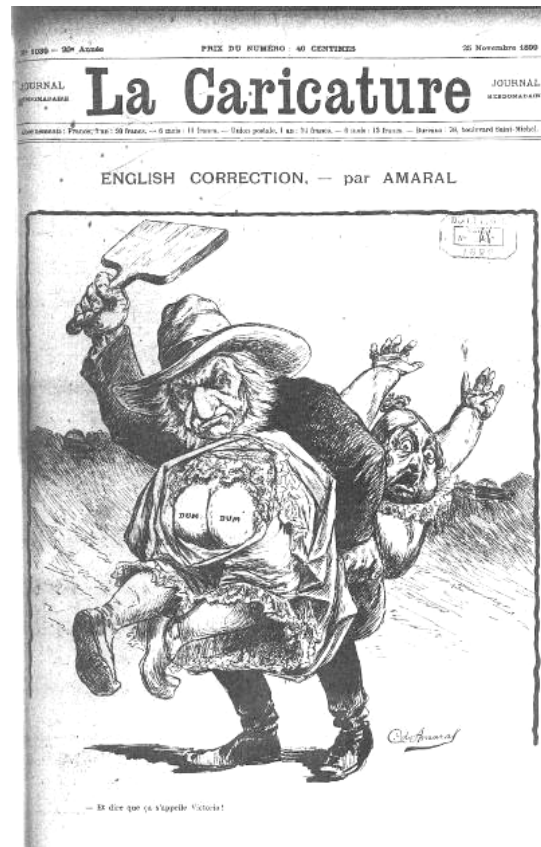


Fig. 11. The anti-British tone reached its height in France and the low countries, and the British authorities grew alarmed when Queen Victoria herself was pilloried.

Le cinématographe de la Scala n'a pas fonctionné depuis le 31 mars dernier, jour où la première d'une piécette a été donnée au dit théâtre.

Les projections dont il est question ne comprenaient cette saison, en tant que vues animées se rapportant à la question transvaalienne qu'un "départ d'un commando boer de Pretoria" et une "artillerie boer à la frontière"; ses vues représentaient uniquement des mouvements de troupes; elles ont été données sans incident d'après mes renseignements et ne comportent rien d'anormal.

Quant au cortège, il s'agit de vues du passage de S M la Reine Victoria et de son escorte à Londres, lors du Jubilé; cette dernière projection n'étant plus d'actualité n'a pas été produite cette saison, d'après les renseignements recueillis.

Toutefois le dit cinématographe dont le fonctionnement reprendra le 16 et a donné cette année le portrait de M Chamberlain et l'apparition de ce portrait soulevait parfois des sifflets dans le public.

Depuis un quinzaine de jours il y a eu outre à la Scala un artiste qui se grime de manière à imiter des personnages les plus en vue. Il se fait entre autres les têtes de MM Kruger et Chamberlain; le public applaudit la première et siffle le second.

Il n'a pas été et il n'est pas donné à la Scala, que nous ayons relevé, d'exhibition irrévérencieuse envers la famille royale anglaise et le public ne s'y est pas livré jusqu'à présent d'après mes renseignements à d'autres manifestations que celles rapportées plus haut.

Bruxelles le 13.4.1.

(s) ?

Fig. 12. Told of an alleged insult to the Queen in a film show in Brussels, the British ambassador complained, prompting the local police to commission a report. (PRO)



Fig. 13. Ad for a lantern show about the Boer War in Russia. (Rashit Yangirov)



Fig. 14. Many Boer War films were shown in the USA (this is in Tacoma, Washington), where public sympathies were more evenly divided than in pro-Boer Europe. (LoC)

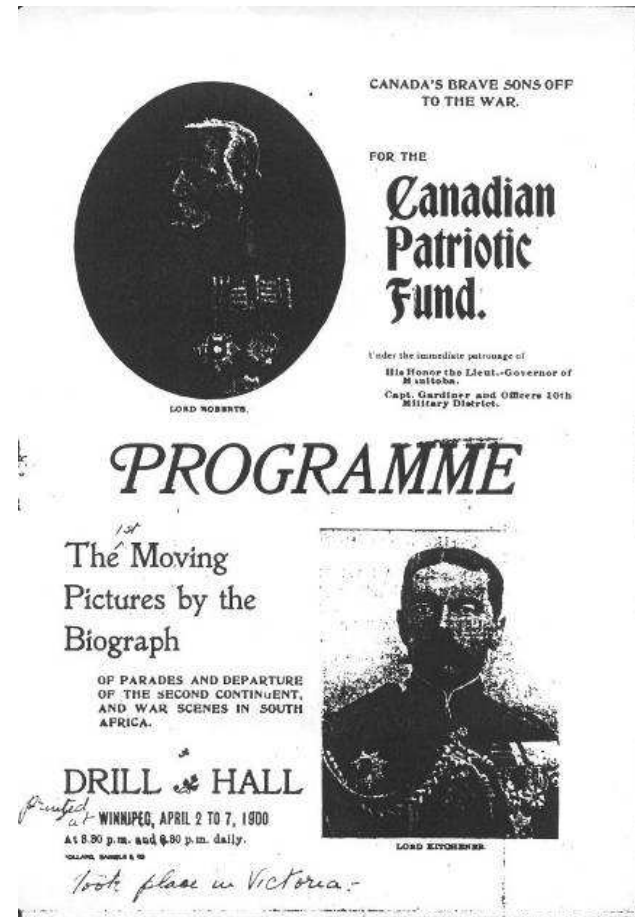


Fig. 15. In Canada (then part of the British Empire) film shows helped to raise funding for the cause, and for the Canadian troops who fought on the British side. (CIHM)



Fig. 1. French troops departing to China from Marseille (*Le Petit Journal*, 26 August 1900)

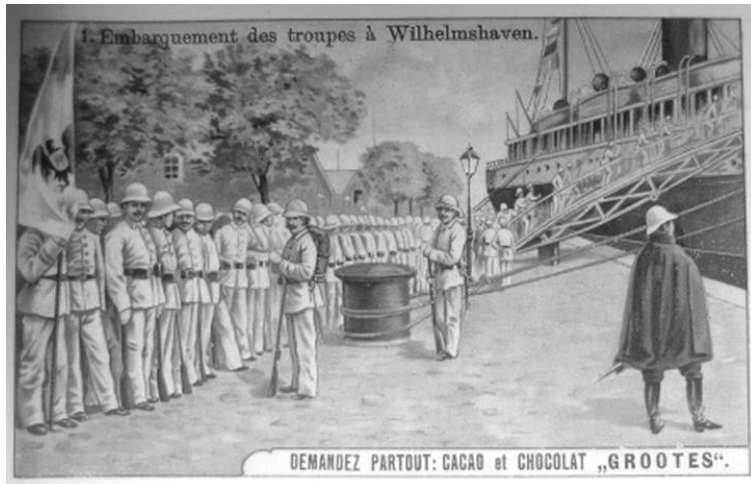


Fig. 2. Departure of German troops from Wilhelmshaven. At a similar troop embarkation, Kaiser Wilhelm delivered his notorious 'huns' speech. (Courtesy Martin Loiperdinger)



Fig. 3. A French General negotiating with Chinese officers during the Boxer campaign.

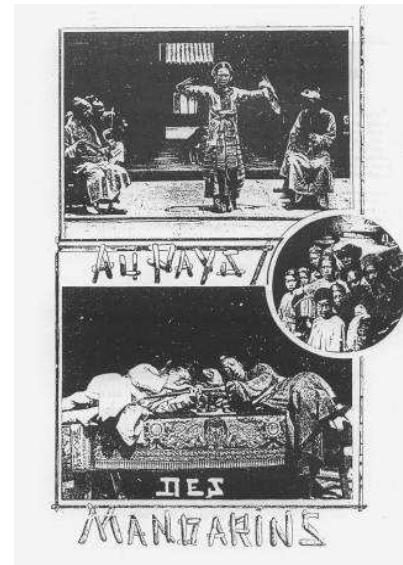


Fig. 4. 'Au Pays des Mandarins'. Gaumont's films about China after the Boxer uprising (catalogue courtesy of Sabine Lenk)



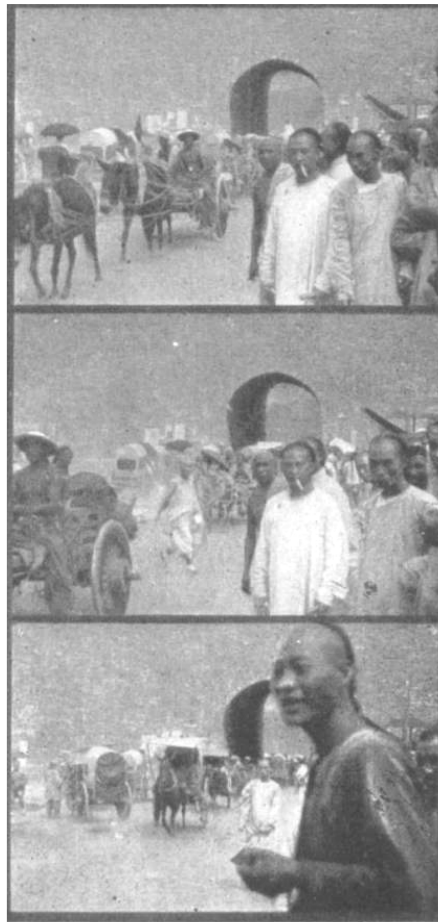


MONGOLS VIEWING MOTION-PICTURES

Fig. 5. During his journey to China, Burton Holmes pauses to show Mongols in the Baikal region some moving images in a 'Kinora'. (*Burton Holmes Lectures*, 1901)



Fig. 6. German troops entering Peking, 17 Oct 1900 (an event filmed by Rosenthal).



THE PASSING THROUGH

Fig. 7. Frames from a film shot by Holmes in Peking, 1901. (*Burton Holmes Lectures*, 1901)

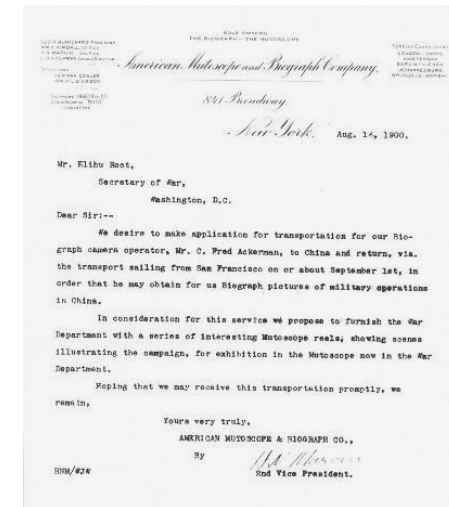
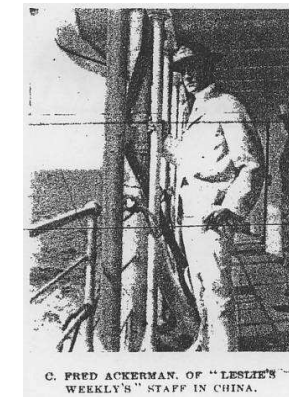


Fig. 8. Letter from AM&B to the Secretary of War, 16 Aug 1900, requesting transport for Ackerman to film in China. (National Archives)



C. FRED ACKERMAN, OF "LESLIE'S WEEKLY'S" STAFF IN CHINA.

Fig. 9. Ackerman on ship to China. (LW 22 Sep 1900)



Fig. 10. Frame from Ackerman's Biograph film of himself greeting Li Hung Chang. (HW Apr 1904)



Photograph by the Biograph Company

LI HUNG CHANG AND THE FIRST MOVING PICTURE EXHIBITION IN CHINA

Fig. 11. Li Hung Chang looking at the mutoscope viewer which Ackerman (on the left) has just presented to him. (*Review of Reviews*, Sep 1910)



Fig. 12. Frame from Ackerman's film, *Assault on the South Gate of Peking* (B&W Budget, June 1901)



Fig. 13. Cartoon satirising a cameraman stage-managing the troops in China. Ironically, this was surprisingly close to what Ackerman was actually doing. (*Kladderadatsch*, 2 Sep 1900)



Fig. 1. China had long been the victim of international intervention – and this was even celebrated on the lantern screen. (ILN, 1858)



Fig. 2. Equally, the Boxers had their own form of visual propaganda: puppet shows, demonising foreigners. (ILN 25 Aug 1900)



Fig. 3. Lubin's *Beheading the Chinese Prisoner* (1900).

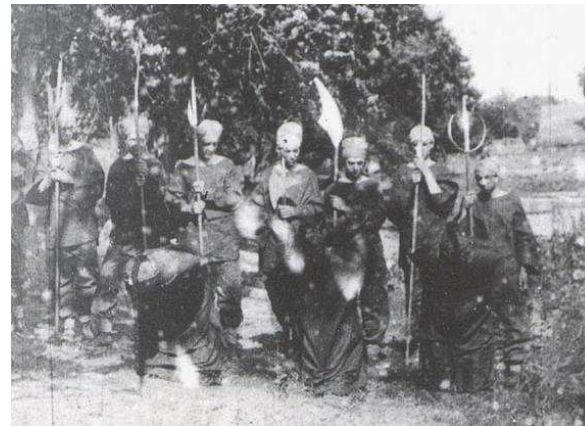


Fig. 4. Photograph taken during production of Amet's 'Boxer Rebellion' film. (LCDM)

**GIBBONS' LATEST FILM SUBJECTS.**

**THE PHONO-BIO-TABLEAUX.**  
The Greatest and Most Wonderful Invention ever yet attained in  
Animated Photography.  
**MYSTERICAL AND BEAUTIFUL.**  
**NO LONGER A SILENT PICTURE.**  
Can be seen Working at the  
**LONDON HIPPODROME**  
Twice Daily.  
**THE TALK OF LONDON.**  
Invented by  
**WALTER GIBBONS.**

1097. **GENERAL BULLER HOME AGAIN.** The Welcome at Algebrat. After the presentation the most exciting scene of all was witnessed. The local French man, at a signal from their commander, and unhorse the General's carriage, proceeding to drag him by hand along the route. This episode has been seized by my operator, and being the only photograph of this notable event is most valuable. The General comes towards the camera and when just in front raises his hat in response to the tremendous cheers of the crowd, thus a splendid portrait is obtained, which is greeted with rounds of applause at each performance at the London Hippodrome. Length 76ft.

**THE LATEST CHINESE WAR PICTURES.**

1098. **OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF PEKIN.** A strong body of Boxer Troops is seen entrenched on a hillside, the walls of Peking being distinctly seen in the distance. They have an old piece of ordnance with them, and repeatedly discharge this and their rifles at the advancing Allies. Our brave troops eventually rush the position, many, however, falling in the attempt. The Boxers are taken prisoners, and the victor's colours are seen proudly floating in the van of the column now advancing on Peking. Length, 100ft.

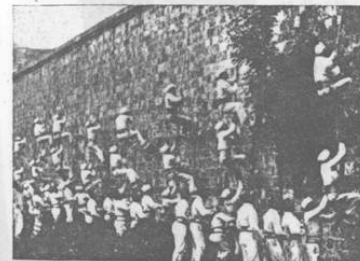
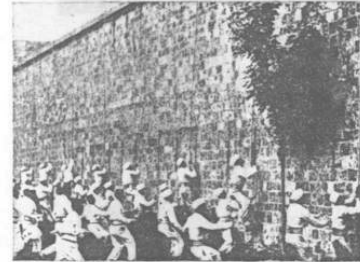
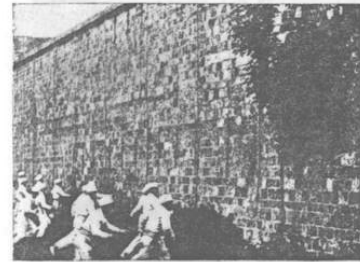
1099. **THE ALLIED TROOPS TAKING CHINESE PRISONERS OVER TIEN-TSIN BRIDGE, OUTSIDE PEKIN.** This picture shows various detachments of the Allied Troops leading Prisoners over the now famous Tien-Tsin Bridge. The various Banners waving as the different sections of the Regiment come into view, combined with the rugged scenery around this notorious place, make a very stirring picture. Length, 80ft.

1100. **THE BURNING OF A MISSIONARY AND THE DISPERSING OF THE INFAMOUS MONKERS BY THE ALLIED TROOPS.** A very thrilling incident, showing the Chinese Boxers hanging up a missionary to burn. Huge flames and dense volumes of smoke are now seen rising from the fire, over which the ill-fated missionary hangs upside down. The infamous monks are now seen dancing with glee, but their merriment is cut short by the arrival of the allied troops, who kill some of the rebels, dispersing the others. The picture is now filled with a multitude of troops, thus bringing to a finish one of the most exciting incidents ever portrayed by the camera. Length, 90ft.

1101. **ATTACK ON A MISSION STATION, SAVED BY BLITZKRIEG.** The outer gate of a Chinese station compound is being tried by a villainous-looking Boxer, who calls for help from his companions, who quickly force it. The second part of the film shows the front of the house, the missionary and family being seen. At the bowling of the Boxer the Missionary sends his family into the house, and obtaining rifle and revolver proceeds to sell his life as dearly as possible. A relief party is seen by the Missionary's wife, who signals them with a handkerchief, and they arrive in the nick of time to rescue wife and children from a far worse fate. The film finishes with a most exciting episode; a Blitzkrieg, who goes into the burning house to rescue a child has blazed out off, and is only enabled to escape with his hands through some of his comrades forming a living ladder up the side of the burning building. The Boxers are eventually taken prisoners. Length, 100ft.

1102. **THE WAR IN CHINA. BOXERS DECAPITATING A PRISONER.** An unfortunate Chinese soldier, taken prisoner by the rebels, is brought in bound and forced to kneel in the center of a circle of Boxers; the headman marches in, brandishing his broad-bladed sword with one click cut he causes the soldier's head to fall to the ground. His immediately plucked up and impaled on a spear, while the Boxers execute a characteristic war dance round the head of their unfortunate victim. Length, 80ft.

Fig. 5. Ad by Gibbons for Pathé's fakes of the China events. (Era 17 Nov 1900)



FRENCH SOLDIERS SCALING PEKING'S WALLS.

Actual size of film.

Fig. 6. Though captioned in this magazine as showing the allies' assault on Peking, in fact this scene was filmed at a French gymnastic school. (Everybody's, 1901)

OFFICE OF  
GEORGE CAMPBELL,  
ATTORNEY AT LAW,  
101 N. WASHINGTON ST.,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Washington, C. M. CONDON & CO., BALTIMORE, (INCORPORATED)  
LITHOGRAPHED AND PRINTED BY THE  
LITHOGRAPH AND PRINTING CO.  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Oswego, Kan. Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> 1902

To The Hon. Secy of War  
Washington  
D.C.

Dear Sir

On the frontispiece pictures, showing the part taken by the troops of the various nations in the capture of Peking, the 1st troops are represented as assigned to a place near the wall. One American soldier looks up toward the top of the great wall and immediately begins to climb it, and is followed by many other soldiers.

When reach the top of the wall, some fire at the Chinese soldiers within the walls, and descend the other side of the wall into the interior and open the great gates to the other nations.

Do this representation borne out by the records of your office?

Respectfully  
G. Campbell

Fig. 7. George Campbell's enquiry (1902) to the Secretary of War as to whether a film allegedly showing the assault on Peking was a true representation of the events. (National Archives)

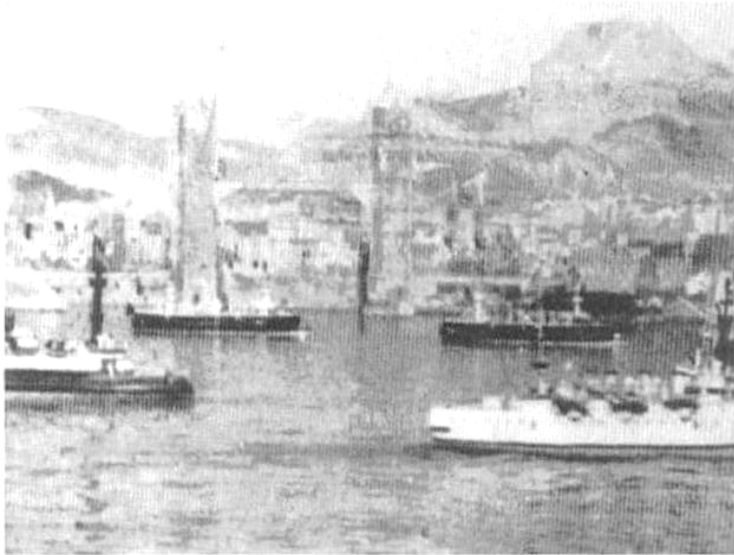


Fig. 8. *Bombardment of Taku Forts* (1900) distributed by Edison, but probably made by Lubin. (LoC)

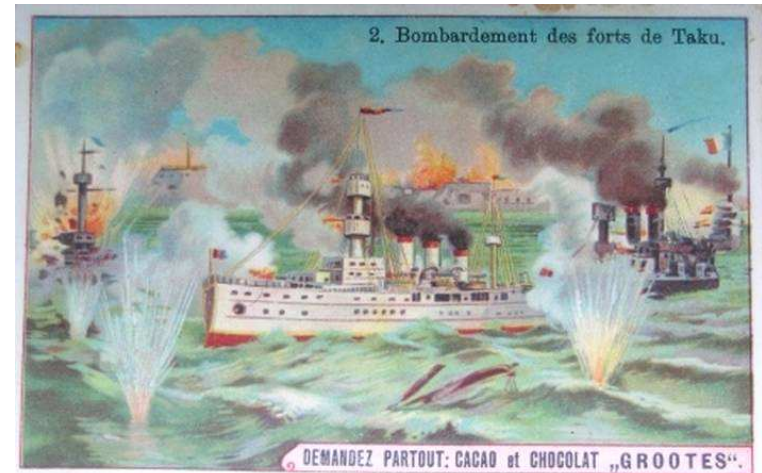


Fig. 9. Representation of the same event in a commercial image. (Courtesy M. Loiperdinger)

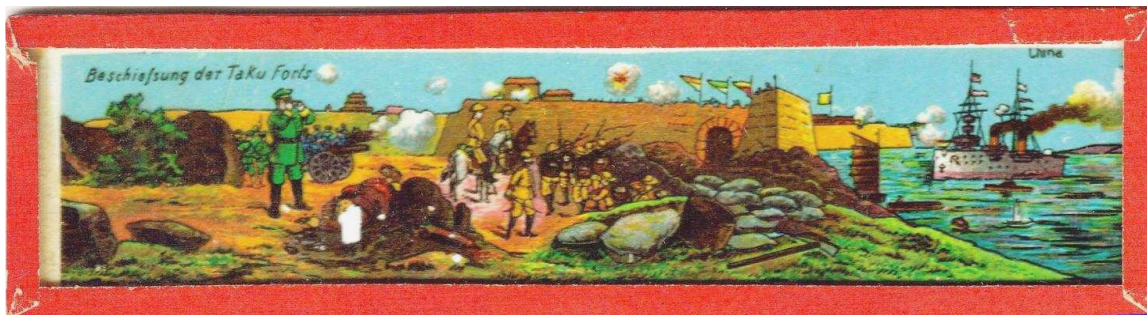


Fig. 10. A lantern slide of the same event, though interestingly this one depicts the attack as seen from the Chinese (i.e. landward) side.



Fig. 11. *Arrest of a Pickpocket* (Birt Acres, 1895). Words on the hoarding include a headline for 'Peace.. between China and Japan'.