



## 'I am not a camera': camera consciousness in 1930s Britain and the Spanish Civil War

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## **Lara Feigel**

### 'I am not a camera': camera consciousness in 1930s Britain and the Spanish Civil War

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In the 1930s, a generation of British writers embraced the cinema at the same time as they committed themselves to left-wing politics. Stephen Spender later described radical German and Russian cinema as conveying 'a message of hope like an answer to *The Waste Land*'. This article argues that cinema entered literature not just as a set of techniques, but as a mode of vision, and that this vision quickly became less hopeful. Having accepted the cinematic quality of their surroundings, several 1930s writers figured consciousness itself as a camera or projector. These narratives take the cinematic as read and investigate the experience of living in a world whose subjects are absent actors mediated by the cinema screen. In this context, the cinema becomes a vehicle not so much for a Benjaminian politicisation of aesthetics as for a more reactionary political disengagement. Here this is explored through a discussion of texts by Edward Upward and Christopher Isherwood and then through an analysis of the cinematic literature of the Spanish Civil War. The article ends with an analysis of Susan Sontag's critique of Baudrillard's 'hyperreal', suggesting that this debate was prefigured in the 1930s.

### **Keywords**

1930s; literature; cinema; hyperreal; Spanish Civil War

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The 1930s was a decade as black-and-white as it was red. When left-wing writers were not observing the working classes in the north of England or fighting on their behalf in Spain, they were side by side with them in the picture palaces, glorying in the black-and-white shadows projected onto the flickering screen. Often, as for Christopher Isherwood, who took a turn as a camera while frequenting the Berlin slums, the two went together. Isherwood, W.H. Auden and Stephen Spender brought home from Berlin a commitment to socialism and a love of avant-garde German and Russian film, which Spender saw as conveying 'a message of hope like an answer to *The Waste Land*'.<sup>1</sup> Both passions fitted comfortably into London of the late 1930s, home of May Day demonstrations, vehement anti-fascism and one of the most enthusiastic cinema-going publics in Europe.

For this generation of writers, cinema entered literature not just as a set of techniques, but as a mode of vision. And if the world itself is cinematic, its inhabitants must play their part in creating as well as spectating cinema. Having accepted the cinematic quality of their surroundings, several 1930s writers figured consciousness itself as a camera or projector. These narratives take the cinematic as read and investigate the experience of living in a world whose subjects are absent actors mediated by the cinema screen.<sup>2</sup>

Isherwood would later gloss his infamous 'I am a camera' declaration in terms of feeling like a camera, rather than attaining a camera-like objectivity:

what I really meant by saying 'I am a camera' was *not* I am a camera all the time, and that I'm like a camera. It was: I'm in the strangest mood at this particular moment [...] I just sit and register impressions through the window – visual data – without any reaction to it, like a camera. The idea that I was a person divorced from what was going on around me is quite false.<sup>3</sup>

Camera consciousness here involves a subjective experience of passive, mechanised vision; Isherwood is more victim than witness of his world.<sup>4</sup> According to Stanley Cavell, cinema entered a world 'whose ways of looking at itself [...] had already changed, as if in preparation for the screening and viewing of film'.<sup>5</sup> For Cavell, as for Isherwood, 'film's presenting of the world by absenting us from it appears as confirmation of something true of our stage of existence'. The cinema's estrangement confirms our own.

Michael North has read the socialist American writer John Dos Passos's influential experiments with camera-eye narration in similar terms to Isherwood's. Dos Passos's socialist *USA* trilogy, published between 1930 and 1936, is punctuated by 'Camera Eye' and 'Newsreel'

sections which would inspire several British cinematic narratives. However, North has pointed out how surprisingly unusual both these sections tend to be. The newsreels seem, he suggests, 'to be misnamed, for they are not actually newsreels at all'.<sup>6</sup> Instead they are textual collages, built from newspaper clippings and song lyrics, which are more sonic than visual. Dos Passos himself described them as giving the 'clamor, the sound of daily life', and North suggests that he was less interested in representing the appearance of the visual than in representing its effects on social life.<sup>7</sup>

The camera eye sections evoke the entire sensorium, juxtaposing sight with sound, touch and smell. 'The Camera Eye (4)' describes the haptic experience of 'riding backwards through the rain', feeling the horse's hoofs 'rattle sharp on smooth wet asphalt after cobbles', and 'The Camera Eye (9)' is dedicated to the smell of the fertiliser factories with their 'reek of rotting menhaden'.<sup>8</sup> Vision here is embodied, and the literary 'camera eye' is human and subjective. Dos Passos would later describe the camera eye sections as 'a safety valve for my own subjective feelings'.<sup>9</sup> Where the newsreels investigate the effects of the visual on social life, the camera eye sections explore its impact on the individual. These effects, Dos Passos suggests, are necessarily political. According to North, Dos Passos uses the camera eye narration to explore the inherently isolating nature of the visual.<sup>10</sup> Where the aural can create a socialised community, the visual creates a crowd of isolated, fragmented spectators, too scared of being looked at to make the most of the opportunities for spectatorship. Dos Passos's depiction of consciousness as camera-like therefore serves to emphasise the deathly indexicality of cinema, turning the inhabitants of the USA into automatons. The mind as a camera is engaged in a vampiric act, draining the real of life in order to revivify it eternally as a film.

## I

### Clouds of irresponsible fantasy

If the camera-eye is vampiric, cinema, with its indexical power not just to record, but to conserve reality, becomes a reactionary force. To accept consciousness as cinematic is to accept life as a living death, in which political change is impossible because everything has effectively already taken place. The cinematically conscious subject has been coopted into passively experiencing the world as a spectacle. This is made explicit in Edward Upward's 1938 Communist novel *Journey to the Border*. Here Upward's hero is an unnamed tutor, financially trapped into employment with the bourgeois Parkin family. The action of the novel takes place during a single day, when the tutor unwillingly accompanies the Parkins and their friends to the races.

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The tutor experiences the day as a series of tests, and a series of corresponding experiments in vision.<sup>11</sup> He falls at the first hurdle, when he fails to assert himself and stay home from the races altogether. He then oscillates between going off on his own, eschewing the crowd, and falling under the insidious spell of the Parkins' jovial friend MacCreath, a tempter equipped with an attractive daughter and an offer of a better job. The experiments in vision tend to occur at moments when the tutor comes closest to renouncing the world of the Parkins and the MacCreaths. Gathering psychological strength to escape the trip to the races, the tutor tries to see the Parkins not as 'living people' but as 'freaks belonging to the same order of reality as the characters in a Grimm's fairy story or a cinema film'.<sup>12</sup> This attempt to turn himself into a filmic spectator in order to avoid pain is intensified when he finds himself coerced into going to the races after all. He now decides that he must 'kill the nerves, put an end to feeling' (p. 26). As he 'mechanically follow[s]' his employer out of the hall, he metamorphoses from spectator to film actor, performing the role of the already-dead cinematic automaton. Indeed, the tense of his actions becomes cinematic so that he 'was already following them'. The action is simultaneous with the thought, because the independent will is denied to the automaton. The tutor stares 'glassily' into the hall, his nerves dead, deciding that 'from now on there would be no more feelings'. Once they are driving to the races, the mechanical motion of the car seems to participate in his own mechanisation, so that he longs to be 'dead like the car itself, even though it moves' (p. 30).

This experiment fails. Thinking and feeling return, and the tutor becomes 'quite normal again', realising that 'the abnormality had probably been a fake, a deliberate experiment' (p. 31). Now he decides to embark on a new mode of vision, attempting to bring about a change that will be 'immeasurably more far-reaching' (p. 32). This time he will not only alter his 'so-called surroundings', he will 'see and touch and hear differently, as he wanted to, happily'. Now he is a filmmaker; at once spectator and camera. For Walter Benjamin, the camera was 'incapable of photographing a tenement or a rubbish-heap without transfiguring it', rendering everything it touches beautiful.<sup>13</sup> Like Benjamin's camera, the tutor transforms the world he looks at into something beautiful. Looked at, the landscape lengthens and broadens, becoming 'a tremendous panorama' like 'an infra-red photograph'. As in a photograph or a film, he can see great distances and the colours become 'far more vivid' than usual. Looking around, he notices details with unusual clarity, picking out 'white insulators on telegraph poles and new copper wires' gleaming on the road. However, this vision too is disappointing. Gazed at for too long, the race-course marquee fades from white to grey and the shape becomes 'less distinct against the sky' (p. 33). As his vision returns to normal, camera eye

and human eye are briefly juxtaposed. The tutor sees the cinematic marquee and the actual marquee at the same time, 'like a superimposed photograph', before the large one fades away. The same process then occurs with sound, and the tutor realises that he has 'not yet conquered his old habits of perceiving' (p. 34).

Nonetheless, the tutor continues in his attempts, with the approach of a steam-roller enabling a moment of visionary epiphany. This new vision goes beyond the traditionally filmic to embrace the metaphysical, as the tutor extols the power of the machine. At first, the power is visual: it is 'crested in front with a rampant brass unicorn, thumping with its pistons like a thumping heart' (p. 36). But the thumping heart simile is the first in a series of metaphorical attempts to understand the roller's extraordinary power. It combines the boldness of engines 'stared at by children from a nursery window' with the 'naïve boldness of a child who sticks out his stomach and makes piston movements with his arms'; it has the 'chuffing indifferent power' of a train carrying an unwilling boy to school and the 'sun-glittering' power of a motor-coach transporting a middle-class man to the just life of the countryside. The steam-roller seems to motor through the tutor's own youthful fears and hopes, exhorting him to 'remember your past' and see how he has wasted himself. From now on, it says, 'you will go my way, will be iron, will be new' (p. 37). This new vision, which transcends the cinematic in embracing the human, is more 'solid and real' than his previous attempt and 'will not fade'. Now certain of his vision and himself, the tutor's eyes fill with tears: 'he had triumphed'.

Again, this vision recedes, but it leaves behind a residue of its power. Although the marquee, in its physical actuality, now proves itself to be ordinary, the steam-roller retains its extraordinary quality. The tutor becomes 'normally happy' (p. 41). He now has the courage to abandon his companions and walk into the countryside, where he finds himself at one with his surroundings, able to appreciate the ordinary pleasures of existence. But as always, the contentment is too illusory to be short-lived. It is interrupted by the arrival of the burly MacCreath, making small talk and attempting to sympathise with the tutor's 'ideals' (p. 50). Re-entering the marquee, the tutor is frightened by the 'ordinary and indifferent' crowds (p. 53). Losing control of the situation, he loses control of his vision, finding that the lips of a man he is talking to fail to synchronise with the sound of his words, 'like a talking-film that had gone slightly wrong' (p. 54).

The tutor now has a series of increasingly bizarre encounters with other people, including two potentially redemptive love scenes with young women. But each is revealed to be false in its promise of ordinary human happiness and finally, just at the moment where he decides that he is both 'insane' and a 'hopeless failure', he engages in a hallucinatory

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dialogue with himself (p. 110). Again, this dialogue begins with the question of vision. A few moments earlier he has seen a short, overcoated man walking away from the marquee and realised that the man has 'an extraordinary resemblance to himself' (p. 107). Now, surrendering to physical paralysis, he is told by his inner voice that 'you *are* walking'; looking at his feet he finds that 'It looks as though I am' (p. 111). The voice informs him that he is in fact his black-overcoated double and that he is now engaged in a 'perfectly sane' internal dialogue (p. 112). 'Stop thinking that what you see around you might be delusory', the voice commands; 'face up to the actuality' (p. 113). He must escape both his cinematic and his metaphorical visions and become aware of his 'real situation'.

Somewhat predictably, the way to do this is 'the way of the Internationalist Movement for Working-class Power' (p. 116). Once he links his lot with theirs, the tutor will acquire 'a new thinking and a new feeling', 'concerned first with the world outside you and only secondarily with yourself' (pp. 118–119). He will cease to be either spectator, camera, filmmaker or dreamer and become 'more vigorous, more normally human' (p. 119). At the end of the novel, he begins a walk to the newsagent where he will be able to find out about the Internationalist Workers' Movement. He has made the first step towards escaping 'the cloud of his irresponsible fantasies' and beginning to live (p. 135). Upward derides camera consciousness as the product of a bourgeois society that must be redeemed through a new sense of external reality. The tutor can only be human once he has stopped experimenting with cinematic modes of vision.

For Isherwood, this Communist transcendence of cinematic consciousness is naïve and impossible. He may have stated in his belated manifesto that he was only 'in the strangest mood at this particular moment', but in fact this passive alienation is the prevailing mood of the Berlin novels, and is presented as the dominant mood in fascist Germany. The narrator's experience of being a camera may be subjective, but it is constant nonetheless, and it is shared by many of the people around him. The inhabitants of Berlin are typified by the girl the narrator observes in Bobby's bar, ostensibly attractive but in fact 'tired and bored' with a dropping mouth.<sup>14</sup> 'It's so dull here', says Otto, on Rügen Island, bored by his querulous lover; 'if you were to go out into the street now and be run over by a taxi', Sally tells Christopher, 'I shouldn't really *care* a damn' (pp. 347, 307).

The 'I am a camera' opening to the 1930 Berlin Diary typifies this bored alienation. Isherwood begins the section with a description of the shabby, dirty streets in his district, before characterising himself as characterless: 'I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording not thinking' (p. 243). He records a man shaving and a woman washing her hair, before styling himself not as a cameraman but as an editor: 'some

day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed'. The implication here is that one day he will have to re-enter his world, interpreting and reacting to what he currently passively observes. For now, he wanders restlessly around his room, turning the street into a peep show as he peers through the slats of the blind to make quite sure that the whistling below 'is not – as I know very well it could not possibly be – for me' (p. 244). As a camera-wielding filmmaker, Isherwood has Upward's tutor's capacity to magnify and distort objects. The cinema, he would say in his 1938 autobiography, 'puts people under a microscope: you can stare at them, you can examine them as though they were insects'.<sup>15</sup> In the Berlin novels, the same is true of objects; in the 'I am a camera' scene, everything in his room appears 'abnormally heavy and dangerously sharp' (p. 244). Surveying 'a pair of candlesticks shaped like entwined serpents, an ashtray from which emerges the head of a crocodile', the narrator feels threatened by the apparent invincibility of the animated objects that surround him. He surmises that they 'will probably remain intact for thousands of years' before apathetically condemning them to the fate of being merely 'melted down for munitions in a war'.

Isherwood's restless inhuman camera consciousness places him at the mercy of malevolently distorted objects throughout the Berlin novels. In *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, as the clock strikes in the beginning of 1931, there is a disorientating crash from the band and

Like a car which has slowly, laboriously reached the summit of the mountain railway, we plunged headlong downwards into the New Year. (p. 30)

The car precedes and supersedes the humans it represents, so that they seem to be caught in a driverless vehicle, plunged against their will into an uncertain future. The immediate future is characterised by a plethora of disorientating objects.<sup>16</sup> The narrator is greeted by a dehumanised silhouetted head, spitting vigorously from a window (p. 31). Entering the house, 'one of the anaesthetic periods of [his] evening supervene[s]', with the passive construction denying agency, implying that an anaesthetised filter is pushed in front of his camera consciousness. The narrator's camera eye is now bruised and drunken. His glance

reel[s] about the room, picking out large or minute objects, a bowl of claret-cup in which floated an empty match-box, a broken bead from a necklace, a bust of Bismarck on the top of a Gothic dresser – holding them for an instant, then losing them again in general coloured chaos.



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Arthur Norris's head is included in the list of objects, 'its mouth open, the wig jammed down over its left eye'. At home in the disembodied world of cinema, the narrator happily wonders around 'looking for the body' before collapsing on a sofa, 'holding the upper half of a girl' (p. 32).

The scene at the sanatorium in *Goodbye to Berlin* echoes the party scene in *Mr Norris* in its bewildering cinematic intensity. The narrator is explicit in viewing this as another of his passive, 'I am a camera' days:

Everything which happened to me today was curiously without impact: my senses were muffled, insulated, functioning as if in a vivid dream. In this calm, white room, with its great windows looking out over the silent snowy pinewoods [...] these four women lived and moved. My eyes could explore every corner of their world. (p. 402)

As in Dos Passos, the literary experience of cinematic consciousness is multi-sensual. On first arriving, 'the smell of the warm, clean, antiseptic building' enters the narrator's passive nostrils 'like a breath of fear' (p. 401). His passivity is now a more explicitly political reaction than it was previously. The women, helpless in their poverty and sickness, are unable to control their own lives and the only appropriate response seems to be a corresponding helplessness. The scene turns into a ghostly parody of a party, with the visitors and patients dancing to the music of a gramophone. The narrator holds a shivering Erna in his arms in the dark and as he kisses her he feels 'no particular sensation of contact' (p. 406). Instead, it is merely part of the 'rather sinister symbolic dream which I seemed to have been dreaming throughout the day'.

As Christopher and Otto depart, the patients throng around them in the circle of light created by the anthropomorphised 'panting bus' (p. 408). Now that Isherwood is about to leave – about, he hopes, to be woken from his cinematic dream – the women take on the aspect of the already-dead figures of cinema. Their 'lit faces' are 'ghastly like ghosts against the black stems of the pines'. Aware that this is 'the climax of my dream: the instant of the nightmare in which it would end', the narrator is guiltily afraid that the women will attack them. But this is merely an illusion. The specters of cinema are not in fact there at all: 'they drew back – harmless, after all, as mere ghosts – into the darkness'.

The narrator's helplessness in the face of both suffering and antagonism reflects a more general passivity in Berlin. The strength of the city itself has been undermined by years of poverty, and it eats away the strength of its inhabitants. 'Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold: it is my own skeleton aching' (p. 464). This is a dull, passive ache, with the iron throbbing and shrinking and the plaster 'numb'. With the Nazi rise to power,

the whole city lies 'under an epidemic of discreet, infectious fear', which the narrator can feel, 'like influenza, in my bones' (p. 224). The violence of the Nazis is too sudden and determined to evoke much of a reaction from the already-passive populace. Watching three S.A. men stabbing a young man of seventeen, a group of dozens of onlookers are 'surprised, but not particularly shocked' (p. 482).

Ultimately, the narrator recognises his camera-eye persona as helpless. He cannot offer documentary accuracy, because in a world where individuals are at the mercy of the whims of a fascist state, documentary accuracy is impossible. What is it that happens to Rudi, and the hundreds of boys like him, who are taken away? The narrator can only speculate: 'perhaps at this very moment Rudi is being tortured to death' (p. 489). All he can offer is a portrayal of camera consciousness, with its apolitical tendency to separate the observing self from the unreal world. At the end of the novel, about to escape poverty and fascism in England, the narrator watches the trams and the people, observing that they have an air 'of curious familiarity', 'like a very good photograph' (p. 490). Looking back from the safety of his writing desk, he finds that he 'can't altogether believe that any of this really happened'.

Edward Upward would no doubt dismiss Isherwood's sense of life as a mediated photograph as a cloud of irresponsible fantasy. In the world of *Journey to the Border*, Isherwood's narrator would do well to join the Communist party he flirts with in *Mr Norris* and to force himself into active participation with his surroundings. But the politically active characters in the *Berlin Novels* are presented as corrupt or merely naïve. Mr Norris and the Communist leader Bayer are too concerned with power to be genuinely engaged in the societal reform; Otto and his fellow workers are too naïve to affect anything. The narrator's journalist friend Helen Pratt, rushing around, combatting indifference with 'vitality, success, and news', seems to miss the point of the human dramas she encounters (p. 230). In the end, she will achieve no more than the narrator in fighting against fascism.

For Isherwood, Hitler's Berlin is an unreal, mediated city. Walter Benjamin, in his *Work of Art* essay, published three years before *Goodbye to Berlin*, observed the tendency of the fascists to introduce aesthetics into political life, pressing film into 'the production of ritual values'.<sup>17</sup> According to Benjamin, 'mass movements, including war, constitute a form of human behaviour which particularly favours mechanical equipment'.<sup>18</sup> By the time that Isherwood published *Goodbye to Berlin*, Hitler had made clear his commitment to cinema and to cinematic spectacle. 'The masses need illusion', he said in 1938, observing the crowds flocking to the cinema, 'but not only in theatres or cinemas. They've had all they can take of the serious things in life'.<sup>19</sup> According to Paul Virilio, Hitler transformed Europe into a cinema screen, and his spectacular rallies

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were created foremost in order to be filmed.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Leni Riefenstahl and others were given unlimited budgets to film the Nazi rallies, and the rallies themselves were created as film sets. In 1937 Hitler's architect Albert Speer was loaned 130 anti-aircraft searchlights (almost the entire German strategic reserve) to create 'the feeling' of a 'vast room, with the beams serving as mighty pillars of infinitely high outer walls'.<sup>21</sup> 'The result', he said later,

was to make the architecture of the building emerge sharply outlined against the night, and at the same time to make it unreal.<sup>22</sup>

In this 1965 diary, Speer professed himself to be 'strangely stirred by the idea that the most successful architectural creation of my life is a chimera, an immaterial phenomenon'.<sup>23</sup> What is more, this immaterial 'cathedral of light' was created largely for the purposes of being filmed.

Isherwood evokes this sense of a chimeric world through his camera consciousness. Keith Williams has seen the 1930s texts as foreshadowing Jean Baudrillard's postmodern 'hyperreal', representing a 'transitional phase between Modernism and Postmodernism'.<sup>24</sup> For Baudrillard, in the postmodern world 'signs of the real' have been substituted for the real and everywhere 'the hyperrealism of simulation is translated by the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself'.<sup>25</sup> This is the world created by Hitler at his rallies and the world as experienced by Isherwood's narrator.

The hyperreality of 1930s Germany is also made explicit by Stephen Spender in his 1951 autobiography. Here he describes attending a party in Hamburg where a film is shown 'of another party just like the one at which I was now present and with some of the same people'.<sup>26</sup> 'It was as though', he says, making the hyperreality explicit, 'this Germany were a series of boxes fitting into one another, and all of them the same'. The experience becomes even more unnerving when the setting changes to a party in the very room Spender is in:

The camera passed through moving figures, surveying the room, occasionally pausing as if to examine someone's dress or figure. Boys and girls were lying on the ground embracing and then rolling away from one another to turn their faces towards the camera's lens. Willi lay stroking the head of a girl beside him. He turned, his face white in the light, and then he kissed her, the shadow first, and then his head, covering the light on her lips. I heard Willi laugh beside me.

In Spender's account, the party is not merely unreal because it is filmed. It is as though it happens in the first place only on film. Like Speer's pillars of

light, Willi's kiss takes place in the hyperreal. He kisses her shadow and then covers the light on her lips, enacting a ghostly, illusionary imitation of a kiss. The actual Willi's laughter becomes as unreal as the filmic Willi's gestures. And after the film is over, Spender sees the people around him as absent actors. They rise up 'with gestures as though they were yawning', with two or three couples dancing 'to no music in the half darkness' and then seeming 'to swoon away together' in the 'silence and shadow' of the corners of the room. For Spender as for Isherwood, the experience of life as cinema is appropriate in a country of simulacra. He states that with the rise of Nazism, he and Isherwood became 'ever more aware that the carefree personal lives of our friends were facades in front of the immense social chaos' (p. 131).

## II

### 'Eyes are another signature of Spanish death'

One answer to this sense of life as a hyperreal façade was war. For Benjamin, the enjoyment of war was a right-wing phenomenon, created by the aestheticisation of politics. But at the start of the Spanish Civil War, in 1936, left-wing writers saw war as providing the shock needed to overcome the anaestheticisation of their aestheticised world. 'When the fighting broke out on 18 July', Orwell wrote in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), 'it is probable that every anti-Fascist in Europe felt a thrill of hope'.<sup>27</sup> According to the editor and Auden cohort John Lehmann, 'every young writer began seriously to debate with himself how he could be of use, by joining the Brigade, or driving an ambulance'.<sup>28</sup> Signing up with the International Brigade, Auden announced gleefully that 'here is something I can do as a citizen and not as a writer'; 'I shall probably be a bloody bad soldier but how can I speak to/for them without becoming one'.<sup>29</sup> For a generation of male writers who had missed the heroism of World War I and were starting to doubt how even the redemptive power of cinema could save the day, war provided the great test of strength they had been looking for.<sup>30</sup> According to Cyril Connolly, the test was often successful. He looked back on the Spanish war as a time when many young writers experienced a crucial 'moment of conviction that [their] future is bound up with that of the working classes' and 'came back with their fear changed to love, isolation to union and indifference to action'.<sup>31</sup>

In fact for many writers, Spain was disappointing. Politically, it was less straightforward than it had looked at first. In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell recounts his gradual disillusionment with the Communist cause, which he discovered was too faction-ridden to be true to any grand ideals. Here he bemoans the 'unmistakable and horrible feeling of political

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rivalry and hatred', observing that 'it was above all things a political war' in which the soldier was a 'pawn in an enormous struggle that was being fought out between two political theories' (pp. 97, 188, 189). More fundamentally, the British media was so saturated by photographs of the atrocities committed by both sides in Spain that many writers found it hard to disentangle photography from actuality, or the sign of the real from the real itself. 'Here comes the dead war', Baudrillard would say in 1991, 'everything in *trompe l'oeil*'.<sup>32</sup> We now have virtual war, Zizek announced ten years later; like 'coffee without caffeine'.<sup>33</sup> Baudrillard's sense that deeds of the Gulf War were merely constructed for the sake of the media might apply just as well to either the Spanish Civil War or the World War II.<sup>34</sup>

In an essay about Picasso's *Guernica* written in 1938, Spender stated that Picasso's picture was not a response to personal horror but to 'horror reported in the newspapers, of which he has read accounts and perhaps seen photographs'.<sup>35</sup> 'This kind of second-hand experience', he adds, gleaned from the media, 'is one of the dominating realities of our time':

The many people who are not in direct contact with the disasters falling on civilisation live in a waking nightmare of second-hand experiences which in a way are more terrible than real experiences because the person overtaken by a disaster has at least a more limited vision than the camera's wide, cold, recording eye, and at least has no opportunity to imagine horrors worse than what he is seeing and experiencing.

In Spender's formulation, war mediated by camera consciousness is in fact worse than actual war. Where for Zizek, virtual war, like decaffeinated coffee, loses its sting, for Spender it only becomes more horrific – more warlike. According to Susan Sontag, the Spanish Civil War photographs were 'a means for making "real" (or "more real") matters that the privileged might prefer to ignore':

Look, the photographs say, *this* is what it's like. This is what war *does*. And *that*, that is what it does, too. War tears, rends. War rips open, eviscerate. War scorches. War dismembers. War *ruins*.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time as seeing the horrors of war as created by camera consciousness, Spender sees war itself as intensifying the existing camera consciousness through the proliferation of images. The 'second-hand experiences' are foisted upon potentially unwilling viewers who are thrust into a waking cinematic nightmare. Photography simultaneously renders war more horrifically real and turns it into a simulacrum of itself.

Keith Williams has labelled the Spanish War the 'first fully modern media conflict', in the sense that people away from the conflict learnt about events on the battlefield almost as they took place.<sup>37</sup> Owing to recent advances in photography, news photographers at the front line were able for the first time to take 36 photographs before needing to reload their cameras. The cameras themselves were more portable than ever before, making the photographer almost as mobile as the soldier, and subject to the same dangers.<sup>38</sup> 'I am the camera's eye', Vertov had announced in 1923;

I run before running soldiers – I throw myself down on my back – I rise with the aeroplanes – I fall and I fly at one with the bodies falling or rising in the air.<sup>39</sup>

By the time of the Spanish Civil War, the cameraman was able to realise Vertov's ambitions both in photography and film. A striking number of films were made in the early years of the Spanish war, several including footage of actual battles. As early as 1936, the Spanish government released *España*, written by Luis Buñuel and directed by Jean-Paul Le Chanois, using a montage of still photographs and documentary footage. In 1937, the American Herbert Kline, self-styled 'foreign correspondent of the screen', recorded the indignities of civilian life in Spain in *Heart of Spain*. Meanwhile, the Dutch Joris Ivens depicted the civilians' and soldiers' struggle to survive in *The Spanish Earth* (1937), written and narrated by Ernest Hemingway.<sup>40</sup>

*The Spanish Earth*, which combined documentary reportage with acted scenes, is a film that is consistently aware of the unprecedented intimacy of its own war footage. Near the beginning, Ivens cuts from the work in the village irrigating the fields to the front line itself. The viewer comes face to face with a soldier, who himself shrinks from such intimate contact with the camera, looking into a pair of binoculars. Hemingway informs us that 'man cannot act before the camera in the presence of death'. The act of killing may now be captured on film, but etiquette demands that the killers remain oblivious of the camera. This self-consciousness on the part of both the soldier and the filmmaker heightens the audience's awareness of the dangerous proximity of the film crew to the fighting that ensues. Shots are fired in the middle-distance before the camera pans out to reveal the smoky aftermath of the battle. Later, Ivens provides a series of close-ups of the faces of the soldiers who are taking aim.

The focus of the film is shared between the heroism of the government soldiers and the brutality of the rebel forces. It is unsparing in its depiction of horror, because this horror is the justification for the mobilisation of government troops. At one point, Hemingway announces that 'boys

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look for bits of shell fragments as they once gathered hailstones', emphasising the youthful innocence of the group of boys we see peering into the rubble. In the next shot, a group of boys are lying dead on the floor. 'So the next shell', Hemingway announces, 'finds them'. Shells are more dangerous playthings than hailstones. From this point onwards, Ivens piles on horror after horror. The German planes fly through the sky, wreaking the destruction of the villages and cities, and the camera reels jerkily from images of dead bodies to images of women flinging out their arms in agonised despair. This camera is as helpless in the face of devastation as Isherwood's literary camera eyes.

Meanwhile in London, newspapers and picture magazines competed to show the newest and most dramatic (most horrific) pictures of the war. Gone were the taboos preventing the publication of gory representations of injury and death. Justifying the publication of a series of photographs of hideously maimed children laid out under clinically numerical labels, the *Daily Worker* reminded its readers that 'these dead children are the cost of brutal, militaristic aggression against peaceful people', insisting on the necessity of printing 'this awful page'.<sup>41</sup> Like the propaganda films, these photographs did not merely depict the war. In a sense they were the war. They were weapons rather than mere representations; weapons used to incite the foreign involvement that was so crucial to both sides.<sup>42</sup>

In the Spanish Civil War, as in the Gulf War, the events of war were distorted by and even created for the media. George Orwell complained later that he had seen

great battles reported where there had been no fighting and complete silence where hundreds of men had been killed [...] and I saw newspapers in London retailing these lies and eager intellectuals building emotional superstructures over events that never happened.<sup>43</sup>

Orwell finds in *Homage to Catalonia* that newspapers rarely know or tell the truth about either side. And photographs, of course, are no more reliable than newspapers. Susan Sontag has pointed out that photographs are always paradoxically both an objective sign of the real and a reflection of subjective choice.<sup>44</sup> The subjective aspect is open to easy manipulation; once shot (in both senses), the socialist and fascist dead civilians look much the same.

Robert Capa's controversial *Death of a Loyalist Militiaman* or *The Falling Soldier* typifies the hyperreal aspect of the Spanish Civil War. Capa himself was a figure constructed for and by the media. Born Andre Friedmann, a Hungarian immigrant in France, he created the Hollywood-inspired persona of the rich American photographer Robert Capa

in order to get better-paid work. In the right place at the right time in the Spanish Civil War, Capa rose to fame and the persona stuck. It seems appropriate that the photograph which brought him widespread renown should itself prove to be constructed.

Capa's photograph of a soldier supposedly captured at the moment of death at the battle of Cerro Muriano was first published in the French magazine *Vu* in September 1936. Headed *Loyalist Militiaman at the Moment of Death*, the commentary described the soldiers running down the slope 'with lively step', when they were interrupted by a whistling bullet – 'a fratricidal bullet – and their blood was drunk by their native soil'.<sup>45</sup> Historians have since long debated the exact circumstances behind the *Death of a Loyalist Militiaman*. Most agree that the photograph was not taken at Cerro Muriano and some suggest that the soldier did not in fact die at all.<sup>46</sup> Capa's biographer Richard Whelan recently gave a comprehensive and thus a far convincing explanation for the photograph. According to Whelan, the soldiers were playing around with their rifles for Capa's benefit, hoping to help him manufacture some convincing shots. This was not an uncommon phenomenon in the Spanish war. In *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell recalls the photographing of some machine-gunners with their gun pointed directly towards him. 'Don't fire', he says, 'half-jokingly', as he focuses the camera, but the next moment there is 'a frightful roar' as bullets stream past his cheek (p. 36). Whelan speculates that Capa's soldiers 'indeed fired, and by doing so attracted the enemy's attention'.<sup>47</sup> Federico Borrell Garcia, the soldier in question, stood up so that Capa could photograph him from below. But just as Capa was about to press his shutter release, a hidden enemy machine gun opened fire.

If we accept Whelan's explanation, the photograph becomes all the more potent, straddling the real and the hyperreal. The face thrown back, the body about to hit the ground and the muscles flexed in a final moment of strength can still be horrific even if he died for the media and not for politics. And of course in this context, the media is politics. Borrell's death had a greater impact on the political stage through being propagated by the media. The photographer has entered the war not just as a would-be soldier, falling like Vertov with the soldier he frames. Instead he is a killer as well as a victim, initiating conflict. Capa later claimed to be haunted by the incident: 'then, suddenly it was the real thing. I didn't hear the firing – not at first'.<sup>48</sup> But in the logic of the mediated war, it was already real. The fascists were merely playing their part in a conflict set up by a photographer.

The British soldier-poet making his way to the Spanish Front was fully aware of his role in adding to the second-hand experiences of those at home. 'This is something I can do as a citizen and not as a writer',



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said Auden. But in fact it was as a writer that he contributed to the war. 'Spain' (1937), his strange, haunting poem about the inexorability of history, made a far more impact than his activities as an ambulance driver. And it is a poem that is ironically aware of its status as a second-hand artefact. 'Tomorrow', the poet announces, inscribing the soldier-poets in a naïve vision of war, 'for the young the poets exploding like bombs'.<sup>49</sup> The poets explode like the bombs – and like the photographers' flashbulbs (and victims). They have condoned 'the deliberate increase in the chances of death' and accepted guilt in the so-called 'necessary murder' only to remain writers before they are citizens.

'I have an appointment with a bullet', begins Spender's poem *War Photograph*, written from the point of view of Capa's dead soldier in 1937.<sup>50</sup> Spender figures the dead man as

that numeral which the sun regards,  
The flat and severed second on which time looks,  
My corpse a photograph taken by fate.

The already-dead aspect of photography lends an inevitability to the death. War, like cinema, is an inexorable machine. Saturated in images of war, many soldiers found it difficult to situate themselves in the here and now. It was hard to throw off the habit of experiencing events second-hand and begin to make history for themselves. According to Clausewitz, the new soldier entering the battlefield always 'for a moment still thinks he is at a show'.<sup>51</sup> He then learns to appreciate the reality of his surroundings, although he does well to continue to some extent to see war as a spectacle, because it will help him to believe he will come out alive. Paul Virilio writes that 'to be a survivor is to remain both actor and spectator of a living cinema'.<sup>52</sup> For Virilio, cinema is a necessary aspect of war.

'Now we can walk into the picture easily', Bernard Gutteridge began his poem 'Spanish Earth' (1939), whose title was taken from Joris Ivens's film.<sup>53</sup> Gutteridge sees the soldier's excitement entering the battlefield as inseparable from the actor's excitement entering the filmset. He walks into the picture

To be the unknown hero and the death;  
We who have watched these things as stunts  
And held our breath.

Gutteridge makes explicit the link between the deathly nature of cinema and cinematic death:

Eyes are another signature of Spanish death.  
This evening in the cinema will kill  
This man we watch direct his troops;  
A man whose eyes are still  
Searching the landscape for his dying countrymen  
In buildings burning fast as celluloid[.]

The cinema here is both a metaphor and an actuality. Night after night, the cinema audience watches the man directing his troops, knowing that he will die – that in effect he is already dead, or at least absent. At the same time, entering the cinema that is the battlefield, Gutteridge knows that the man will die because he has seen the scene, or scenes like it, on film, and has learnt what to expect. War has at last caught up with cinema. The buildings burn as fast as they do on film; as fast as the highly flammable film-stock itself. Gutteridge ends the poem with the inevitable pun, never far away in the Spanish Civil War. 'Perhaps we will be killed', he muses; 'The shooting never stops'. If the photographer is Robert Capa, the two shots are the same.

For the socialist writer John Sommerfield, arriving in Spain, the mediated, cinematic aspect of the Spanish Civil War was dangerous for the soldier. In his *Volunteer in Spain* (1937), he first glimpses the war as a spectacle, reflected in the 'sea of faces and waving hands' of the audiences who welcome the soldiers to Spain.<sup>54</sup> On the train to war, he has an 'unreal' vision of a crowd of 'peasant dressed in their best clothes', illuminated by the headlights of a semi-circle of motor-lorries which form 'a brilliantly lit stage'. This scene, at once cinematic and theatrical, takes place in a ghostly past-present, 'like something remembered from a dream'. For Sommerfield, the war itself is best glimpsed in the eyes of the soldiers in the lorries which roar by them, returning from the front: 'their eyes had seen it, and mostly they had known death and retreat' (p. 45).

When they finally arrive at the front, Sommerfield welcomes the moment 'long expected, anticipated in dreams' (p. 69). His sense of the war now becomes explicitly theatrical. These soldiers are at last 'the main actors in the play', but the drama has gone on too long (p. 91). For the cheering audiences,

the illusion didn't work; they were like people who go to the theatre to forget some calamity in their own lives, and for whom the illusion doesn't work because however much they might be caught up in the action of the play they are remembering all the time at the back of

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their minds that when the last curtain descends they will have to go out into a cold night full of unescapable grief.

In Sommerfield's account, the problem with experiencing the war as mediated and illusionary is that it ignores the real suffering of the civilians on whose behalf they are fighting. These civilians, who have been taken in by the spectacle themselves, are now feeling that 'their play [is] nearly over, the reality of death and destruction and terror would soon begin'.

Sommerfield succeeds in overcoming the cinematic detachment described by Gutteridge. Awakened by the scream of a shell, he at first 'picture[s] its flight in the air, and death' (p. 96). But rushing out to fight he is filled with 'an extraordinary strength and lightness and joy' (p. 97). Quickly, he learns the realities of 'the cold and the danger, the firing in the night, the expressions on the face of the dead' (p. 103). Baudrillard, Virilio and Zizek have suggested that the experience of being bombed from the air has rendered war inevitably hyperreal. When the aggressors are intangible, they might as well be invented. Sommerfield pre-emptively refutes their arguments, insisting that

It made no difference that the perils that beset us were the product of a scientific age, that men had learned to fly so that our enemy could kill us from a thousand feet above our heads, that the poetry of mathematics had made it possible for him to direct death at us invisibly from behind the flanks of hills five miles away [...] In defending the advance of mankind we lived like men of the Stone Age.

The daily conditions of war, the new knowledge of 'the various ways of broken flesh' and of the 'precarious impermanence' of their own lives, prevent warfare from seeming unreal, however mechanised and impersonal it may have become (pp. 109, 110).

### III

#### 'I am not a camera'

In 2004 Susan Sontag chastised writers like Baudrillard and Zizek who had accepted 'the death of reality':

To speak of reality becoming a spectacle is a breath-taking provincialism. It universalises the viewing habits of a small, educated population living in the rich parts of the world, where news has been converted into entertainment [...] It assumes that everyone is a spectator. It suggests, perversely, unseriously, that there is no real

suffering in the world. But it is absurd to identify the world with those zones in the well-off countries where people have the dubious privilege of being spectators [...] just as it is absurd to generalise about the ability to respond to the sufferings of others on the basis of the mind-set of those consumers of news who know nothing as first hand about war and massive injustice or terror.<sup>55</sup>

For Sontag, to see war as taking place in the hyperreal is to ignore the 'Stone Age' aspects of suffering experienced by Sommerfield. Sontag is right to reprimand Baudrillard. His position, like Spender's in the *Guernica* essay, remains that of the privileged voyeur who is too engrossed in the interestingness of voyeurism to make the imaginative leap that will render suffering as suffering. But in fact Baudrillard's own sense of the unreal side of contemporary warfare stems not only from its hyperreal, mediated nature, but from its unfairness. In 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place', he is partly making the conventional liberal argument that the Gulf War was unfair because it was 'won in advance' and 'we will never know what an Iraqi taking part with a chance of fighting would have been like'.<sup>56</sup> By using this moral argument, Baudrillard to some extent contradicts his own more radical sense of virtual reality and virtual war. It is clear that Baudrillard, like Sontag, and like Sommerfield or Orwell, ultimately believes that there is a point where suffering breaks through the film of cinematic consciousness, forcing an engagement with the real.

'I am Not a Camera', Auden would announce in the title of a poem in 1969; 'It is very rude to take close-ups [...] lovers, approaching to kiss,/ instinctively shut their eyes'.<sup>57</sup> By then it had become easier to dismiss the camera consciousness of the 1930s, although the world was as hyperreal and mediated as ever. But at the time, it was Auden, more than Isherwood or Spender, who was always to be found behind the lens of the camera; Auden who lauded photography as '*the* democratic art' and insisted that you had to take a lot of photographs 'to make an effect'.<sup>58</sup> 'I walk among them taking photographs', he wrote in a 1937 letter from Iceland to R.H.S. Crossman;

let the camera's eye record it:

Groups in confabulation on the grass[.]<sup>59</sup>

Here the camera enables a specificity; he can see the figures from Iceland's sagas as clearly as 'The wraps of cellophane' which flit 'through the glass' of his lens. This specificity is set against 'the word of fate' and the forces of law and order. In contemplating fate, people forget 'The rusting apple core we're clutching still'. Photography is a way to remember it. Later Louis

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MacNeice, in his persona as Hetty, mocks Maisie/Auden 'who fancies herself with a camera' and goes round 'taking art shots of people through each others legs'.<sup>60</sup>

Yet even in Iceland, Auden, a keen photographer though he may be, himself mocks both the objective documentarist and the subjective camera consciousness. In his 1930 'Consider this and in our time', Auden had half adopted and half derided the panoptic perspective of the 'hawk' or the 'helmeted airman'.<sup>61</sup> As in the letter to Crossman, he delights here in observing the 'cigarette-end smouldering on a border'. But in using the airman and not the cameraman, he makes clear the antagonistic aspect of the panoptic perspective, which is used for surveillance and not just for objective observation. The hawk or helmeted airman metamorphoses into the 'supreme Antagonist', possessed of camera-like powers to roam around, observing, interrogating and propagating rumour. The Antagonist induces neuroticism through surveillance as everywhere people are 'Seized with immeasurable neurotic dread'.

Now, offering his former GPO film colleague William Coldstream 'a little donnish experiment in objective narrative', Auden easily reveals the documentary filmmaker to be pompous and false:

Let me pretend that I'm the impersonal eye of the camera  
Sent out by God to shoot on location [. . .]  
The whole place was slippery with filth – with guts and decaying  
flesh –  
like an artist's palette.<sup>62</sup>

The poet intrudes on the camera, forcing a moral reaction to the guts and decaying flesh and then suggesting that the painting is more appropriate than photography in describing the visual aspect of the scene. Going through his own photographs as though they are stills in a film, Auden finds that they are inaccurate: 'Too confused to show much'. Having done with 'perceiving', Auden moves on to 'telling', providing the external, personal details that characterise Isherwood's camera eye. These too are confused; he ends up listing a jumble of trivia and personal gossip. Auden finds that both language and image are inadequate in describing the 'purely subjective feelings, /the heart-felt exultations and the short despairs'. Instead, they 'Require a musician'. 'The novelist has one way of stating experience', he says, 'the film director another'; 'each man to his medium'.

As the epigraph to 'I am Not a Camera', Auden quotes the German philosopher Eugen Rosenstock-Huessey's statement that 'photographic

life is always either trivial or already sterilised'. Both objections are already clear in his letter to Coldstream. Enthusiastic photographer though he may be, film is not his medium. As he would put it in his 1949 poem, 'Memorial for the City', 'The eyes of the crow and the eye of the camera open/Onto Homer's world, not ours'. The crow and the camera magnify earth, 'the abiding/Mother of gods and men' but only notice the men themselves in passing. They 'See as honestly as they know how, but they lie'.<sup>63</sup> In mocking the camera-eye, Auden joins Upward and Sommerfield in suggesting that it is not enough just to observe, even if, like Isherwood, one observes oneself in the process of observing. For Isherwood, Allen or Hamilton, on the other hand, the writer has no choice; it is precisely the already sterilised or trivial aspect of the world that they want to record. These writers see the politics of the 1930s as creating a detachment best expressed through the dominant metaphor of the camera. For Spender and Gutteridge, even war has become a mediated, second-hand experience.

Like the argument between Baudrillard and Sontag, the 1930s argument goes round in circles. Is it politically irresponsible to embrace the hyperreal, or merely politically accurate? When the objective camera vision is the dominant subjective mode, how can you distinguish between subject and object, self and world, vision and action? It is easy to end up in a hall of mirrors – the boxes within boxes, or screens within screens, which Spender experienced in Berlin. And this hall of mirrors operates both within politics and outside it. Like Speer's chimeric buildings, which reconstitute architecture as light, the political itself has been redefined in terms of cinema.

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## Notes

- 1 Stephen Spender, *World Within World*, introduction by John Bayley (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p. 145.
- 2 For a discussion of cinema as an absent art see David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 24. Trotter quotes Christian Metz remarking that in the theatre the world viewed (the 'given') is 'physically present, in the same space as the spectator'; whereas the cinema only ever offers the given 'in effigy, inaccessible from the outset, in a primordial elsewhere'.
- 3 Robert Wennersten, 'An Interview with Christopher Isherwood', quoted in Stephen Wade, *Christopher Isherwood* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 12–13.
- 4 For a discussion of the objective/subjective politics of Isherwood's camera-eye see Kay Ferres, *Christopher Isherwood, a World in Evening* (San Bernardino:

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- The Borgo Press, 1994), pp. 15, 55; Keith Williams, *British Writers and the Media, 1930–45* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 149; Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse, Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 431.
- 5 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 226.
  - 6 Michael North, *Camera Works: Photography and the Twentieth-century Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 143
  - 7 John Dos Passos, *The Major Nonfictional Prose*, edited by Donald Pizer (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), p. 283; North, *Camera Works*, p. 143.
  - 8 John Dos Passos, *USA* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 39, 89. For a discussion of the ‘negotiation’ between objectivity and subjectivity in the camera eye sections, see David Seed, *Cinematic Fictions* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), pp. 140–141.
  - 9 Dos Passos, *Major Nonfictional Prose*, p. 247.
  - 10 See North, *Camera Works*, p. 146.
  - 11 For a discussion of these experiments in vision, see Rod Mengham, ‘The Thirties: Politics, Authority, Perspective’ in Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (eds), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-century English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 367–368. Mengham finds that the tutor misses the ‘reassuringly human angle of vision, which the text reaches for but never achieves – the point of view is one that never establishes a proper perspective’ (p. 367).
  - 12 Edward Upward, *Journey to the Border*, introduction by Stephen Spender (London: Enitharmon Press, 1994), p. 12. Subsequent references are incorporated in the text.
  - 13 Walter Benjamin, speech to the Institute for Fascism in Paris, 1934, quoted in Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 170.
  - 14 Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Novels* (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 257. Subsequent references are incorporated in the text.
  - 15 Christopher Isherwood, *Lions and Shadows, an Education in the Twenties* (London: Four Square Books, 1953), p. 53.
  - 16 See Paul Piazza for a discussion of the disorientating effect of the description of the New Year’s Eve party (Paul Piazza, *Christopher Isherwood, Myth and Anti-Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 117).
  - 17 Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, 1936, in *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, edited with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 240.
  - 18 Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art’, p. 251.
  - 19 Quoted in Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, translated by Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989), p. 53.
  - 20 Virilio, *War and Cinema*, p. 53.

- 21 Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (London: Sphere Books Limited, 1971), p. 101.
- 22 Albert Speer, *Spandau, the Secret Diaries*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (London: Collins, 1976), p. 428.
- 23 Speer, *Spandau*, p. 428.
- 24 Williams, *British Writers*, p. 1.
- 25 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 2, 23. In 'Symbolic Exchange and Death' (1976), Baudrillard suggests that the real is '*that for which it is possible to provide an equivalent representation*' in the modern world and that 'reality itself founders in hyperrealism, the meticulous reduplication of the real, preferably through another, reproductive medium, such as photography'. Here he states that 'today, *reality itself is hyperrealistic*'. (In Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, edited by Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 145, 144, 146).
- 26 Spender, *World Within World*, p. 111.
- 27 George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, introduction by Julian Symons (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 189. Subsequent references are incorporated in the text.
- 28 John Lehmann, *The Whispering Gallery* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1955), p. 274.
- 29 'Bourgeois' quoted in Edward Mendelson, *Early Auden* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), p. 19; comments about Spain are in two letters to E.R. Dodds, quoted in Mendelson, p. 195.
- 30 For the need for a heroic 'Test' and the promise of Spain see Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 171, 421.
- 31 Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise* (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1973), pp. 102–103.
- 32 Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, translated by Paul Patton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 23, 62.
- 33 Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real, Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 10.
- 34 Baudrillard noted in particular that 'The Iraqis blow up civilian buildings in order to give the impression of a dirty war' while 'The Americans disguise satellite information to give the impression of a clean war' (Baudrillard, *The Gulf War*, p. 62).
- 35 Cunningham, *British Writers*, p. 419. This poem appears in a section in Cunningham's Spanish Civil War anthology entitled 'photogenic war' (see Valentine Cunningham, editor, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 409–420).
- 36 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), pp. 6, 7.
- 37 Williams, *British Writers*, p. 3.
- 38 See Christopher Phillips, introduction to Richard Whelan, *This is War, Robert Capa at Work* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2007), p. 9.



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- 39 Dziga Vertov, 'The Council of Three', 1923, in Annette Michelson (ed.), *Kino-Eye, the Writings of Dziga Vertov*, translated by Kevin O'Brien (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 17.
- 40 For a discussion of Hemingway's role in the film, which has often been exaggerated, see Seed, *Cinematic Fictions*, pp. 179–180.
- 41 *Daily Worker*, 12 November 1936, p. 5. For a discussion of the breaking of taboos in the press see Brothers, *War and Photography*, p. 175.
- 42 See Brothers, *War and Photography*, p. 2.
- 43 George Orwell, 'Looking Back on the Spanish Civil War', 1942, in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, editors, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (London: Penguin, 1970), Vol. 2, pp. 294–295.
- 44 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 23.
- 45 Quoted Whelan, *This is War*, p. 55 (translation his).
- 46 See Whelan, *This is War*, p. 72.
- 47 Whelan, *This is War*, p. 75.
- 48 Quoted Whelan, *This is War*, p. 73.
- 49 Auden, 'Spain', 1937, in Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, pp. 97–100.
- 50 Stephen Spender, 'War Photograph', 1937, in Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, p. 413. For a discussion of photography in Spender's poem see Stan Smith, "'What the dawn will bring to light": Credulity and Commitment in the Ideological Construction of *Spain*, in Tim Kendall, *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish Poetry*, pp. 255–256.
- 51 Clausewitz.
- 52 Virilio, *War and Cinema*, p. 48.
- 53 Bernard Gutteridge, 'Spanish Earth', 1939, in Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, p. 412.
- 54 John Sommerfield, *Volunteer in Spain* (London: Lawrence & Wishart), 1937, p. 28. Subsequent references are incorporated in the text.
- 55 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, pp. 98–99.
- 56 Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, p. 61.
- 57 W.H. Auden, 'I am Not a Camera', in *Collected Poems*, pp. 840–841.
- 58 W.H. Auden, Letter to Erika Mann, in W.H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), p. 137.
- 59 W.H. Auden, Letter to R.H. S. Crossman, *Letters from Iceland*, p. 91.
- 60 Louis MacNeice, Hetty to Nancy, *Letters from Iceland*, p. 173.
- 61 W.H. Auden, 'Consider This and in Our Time', 1930, in *Collected Poems*, edited by Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1994), pp. 61–62.
- 62 W.H. Auden, Letter to William Coldstream, *Letters from Iceland*, pp. 223–224.
- 63 W.H. Auden, 'Memorial for the City', 1949, in *Collected Poems*, pp. 591, 592.