

CHAPTER ONE



Introduction

The reality of any hegemony in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive.

—Williams, 1977, 113

This book intends to deal with a specific feature of British cinema from 1940 through 1955, namely, representations of desire during a historical period of turbulent change. It was an era that saw Britain's involvement in the Second World War, social changes leading to the landslide victory of the postwar Labour government, succeeding years of hope and disillusionment, the return of the Conservative Party to power in 1951, and (despite certain material advances) a rigid return to status quo patterns of thought. It is a depressingly familiar picture. Both American and British society have equally suffered from decades of right-wing reaction reinforced by opposition parties initially pledged to reverse those trends.

Despite changes in gender relationships over the past fifty years, men and women still find themselves dominated by the *Homo economicus* model sketched by classical Marxism over a century ago. Change has occurred but also regression. Ironically a supposedly anachronistic nineteenth-century model is more relevant today in understanding such

dilemmas. We live in an era characterized less by thirties totalitarianism and more by consensual "everyday Fascism" as R. W. Fassbinder once put it. Market values directly responsible for the horrors of the thirties again rule in an indirectly ideologically oppressive manner. Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony is now particularly useful for examining relevant cinematic depictions of human relationships indirectly influenced by prevailing social structures.

Structures of Desire concentrates upon certain personal representations within one era of British cinema, an era influenced by hopes for a better world, the manufacturing of a "People's War" ideology, conservative retrenchment, and prevailing consensus politics before the right-wing hegemonic and political victory of Thatcherism in 1979. Although the current era has seen the collapse of the Soviet Union and the discrediting of socialism as practiced in both East and West, this is not "The End of History" despite claims of right-wing apologists. While classical Marxism needs major restructuring toward the different demands of a new century, one aspect of its tradition does not: the legacy of Antonio Gramsci. His concept of hegemony involved a willed, noncoercive consent to a dominant oppressive order which need not be permanent. Since cinema forms an inherent part of a cultural production manufacturing consent, Gramsci's ideas are crucial not only for understanding cultural and emotional realms often ignored by classical Marxism but also for tracing the peculiarities of specific phenomena within the 1940–1955 period of British cinema. These phenomena involve representations of human relations that either struggle against or passively submit to contemporary prevailing ideological norms.

Both *Cahiers du Cinema* and *Movie* damned British cinema as a national institution lacking the dynamic vitality of its American counterpart. While true in certain formal and aesthetic senses, the judgment tended to ignore other aspects worthy of attention such as cultural, ideological, and oppositional alternatives to dominant class and sexual patterns of behavior. Recent anthologies such as *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism* and *Re-Viewing British Cinema, 1900–1992: Essays and Interviews*, edited by Lester Friedman and Wheeler Winston Dixon respectively, and studies such as Antonia Lant's *Blackout: Reinventing Women for British Wartime Cinema*, Andrew Higson's *Waving the Flag*, Sue Harper's *British Costume Melodrama*, and Pam Cook's *Fashioning the Nation* reveal British cinema as containing more complex cultural representations than previously realized. While British cinema may lack the

types of artistic innovations common to American, French, and German national cinemas, it does contain significant material on cultural, historical, and political levels. British cinema during 1940–1955 is a revealing object of study when approached in terms of the flexible critical ideas associated with Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams rather than reductionist concepts defining the cinema as an ideological tool designed to captivate audiences by the deliberate use of false consciousness. In *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930–1960* and her later work, Marcia Landy has already begun this process of interrogation.

British cinema reveals tensions, contradictions, and recuperations as do other national cinemas. It is not to be defined exclusively within rigid terms of class, race, and sexual representations nor under monolithic definitions of realism versus fantasy. The 1940–1955 period is a worthy subject for hegemonic exploration. Wartime era and postwar society experienced a temporary erosion of Britain's rigid class and social structures until recuperation began in the early fifties. This period parallels tensions undergone in Western society after World War I when the fall of the old order seemed to promise new political and cultural movements until coercive and ideologically recuperative powers again gained control. The post-World War II situation was not as dynamic and contradictory as in the aftermath of the "war to end all wars." No major radical political movements or cultural forces emerged to challenge the status quo, but tensions did exist and appear within certain cinematic representations. If we wonder today about what happened to sixties hopes and challenges, the same applies to aspirations common to British wartime society which were later savaged by the right-wing hegemonic victories of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Tony Blair in 1997. This phenomenon also affected representations of human relationships in certain films. Active state intervention did not brutally manipulate particular representations. Consensual operations involving the oppressed contributing to their own domination often explain the poverty of desire characterizing certain cinematic depictions of human relationships. Gramsci's philosophy explains such operations.

During his ten-year incarceration in Fascist Italy, Gramsci had plenty of time to consider why totalitarian ideas achieved victory in his country after the brief hopes and radical directions following World War I. The State had won not by direct coercion but by the willing consent of a population unsympathetic to new ideas. In his political and cultural writings, Gramsci moved away from many classical Marxist definitions of

state control toward a concept of hegemony including cultural ideas that had never before received explicit recognition. As Carl Boggs points out, Gramsci's work emphasized certain cultural and ideological dimensions of class and political struggle. Some immanent processes exist within capitalism resulting in the majority internalizing dominant ideological and cultural values in a manner conflicting with their actual personal and political values.

For Gramsci the primary focus was not the objective determinants of crisis but rather the subjective responses to it; not simply a structural analysis of political economy but comprehension of the dynamics of mass consciousness; not the institutional engineering required for the conquest and management of state power, but the ideological-cultural preparation for a new type of society. (x)

This hegemonic operation involving the battle of ideas was not dogmatically monolithic. It dialectically understood specific functions of history and politics in a dynamically vital manner. As Gramsci (1985) noted, "A given socio-historical moment is never homogenous; on the contrary, it is rich in contradictions. It acquires a 'personality' and is a 'moment' of development in that a certain fundamental activity of life prevails over others and represents a historical 'peak': but this presupposes a hierarchy, a contest, a struggle" (93). Robert Bocock also notes the variable nature of a hegemonic process where some historical situations see partial control by the dominant class in some spheres but not in others.

To suppose otherwise is to fail to distinguish the analytical model of hegemony from the analysis of concrete cases. In other words, the degree of hegemonic leadership which is successfully provided by a ruling group or alliance, can vary from a relatively fully integrated situation, at one end of the continuum, in which all classes and groups give their consent to the leading hegemonic arrangements in the economy and in philosophy and morals, through to a situation in which there is an almost total lack of leadership being provided by the ruling group outside of the upper class. (94)

Hegemony can encompass the realms of popular culture and desire as well as politics and ideology. British cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1977) developed Gramsci's dynamic definition of the hege-

monic process when he stated that rather than being seen in terms of manipulation or indoctrination, hegemony is really “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping of perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming” (110).

Williams lived through a formative period, experiencing the changing nature of British society during the thirties and forties. Born into a working-class family, a member of the Communist Party during his youth, he went to the ivory tower of Cambridge, interrupted his studies during World War II, and worked in adult education before receiving a lectureship in his alma mater. He became one of the most important cultural theorists in Britain, affirming the true values of socialism throughout his life. His suspicions of the British Labour Party have received confirmation with the emergence of Tony Blair’s right-wing “New Labour” and its manipulative spindoctors. Williams recognized the crippling dogmatism within certain British and European definitions of Marxism and championed the ideas of Lucien Goldman and Gramsci. His famous ‘structures of feeling’ concept is a notoriously elusive definition, perhaps deliberately so. It avoids the danger of falling into certain reductive sterile definitions of classical Marxism. But it also champions important humanistic and personal dimensions within Gramsci’s cultural and political writings. Deeply affected by his working-class roots as well as contributing to the important field of British adult and extramural education (now gutted under Thatcherism), Williams recognized the crucially intertwined roles of personal feelings and popular culture. His ‘structures of feeling’ concept is applicable both in defining certain popular levels of desire attracting audiences to cinematic representations as well as leading toward interrogating these very practices.

Cinema is as much a social form of dramatic representation as the theater. If the personal is political, the cultural realm may also reproduce ideological values. Robert S. Dombroski notes the compatibility of Gramsci’s early theatrical criticism with his later work as a political journalist and emphasizes his awareness of the operations of the entertainment industry. “He recognizes the power of the stage to manipulate minds by expressing the values of those who control society, but is also mindful of its potential to challenge and subvert those values” (24). Although Gramsci scorned trivial representations in contrast to certain contemporary

postmodernist totalizing celebrations of popular culture, he critically aimed toward enlarging the cultural perspectives of his readers "by showing them how dramatic art elicits reflection on their social and human condition" (Dombroski, 35). Rather than distinguishing high from low culture and condemning the latter as false consciousness, Gramsci recognized the importance of understanding the pleasurable operations of popular culture.

Subaltern social groups experience as satisfying and fulfilling fictions what from another point of view may seem uninspiring, banal, and contradictory. They experience it from the inside, in terms of their own social and material existence, perceiving in the artifact a combination of cultural elements through which they identify themselves, recognize the limitations of their historical existence, and fantasize solutions. (Dombroski, 114)

These insights equally apply to a British cinema whose artistic status has never been officially recognized. They also call into question officially discursive hierarchical divisions separating realism from fantasy and melodrama. Any examination of Gainsborough melodrama productions need not imply championship of their supposedly undiscovered aesthetic values. It rather suggests recognizing the validity of their cultural appeal to particular audiences within a specific social and historical formation. Aimed at working-class, female audiences, the melodramas belong to a Gramscian popular cultural realm that (if not embryonically Marxist) contain features that *may* oppose dominant cultural patterns. By interrogating these and similar works, some films might become "part of that transformational process of which a Marxist praxis is object and model," displaying a potentially subversive arena for cultural politics (Dombroski, 116). Like most representations, films contain contradictory positive and negative features. Some films may contain potentially powerful counter-hegemonic elements. Others may simply reinforce the dominant ideology. Audiences may accept or reject certain representations.

This is important in terms of recognizing the role of human agency in producing change as opposed to the prison house of Althusserian and poststructuralist ideas, which see subjects as inmates constituted by structures and discourses over which they have no control. Although theorists such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe suggest returning to Gramsci to counter this monolithic conception, they ignore the very Marxism con-



FIGURE 1. The celebration of sensual desire. Jean Kent as Rosal in *Caravan*.

tained within his works. It was neither dogmatically scientific nor subjectively humanist but involved a philosophy of praxis containing a “‘materialism’ perfected by the work of speculative philosophy itself and fused with humanism” (Gramsci, 1971, 371). Despite Laclau and Mouffe’s poststructuralist objections against a supposedly rigid classical Marxist model influencing the thinker, Gramsci acknowledged that important macrolevels of economics, politics, and culture are never deterministic. Laclau and Mouffe not only deny the relevance of socialism as an agency for human freedom but also fall into a dogmatic position by ignoring the role of economic and ideological factors attempting to condition subjectivity within their privileged minority activist microlevel forces.

Although subjective factors exist in an area Mas’ud Zavarzadeh defines as “ludic postmodernism,” they also occupy an important position in Gramsci’s particular definition of a Marxism that contradicts later misreadings by Laclau and Mouffe. Noting Gramsci’s relevance to later developments in critical theory, Renate Holub recognizes that culture industries such as the cinema both manufacture and negotiate subjectivity within given historical periods. “What also emerges from Gramsci’s pages is the notion of a culture industry, of the production and manipulation of needs and desires, of consuming subjects that are unable to define their needs, subjected to the powers that manipulate the public into acceptance of a static status quo” (15). Although the younger Gramsci rejected cinema in his earlier writings, he revised his ideas in 1930 and noted its potential for producing counterhegemonic meanings capable of challenging the status quo. Holub (46) notes Gramsci’s affinities to Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht here. Classical Marxism saw literature and art as embodying tensions and contradictions inherent within superstructural areas relating to the material forces of society. But problems lay in defining exactly how culture functioned. Like Georgy Lukacs, Gramsci viewed art as a territory where certain values are promoted and others silenced and marginalized. He investigated the nature of these values whether progressive or regressive (Holub, 46). By taking the popular realm more seriously than his predecessors and contemporaries, Gramsci viewed its adherents (whether majority or minority) as subjected to domination, discrimination, marginalization, and contempt, whenever they consented to their own subjugation. However, as Holub continues:

the popular creative spirit is capable of producing an alternative or counter-cultural consciousness to the predominant or high culture,

capable of rupturing the silence which is imposed. The popular creative spirit is the object of desire of hegemony not because it lacks desire, but because it is, as collective and individual, subject of desire itself, human beings that desire something more than they have and are. (55)

This recognition is important. It relates desire to collective operations within social and historical eras rather than confining it to individualist terrains of Freudian analysis. Why do certain cinematic representations occur within particular historical eras that are not entirely the result of individual producers or audiences? Gramsci took popular cultural representations of desire and fantasy seriously and related them to wider issues within society.

Understanding why people overwhelmingly chose to read certain texts, including kitsch, and why they refused to read other texts, even nationally monumental texts . . . meant for him to understand the structure of their fantasies and desires; and addressing that structure with a different, more democratic content, would contribute to changes in consciousness, would contribute to what he called the moral reform. (Holub, 66)

Leaving aside the utopian aspects of this belief, it is important to note that Gramsci avoided any cultural hegemonic traps assiduously guarding boundaries of "good taste" against officially defined "other" and "inferior" representations. By viewing certain films within their wider social and historical contexts, particular representations may possibly reveal complex articulations of a changing national consciousness. This does not mean seeing productions as direct social representations but viewing them in terms of their dynamic embodiment of complex and contradictory hegemonic and counterhegemonic features. As Holub (80) notes in a definition applicable to cinema, "The play or work of art is viewed not so much in terms of its origins as in terms of the social dynamics it elicits and resists, unravels and silences, affirms and denies, reveals and conceals, at the various moments of its reception."

Williams's definitions of dominant, residual, and emergent cultural ideas help in analyzing such contradictions and tensions. The dominant involves hegemonic control of the status quo, which Gramsci never regarded as monolithic. It may be threatened at any time. The residual is

a concept applicable to the popularity of Gainsborough melodramas set in imaginary historical worlds. As Williams (1977, 122) points out, any culture has

available elements of its past, but their place in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly variable. . . . The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue—cultural as well as social—of some previous social and cultural institution or formation.

A dialectical process of fusion and negotiation may occur between dominant and residual meanings. The former's influence on the latter involves "the incorporation of the actively residual—by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion—that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident" (Williams, 1977, 123). This particularly applies to Gainsborough melodramatic devices. Although they formally compete with British realist cinematic conventions and feature strong heroines, the films often restore ideological closure in their various conclusions. The closing shot of *The Man in Grey* (1943) repeats an earlier camera angle used in a past sequence when Clarissa Rohan comments, "Isn't it a lovely day" before leaving Swinton Rokeby behind on the steps and mounting her horse. The Regency scene involves the dominance of class structures inhibiting their romantic union. But the concluding scene is set in wartime Britain with the descendants of Clarissa and Rokeby in uniform. They leave the Rohan mansion for the last time. Clarissa again repeats the comment of her aristocratic predecessor. However, she and Peter Rokeby now descend the steps. The camera movement follows them, repeating its past trajectory. But it continues the earlier overhead panning shot by swinging to the left and following the lovers as they run to catch a more egalitarian form of transport—a double-decker bus.

This is a typical happy ending. But it is residual in nature. The individual Regency lovers are finally reunited in the bodies of their descendants within a "People's War" conclusion. But certain features are

excluded. Neither the marquis of Rohan nor Hester appear in the present. They have left no progeny to contaminate an optimistic brave new post-war world envisaged by the People's War ideology. The attraction of costume appealing to female audiences is also gone. Clarissa and Rokeby wear sober service uniforms. Rokeby's former handsome Regency features are now blurred by a moustache. The past becomes renegotiated within dominant mechanisms of the present. Finally, the union occurs not through some transcendental romantic act of karma but by Rokeby's ancestor returning to his island off the coast of Jamaica and quelling a slave revolt inspired by the French. Rokeby's future return depends on his forefather regaining his inheritance. He and Clarissa can now enjoy future happiness in a pastoral English island in the sun. But Rokeby's original displacement happened due to democratic feelings following the French Revolution. *The Man in Grey* makes no reference to these class and racial factors. It chooses instead to concentrate upon romance, costume, and gender instability. The young black slave Tobey (played by a white juvenile!) frequently refers to Rokeby as "the black-white man" after he sees him performing Othello on stage. When Clarissa later sees Rokeby at a racecourse fair, he plays another role as a fairground barker promoting the physical strength of a black slave (this time played by a real black extra). Although Rokeby performs in a fairground inviting his audiences to compete in a trial of strength, his activities resemble those of a New Orleans slavemaster selling his wares. These features reveal Rokeby as less of an ideal romantic lover and more of a manipulator of a social system he affirms rather than opposes. Despite the film's attempt to separate dashing, handsome Swinton Rokeby from the moody marquis of Rohan, both men bear certain similarities. They not only react in frustration against conformist social patterns but are totally subjected to them. Rokeby and Rohan may not breach certain social codes. Rokeby has to return to his island to become a gentleman again by putting down a revolutionary uprising. His callous slapping of Hester reveals affinities to Rohan's brutal manner. It foreshadows Rohan's later whipping-to-death of Hester concluding the Regency narrative of *The Man in Grey*. The film may contain female pleasure, but it also attempts to eliminate other important contradictions within its textual structure.

These arguments do not necessitate the total rejection of recent research reevaluating Gainsborough melodramas as well as theories noting the importance of costume within filmic discourse by scholars such as Cook (1996) and Harper (1994). But they do involve considering a

broader picture. Supposedly progressive traditions within fantastic realms of British cinema may contain similar ideological problems also contaminating their realistic counterparts. The films may contain progressive aspects. But they can also function according to conservatively dominant and residual mechanisms controlling the play of desire. Although the melodramas may validate some female perceptions, they also contain negative representations of class and racial factors that question any progressive readings about the dilemmas of white aristocratic heroines within such melodramatic contexts. Realist and melodramatic traditions emerging from the same era may respond in similar ideological ways despite different stylistic forms.

Williams's definition of the "emergent" may question certain ideas concerning the supposedly progressive and revolutionary meanings existing in these films. New meanings and values occur within any tradition. But Williams (1977, 123) cautions that "it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture (and in this sense 'species specific') and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely novel." The emergent always faces incorporation. Any text may contain levels of confusion between the residual as a form of resistance and the emergent as a genuinely active oppositional element. Certain films may contain residual levels of expression, but they are often undermined and renegotiated toward conservative closure as a result of certain textual operations.

The Gainsborough melodramas may be regarded as residual, but they also contain repressed emergent elements altered to prevent any form of radical oppositional expression. Rohan and Hester appear as monstrous embodiments needing removal from the text so their acceptable counterparts, Rokeby and Clarissa, can live happily ever after. The excessively masculine Rohan and sensual Hester enter into a romantic relationship containing the potential to rupture class and sexual barriers. Although their relationship is more dynamic than that of their counterparts, the film cannot allow any expression of positive alternative oppositional ideas. Desire becomes dangerous for both partners and leads to a violent climax. Hester dies, and Rohan may face execution for his deed. The future happiness of Clarissa and Rokeby occurs within the ideologically manufactured context of the supposedly egalitarian People's War (see Calder, 1969; 1991). But Charlie's speech in *Millions like Us* (1943) counters its ideological premises. He refuses to entertain false utopian feelings con-

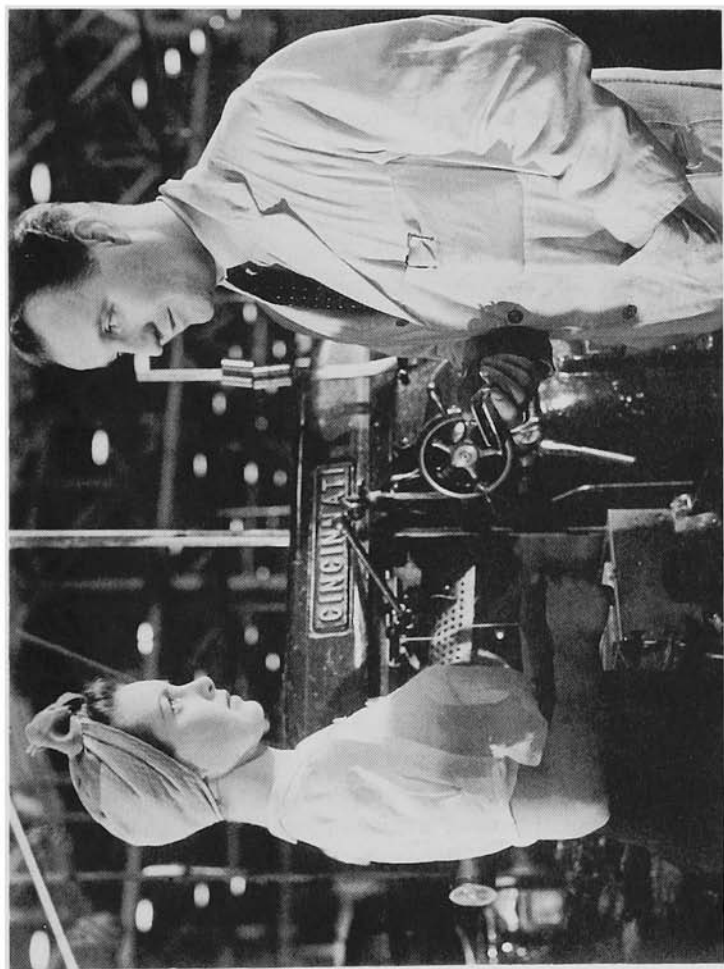


FIGURE 2. The skeptical figure of Charlie (Eric Portman) addresses Celia (Patricia Roc) in *Millions like Us*.

cerning the abolition of prewar class barriers and postpones his engagement to upper-class Jennifer until he is sure that wartime egalitarianism is not a temporary phenomenon. Future circumstances prove him correct.

The emergent is subject to incorporation. But, as Williams notes, its presence is undeniable in certain textual representations. However, any simple definitions involving dominant control or emergent breakthrough must consider the actual texts themselves. Although tensions among dominant, residual, and emergent appear class terms, other factors such as the emotionally textual elements often appear. Williams (126) points out that aspects of social consciousness such as "alternative perceptions of others, in immediate relationships; new perceptions and practices of the material world" (126) may occur in any text whether political, social, or cinematic. But historical circumstances often determine whether these alternatives are radically oppositional. Many films exhibit different alternative levels, yet they often never rise to levels involving radically emergent meanings.

Raymond Williams warned against the tendency of hailing new ideas as emergent, when in reality, they form "a *pre-emergence*, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the active emergence which could be more confidently named" (126). Williams defines a mode of interrogation recognizing dialectical operations of formal (structure) and personal (feeling) levels within any text. His version of alternative oppositions to dominant structures represents "a kind of thinking which is indeed social and material, but each is in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and define exchange" (131). He makes an exceptionally complex recognition of a *process* involving various levels of feeling that may move toward positive directions. Williams related any emergent structures of feeling to either the rise of a class or a time when "a formation appears to break away from its class norms, though it retains its substantial affiliation, and the tension is at once lived and articulated in radically new semantic figures" (134–35). Williams obviously owes much to Gramsci, who never isolated structures or feelings into exclusive categories.

Such complex structures of feeling characterize certain representations within British cinema during 1940–1955. But rather than retaining Williams's definition of "structure of feeling," "structures of desire" is more appropriate. It better expresses the nature of emotional negotiations involving contemporary conflicts among dominant, residual, and emergent factors within wartime and postwar British cinema. The emergent probably does not exist in the terms Williams defined it. But certain

British films may embody conflicts between dominant and potentially emergent realms of desire that exist on the pre-emergent level. They occur not as isolated individualized features but in relation to contemporary social and historical structures of meaning influencing levels of desire.

Desire is best understood neither in exclusively Freudian terms nor by the concepts of Michel Foucault but more in terms of the combative philosophy of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh. Arguing for more radical definitions of postmodernism relating local to the global levels, Zavarzadeh (1991, 43–44, 46–47; 1991, 205–6) takes issue with a ludic postmodernism celebrating subjectivity while ignoring the presence of wider social and historical factors conditioning its very existence. Freudian microlevel definitions by critics such as Appiganesi are insufficient if they do not consider relevant external levels of historical and social determination. Precedents for this form of investigation already exist in Gramsci's writing. As Landy (1994) notes, desire is not entirely absent from his writing. "Gramsci's brief comments on sexuality also validate his concern for a complex understanding of social forces, but always in the context of a specific social and historical conjuncture" (94–95). It is a methodology she applies in her analysis of the Gainsborough melodrama *They Were Sisters* (1944), which is set in the present and not the historical past. Cook (1983) also recognizes the importance of examining the Gainsborough women's pictures "in terms of the way they discuss femininity to appeal to a female audience" whether "British and wartime, or immediately postwar" (21).

The expression of desire in fictional texts may be influenced by historical, political, and social factors that producers and readers are unaware of at the time. Such expressions are usually indirect but are never entirely free or individual. Instead they follow particular ideological structures that often become recognizable at a later time. Although film is generally regarded as harmless entertainment, like the romance novel it is never entirely isolated from prevailing cultural forms of expression, no matter how much audiences and individual readers may wish to retreat into what they believe are private fantasies. If fantasy is both public and private, so, also, are manifold expressions of desire. Like political and social life, they are determined by certain historical conventions or structures implicitly controlling the expressions of each particular text. Desire is never entirely spontaneous but is governed by particular ideological structures operating within any historical era. This work studies their various forms of expression within a certain period of a national cinema generally regarded as lacking any coherent expression of both desire and emotion. Such factors

exist within cinematic texts but are expressed via ideologically structured forms of expression. In this sense, British cinema manifests specific structures of desire.

Desire involves males as well as females. One gender crisis does not exist in isolation from another. Although popular memories of wartime cinema tend to be clouded by stereotypes such as the "stiff-upper-lip" heroes and "dutiful waiting women" in fifties representations starring Richard Todd, Kenneth More, Veronica Hurst, Ann Todd, and Ursula Jeans, the male order also suffered its form of crisis. Although Jack Hawkins is now associated with the "stiff-upper-lip" leader in films such as *Angels One Five* (1950), *The Malta Story* (1952), and *The Bridge over the River Kwai* (1957), he also exhibited masculine crisis in other films, such as his emotional breakdown in *The Cruel Sea* (1953) and his vulnerable need for friendship in *The Two Headed Spy* (1958) illustrate. After playing Guy Gibson in *The Dam Busters* (1955), Richard Todd became associated with controlled leader figures in *D-Day the Sixth of June* (1956), *Yangtze Incident* (1957), *Danger Within* (1959), *The Longest Day* (1962), and *Operation Crossbow* (1965). But he came to public attention playing the terminally ill, vulnerable Scottish soldier in *The Hasty Heart* (1950). Todd's repressed persona in *The Dam Busters* ideologically contradicts other vulnerable military males in *The Cruel Sea* (1953) and *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955). But even he expresses desire in a particular manner in *The Dam Busters*. Male representations were by no means one dimensional during this period. Medhurst and Geraghty's (Hurd, 1984) explorations into this neglected area reveal the existence of contradictory features texts attempt to conceal in various ways.

As Landy (1994) urges, knowledge of past traditions

is essential to any charting and understanding of the uneven development of culture and its relation to technology and capital formations. In the spirit of his [i.e. Gramsci's] insistence on the importance of common sense, an analysis of cultural production must articulate both the persistence of dominant forms from the past and the presence of new elements which can either be considered as further aspects of traditional hegemony or can be identified as counterhegemonic emergent forms. (35)

Films in this study belong to a particular historical context of British cinema. They are not only determined by the past but also anticipate

future cinematic movements. The "kitchen sink" films of the early sixties continue class and realist narrative concerns of their wartime predecessors. Hammer horror films also continue the excessive romantic agonies of Gainsborough costume films. James Mason or Stewart Granger could have played Count Dracula had they not migrated to Hollywood. Institutional constraints of censorship and ideological control during the forties and early fifties affected British cinema particularly in terms of gender and political representations. Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* (1933) never reached the screen until 1941. Its diluted images of Salford poverty in the Great Depression functioned as grim reminders of a world that a utopian postwar society would never again accept. But most thirties British films contain regimented images of hierarchical class structures and strictly controlled gender representations.

The Four Feathers and *The Lion Has Wings* (both 1939) embody this dominant British structure of desire. As Harper (1994, 29) notes, *The Four Feathers* appealed to Alexander Korda's fascination with British culture, sexuality, and pleasure. It adapted A. E. W. Mason's imperialist novel about a young aristocrat determined to rebut charges of cowardice made against him. It resembles a conservative structure of meaning narrating the compliance of vulnerable hero Harry Faversham (John Clements) with the demands of the dominant ideology. But other factors also appear that anticipate later British cinematic themes of male crisis. Although Harry resigns his commission, reacting against an oppressive family tradition and wanting to rescue his estate from generations of neglect, he is haunted by accusations of cowardice. His fiancée Ethne (June Duprez) also rejects him. Her dialogue articulates an oppressive ideology dominating the film's major characters. "Some people are born free . . . but you were not born free, nor was I. We were born into a tradition, a code we must obey even if we do not believe it. . . . The pride and happiness of everyone surrounding us depends on our obedience." *The Four Feathers* supports this repressive British ideology, which differs little from its Fascist counterpart. Although Harry proves his heroism by rescuing three friends, he still submits to the system. *The Four Feathers* is an ideologically repressive text enclosing everyone in conservative structures of desire. But even the humorous happy ending contains contradictions. Although Harry proves himself to Ethne by revealing the false nature of a Crimean war story repeated incessantly by General Burroughs (Sir C. Aubrey Smith), the film concludes with the revelation that a pillar of society has lied about his own heroism for most of his life!

The Lion Has Wings is a propaganda film hammering its audiences into submission with British cinematic documentary realist techniques. As well as propaganda images of rural conservatism and social improvements, the film also contains staged fictional sequences with Ralph Richardson, Merle Oberon, June Duprez, and Brian Worth representing dominant upper-middle-class values. The women stand to attention during the national anthem following Britain's declaration of war. Their men stiffly stand to attention until the last bar before they embrace their sweethearts and march off to war. The final sequence concludes with the uniformed Richardson and Oberon reunited again after a hard day's wartime work. Deciding to visit a park (recalling those opening rural English values), they relax in the sunshine. Oberon makes a patriotic speech in close-up, articulating British values. When she turns to Richardson, she finds him asleep, a position humorously paralleling the average audience reaction!

Oberon's climactic image is more positive than Vivian Leigh's Lady Hamilton in Zoltan Korda's *That Hamilton Woman* (1941). Although suffering condemnation for her sexually free life style, Emma ensures that Lord Nelson (Laurence Olivier) constantly does his naval duty despite constant risks to life and limb until the fatal Battle of Trafalgar where Hardy achieves that final kiss. After Nelson's death, Emma has served her wartime purpose. She now faces a death-in-life existence as wino and bag lady. As Short and Draper show, oppressive codes of propaganda and censorship stifle the possibility of any liberatory desires emerging in the film.

Similar rigid class and sexual codes structure *Convoy* (1940) and *Ships with Wings* (1942). Both feature John Clements, an actor associated with status quo values in this era of British cinema. As in *The Four Feathers*, Clements finds himself doing the ideologically "right thing" after falling from social grace. But his sacrifice is much higher as he gives his life to save his former squadron. In *Convoy*, naval lieutenant David Cranford (Clements) wins back the respect of his superior officer Captain Armitage (Clive Brook) not only by his eventual heroic death but also by revealing that the latter's wife had left him rather than the other way around! Similarly, in *Ships with Wings*, court-martialed and cashiered Fleet Air Arm pilot Stacey (Clements) loses Celia (Jane Baxter), daughter of Vice-Admiral Weatherby (Leslie Banks), after a reckless incident. Although Celia marries another officer (dashing Michael Wilding), Stacey refuses the love offered by his devoted Kay (Ann Todd). As a singer her

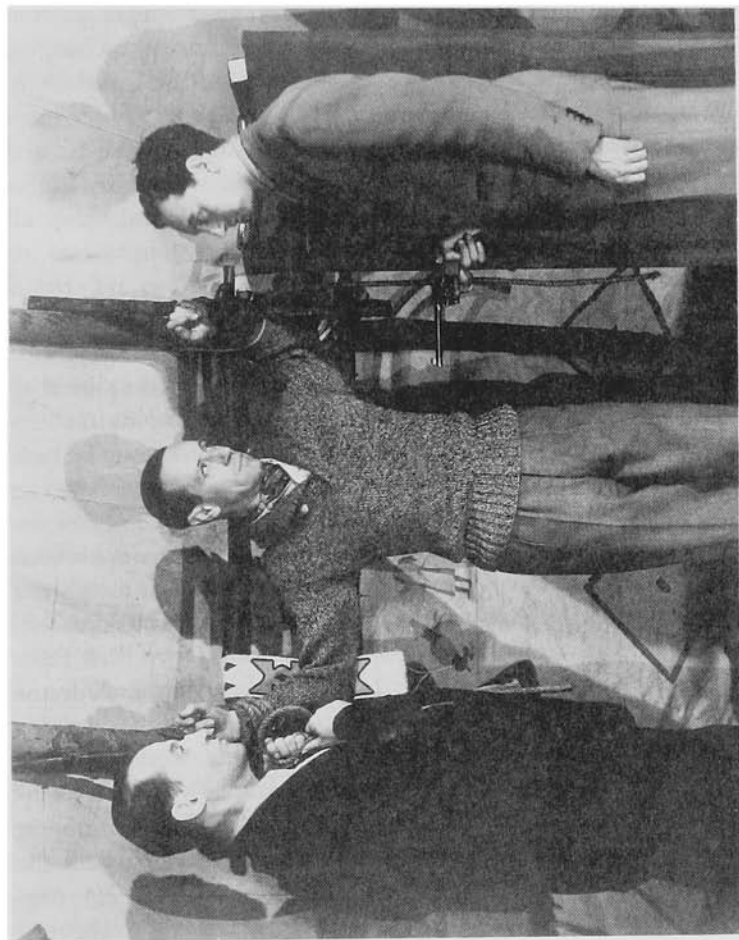


FIGURE 3. An English gentleman (Leslie Howard) faces the wartime enemy (Eric Portman, John Chandos) in *49th Parallel*.

ideological status resembles the “dance hall girl” of Hollywood Westerns as well as gypsy Rosal in *Caravan* (1946). Like Marlene Dietrich in *Destry Rides Again* (1939), Kay expires from the scene. Stacey recovers his lost honor as an officer and a gentleman by dying for God and Country.

David MacDonald's *This England* (1941) covers several historical episodes in the life of this sceptered isle. Beginning and ending in the contemporary era, it presents rural English life as essentially unchanging despite earlier historical challenges during 1086, 1588, 1804, and 1918. The same actors portray their forebears in these episodes. *This England* opens when an American journalist (Constance Cummings) visits rural Cloverly Downs and meets home guard squire John Rookeby (John Clements) and trusty farmhand Appleyard (Emlyn Williams). After all three feel historical familiarity with each other, the film moves to post-Norman Conquest times. Despite its mundane nature and critical eclipse by another rural film, *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), *This England* has several dark features critics overlook. Like *Went the Day Well?* (1942), it reveals the vicious strains in a British character indelibly committed to dominant status quo values. Although the Saxon Rookeby leads a successful revolt against his Norman master in 1086, he achieves it by brutally breaking the latter's neck after overpowering him in fair combat. The bleakest episode in the film involves the *Armada* period. When free-spirited Miss Fiske (Cummings) wishes to entice Rookeby away from his farm toward the pleasures of the “open road,” Appleyard frames her for treason and witchcraft and incites a mob against her. He has already murdered an absentee landlord's steward to protect Rookeby's land. Since Miss Fiske wears a gypsy costume (anticipating later Gainsborough melodrama females) and speaks Spanish, she is a sexual and European threat to English country values like Rosal in *Caravan*. Miss Fiske commits suicide to escape rural British justice. Her 1918 descendant is a Cockney gin-drinking widow who has lost her husband in the Great War. Her mother has decided she is unfit to bring up her own daughter and has sent the child to America where she will grow up and return in 1941. *This England* presents her as an unfit, single parent who will move on to the next city and not contaminate rural values by her presence. But she is also a victim of social forces the film chooses to neglect. Women were abruptly dismissed from the workforce after 1918 and forced back into the ideologically proscribed roles of wives and mothers. Their brief status of economic independence was “for the duration only.” Similar events happened after 1945.