

Viewing the World in *Till the End of Time*

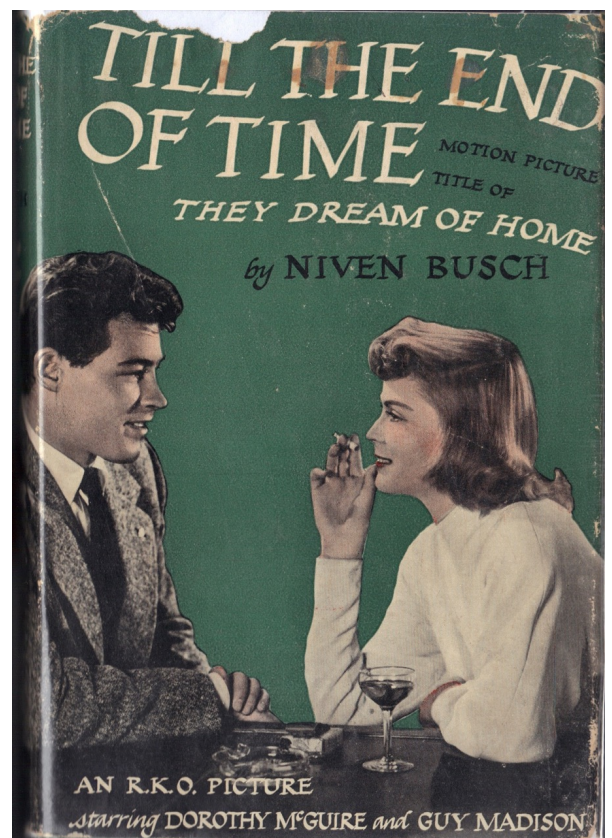


Cliff (bemoaning the loss of his college years): 'I might even have made a good fraternity!'

Patricia: 'You *made* a good fraternity. Fourteen million members'

*Till the End of Time* (Edward Dmytryk, 1946; referred to hereafter as *End of Time*), was released on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1946, four months before *The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946; referred to hereafter as *Best Years*). It is one part of a substantial body of material, found both in U. S. film and other media, which focused on the figure of the returning veteran at the end of the war.<sup>1</sup> It is not my purpose here to survey that material – but to concentrate on some details of *End of Time* with a view to exploring what the two films share, and what distinguishes them, and how this might help to contextualise *Best Years*.<sup>2</sup>

*End of Time* credits Niven Busch's 1944 novel *They Dream of Home* as its source, although Allen Rivkin's screenplay diverges substantially from Busch's account of American lives in wartime, and virtually all the film's dialogue and many of its situations are Rivkin's. In his biography of David O. Selznick, David Thomson includes the title in a list of a number of properties passed on to RKO, with Selznick's company supplying actors under contract and taking a share of the profits (1993: 459). Selznick thought the film 'a bad picture', but quotes it as an example of the commercial wisdom of giving a film a





strong 'theme melody', as it had 'rolled up a very, very big gross'.<sup>3</sup> The politically left-wing director, Edward Dmytryk, was briefly a member of the US Communist Party at around the time the film was made.<sup>4</sup> Given its relative obscurity, a summary of some elements of the plot may be helpful here.

*End of Time* opens on an American military base where large numbers of soldiers are being demobbed. Two are picked out for us: Cliff Harper (Guy Madison) and William Tabeshaw (Robert Mitchum). Cliff is physically uninjured, but Tabeshaw has been in hospital and has a silver plate inside his skull. We see something of the de-briefing process, and then lose sight of Tabeshaw as we follow Cliff in his return to his home town (Los Angeles) and to his parental home. On the first day of his return he meets two women, who are characterised as respectively slightly younger and slightly older than he is: Helen Ingersoll (Jean Porter) the daughter of the family who have moved in next door, and Pat Ruscomb (Dorothy McGuire).<sup>5</sup> He is attracted to Pat, but their relation has an awkward beginning, over the fact that she is a war widow, and over the difficulty she has in bringing herself to speak of this.

Cliff settles uneasily into life at home with his mother Amy (Ruth Nelson) and his father C.W. (Tom Tully). The friction is partly because he will neither get a job nor continue the education that was interrupted by the war. He continues to see both Helen and Pat. Tabeshaw pays him a visit, and introduces him to another household, that of Perry Kincheloe (Bill Williams). Tabeshaw and Perry met in army hospital; Perry is struggling to come to terms with the loss of his legs. Shortly after the conclusion of this visit, Tabeshaw again disappears.



Cliff's parents tell him that his behaviour is disappointing them. He visits Pat in her apartment and after another bad start, they reach a degree of understanding of each other. She talks about her motives behind a brief wartime marriage to John Ruscomb; Cliff promises to find and keep a job.

Cliff takes a position in the local factory where Pat works in the front office, and they continue, with evident difficulty on both sides, to imagine a life together, or rather to try to articulate what prevents them being a suitable couple. This reaches a point of impasse, and they quarrel.

Tabeshaw now reappears for the final time. He is penniless and in a poor physical state, troubled by his old head wound. He and Cliff go to a rough saloon and hatch a plan, one which feels more like a fantasy, to light out together and buy a farm. They contact Pat, who is unresponsive to this, but worried about Cliff. Cliff also telephones Perry, asking him to come to the saloon and help to manage Tabeshaw, who needs to go to hospital. Pat and Perry arrive separately; Pat tries to persuade Cliff that a dream of another life is no kind of solution to his troubles, but fails and leaves. The three veterans are now confronted by recruiters for the racist and anti-semitic 'American War Patriots'. A fight starts, in which Tabeshaw is hurt, but which enables Perry to find that he can accept his prosthetic legs, and still land a good punch.

The final scene takes place in and around the hospital to which Tabeshaw has been taken. C.W. and Cliff are reconciled as they wait for news; the occasion of C.W.'s waiting for Cliff to be born is invoked. Father and son meet Cliff's mother on the steps of the hospital, and we learn that Tabeshaw will recover. Cliff learns that Pat too has been waiting, and keeping his mother company. The couple run towards each other, and fall into an embrace which is the film's closing image.<sup>6</sup>

### Veterans

The characterisations of the veterans in *End of Time* and *Best Years* have a number of elements in common. Both concentrate on a group of three, none of whom could be said to have survived the war unscathed. They display different combinations of outward and visible damage, and degrees of mental and physical trauma which are inward and invisible. For those to whom they return, some physical injuries can be observed, and so attempts can be made to accept them. Even internal physical damage, such as Tabeshaw's, can be known and described. This access contrasts with the difficulty of measuring, and thus of addressing, the mental state of the veteran. Those who come back physically whole are quick to assert that their outward state represents them; they claim to be 'still in one piece', but we understand that this is not so simple.

There is the manifestly physically disabled figure – Homer (Harold Russell) in *Best Years*, Perry in *End of Time*. Supported by family and friends, he will come to terms with his disablement by the end of the film. The sleight of hand that the films have to deploy here is that the mental difficulties of this veteran relate *only* to his physical injury and attitudes to it. Once that is accepted, he is effectively cured.

There is the veteran who represents a recognisable American cultural type – Al (Fredric March) the banker in *Best Years*, Tabeshaw the westerner in *End of Time*. We see him return to his work and he finds that he can manage to fit into it again. But his story acknowledges the problematic character of his world, and does not give us an altogether rosy view of the future. Al the banker will go on giving too many loans, Tabeshaw the cowboy may never be able to afford a farm. We see that both men like a drink a little too much, a detail that underlines the uneasiness that circulates around them.

Finally, there is the younger veteran with an unformed life, immediately established by his having no settled profession or occupation: this is Fred (Dana Andrews) in *Best Years*, Cliff in *End of Time*. The war years have left him with mental traumas that are difficult for him, or us, to comprehend. He knows that he is profoundly changed by the war, but not how. In both films the situation of this

veteran is the most prominent of the three narratives, and it is dramatised by posing the figure between two women. One of these is the kind of girl that the veteran might have married, or in Fred's case did marry, before he was changed by the conflict: Marie (Virginia Mayo) in *Best Years*, Helen in *End of Time*. The other we might think of as the woman who has known too much, who has understood something of the war and its costs: Peggy (Teresa Wright) in *Best Years*, Pat in *End of Time*. Both films conclude with this woman in her lover's arms, and the assurance of a future.

The films explore the return through two significant spaces, the home, and the bar. In both, something of the quality of the arrival home is dramatised through making it unexpected; this can be relatively positive, as we see in *Best Years* in Al's homecoming, or it can carry something more of its difficulty or anxiety, as in Fred's attempts to find Marie. In both cases homecoming is marked in part by the image of being confronted by a locked door. When Cliff arrives in Los Angeles, nobody is home; he lets himself in and the scene of his exploring the house nicely implies his familiarity, his relief at seeing it, and his restlessness. Like Al in *Best Years*, Cliff cannot settle; he leaves a note for his parents and goes out to the local bar almost immediately.

The bar is used to express both continuity with the world before the war and the passing of time. In *Best Years* the stress is heavily on the former: the reassuring presence of an implicitly unchanged owner, Butch (Hoagy Carmichael), the prominence of the piano rather than the juke-box, the traditionally dressed waiters. The only noted change is perhaps deliberately posed as a superficial one: Butch's has a new neon sign. In *End of Time* the bar has parallels to Butch's place and does something of the work done by the drugstore scenes in *Best Years* in addressing modernity and social change. Its owner Scuffy (Harry Von Zell) records its growth from 'nothing but a hard candy and ice-cream parlour'<sup>7</sup> to its current thriving state as a direct result of what he refers to with self-protective irony as the 'gravy train' of 'la guerre'. And this bar, with its jiving young people, speaks of modernity, the new order that has followed the war years, in a way that Butch's is not intended to do.



Issues of youth and age are central. In both films there is a scene in which a returned vet contemplates his boyhood bedroom, trying to grasp the distance between his current state and the world that he left, essentially the world that is captured as the camera pans across the objects on the walls.

For Homer, much of what is prominently at stake is the loss of his hands, underlined for us by the shots of his boyhood athletics. For the physically intact Cliff, the loss is of a carefree state of mind; the collection of abducted signs that decorate the room speak to the college pranks of that other life.

Both films use scenes in their bars which turn on age, and they are suggestively different. Scuffy refuses to serve Helen alcohol because it would be illegal: she is too young. This is a way of underlining a recurrent topic in the film, which is that Helen is too young for Cliff, not in terms of their chronological ages, but in terms of the generation she represents, one for which the war is essentially a childhood memory. When Butch refuses to serve Homer hard liquor – he can have ‘any kind of beer’ – it is not so much his chronological age or maturity that is in question, but rather an insistence on continuity. If Homer can still only drink beer, then he is the same person as before the war. Is this therapy, a happy lesson for Homer, or is it part of a larger insistence in the film that the war years can be – must be – erased?

### Speaking of the Dead

This brings me to a crucial topic, the matter of speaking of the war. The uneasiness expressed is similar in the two films. It might be summed up by saying that there is both a desire to let the veteran speak, and an impulse to avoid it, to call for, or rely on, his silence. There is a belief that it might be good for him to tell his story and that this would bring him close to those who listen, who could then share in the pride that (they hope) he feels about his record. But there is a fear, as if to speak of, or to listen to, accounts of the war would be to be dragged back into the horrors of it, to have to remember, or acknowledge, something best forgotten.

On first seeing Fred, Marie is typically forthright: ‘All those ribbons! You’ve got to tell me what they mean. But not now.’ In *End of Time* the scene in which Cliff is reunited with his mother Amy for the first time subtly expresses similar issues. Her tears and embraces reflect both the

boy from the past. The veteran in Cliff now speaks, telling his mother: ‘I’ve got so much to talk about I don’t know where to begin. I want to tell you where I’ve been, what I saw ....’ At this point Amy, smiling into his face and grasping him with both hands, interrupts him; ‘Don’t talk about it, Cliff. I know you don’t want to talk about it.’<sup>8</sup> Cliff is momentarily disconcerted, but the moment passes off without further comment.

Ruth Nelson’s performance poses a question here. Is Amy fully aware of what she is saying? Her resistance to hearing about Cliff’s experiences feels unrehearsed, as if she instinctively brushes the subject aside. Underlying such anxieties is a radical threat: to speak of the war might be to have to speak of the dead. Both films address this, but again the treatment of the issue is suggestively different. In *Best Years* we can say that neither the veterans nor those to whom they return consciously invoke the American dead.<sup>9</sup> There are no scenes of reminiscence about those who did not make it, and no roles of bereaved mother or traumatised widow. But of course this buried knowledge cannot be repressed entirely. It famously emerges in Fred’s nightmares about Gadowski, the serviceman killed in one of his wartime missions. Wyler uses this strategically, to make a didactic point about the difference between the sympathy of Peggy, who nurses Fred through his dream, and the attitude of Marie, who tells him to ‘snap out of it’. But the point can also be made more subtly, and more touchingly. In Milly (Myrna Loy) and Al’s breakfast scene, Al, finally suffused with a sense of well-being and of relaxing at home, tells his wife that ‘I can’t help thinking about the other guys’. Fredric March then gives the slightest pause, or hesitation, before Al speaks again. The pause creates the suggestion that he might have been going to say something else, but he concludes: ‘All the ones who haven’t got you’.

*End of Time* introduces this subject early, in Scuffy’s evasions: in the opening bar scene, the war is first ‘the thing’ and then ‘la guerre’. Scuffy glosses the latter to Cliff – ‘that’s French for the war, chum ... the war?’ – as if it were possible he needed to have a translation, that the war



length and the dangers of their separation, but her question to Cliff is whether the house looks the same to him, as if to ask whether time has been successfully stopped here. C.W. now fetches the bourbon he has been saving for this occasion, and Amy’s shocked reaction to seeing Cliff’s glass filled – ‘C.W., do you want to make him sick?’ – again expresses her desire to construct Cliff as if he were their



has become suddenly obscure. A few moments later Cliff meets Pat, and they leave the bar for her apartment.

The attraction between the couple is strong and mutual. After they have been kissing, Pat tells Cliff how young he seems, and sensing that he is being possibly diminished, he asks her about the photograph of a serviceman that faces them across the room. Pat replies at once, as if she is



pleased to be asked: 'his name's John Ruscomb, First Lieutenant, AAF, eighth bomber command'. He could still be her brother, but sensing something else, Cliff persists. Pat hesitates for several seconds. She seems to be in a state of surprise, looking back at the photograph as if seeking advice, or permission. She finally replies: 'my husband.' This parts the couple briefly, but in reply to Cliff's next question, Pat tells him what she did not say – could not bring herself to say – before, that John Ruscomb is dead, killed in the war. She apologises, we may assume for being unable to speak of it immediately or directly. She briefly tells the story of her wartime romance. Cliff's response, that 'They ought to give purple hearts for war widows' is taken as the poised compliment that it was meant to be, and they part.

It is Pat's touching awkwardness that gives this scene its force, the impulse to both try to preserve the reality of John Ruscomb (the picture on the table, the happy announcement of his name and rank) and to move on from his loss (she has forwarded his personal effects to his parents without opening the parcel, she claims to have no interest in where he is buried). This contradiction resurfaces later. A drunken Pat returns from an evening out with John Ruscomb's co-pilot, whom she has encouraged to the point where 'just for a moment he almost seemed to be John'. Cliff stages a jealous scene and storms off, leaving Pat alone on her bed in a pose which suggests both her grieving and her sexual loneliness. But he reappears and the couple reconcile over coffee and cigarettes; Pat finally allows herself to weep for her lost dream of a husband's return.



### Lending a Hand, Landing a Punch.

Such scenes make Pat's situation, and the task before her, relatively clear: she must lay claim to a life in the present while preserving her memory of the past. Cliff's situation is more perplexing; as the film progresses he is increasingly plagued by a problem he cannot identify and which he cannot see is not his alone. He can neither understand what haunts him, nor how it needs to be addressed; there is no loss here that can be spoken of, nothing to parallel the romantic figure of John Ruscomb.

The film begins to explore this issue indirectly, through a scene showing us an ordinary pleasure. After Pat's status as a war widow has been established, two couples – Cliff, Helen, Pat and Pinky (Loren Tindall), a serviceman who is her date for the day – visit an ice skating rink. This is a place where matters of physical balance and co-ordination offer a simple enough metaphor for needing or not needing assistance, call it the ability to stand on your own two feet. We see some skating; both the women are competent on the ice. Pat and Cliff now go to the rink's café. As they cross the room we see another serviceman (played by Richard Benedict), ordering a drink from the bar; his costume and



rank echo Cliff's. As Pat and Cliff have an uneasy conversation about remembering and forgetting, they realise that the man is shaking uncontrollably. He is another kind of veteran, one physically undamaged but possessed by mental traumas that manifest themselves in seriously disabling symptoms, a figure markedly absent from the variations on the figure of returning veteran explored in *Best Years*.<sup>10</sup> As they try to comfort him, he turns out to be a boy from Idaho on a twenty-one day pass from hospital, a man who feels that everyone is looking at him, who is afraid to go home.<sup>11</sup> Pat offers him a story from her childhood, and when he asks what it means, she replies: 'all I'm saying is, let them look'. In other words, accept their relation to you, and their difference from you, and yours from them – do not isolate yourself. Of course she cannot cure, or even address, his trauma, but she knows that learning to manage it must involve relating to others. While Pat is not directly trying to teach Cliff something about his own situation, we can read the boy from Idaho as a figure who physically manifests the buried traumas that Cliff cannot directly express.<sup>12</sup> And Cliff's violent response to the thought of the onlookers – 'if they don't like it, let them kill themselves' – measures the distance at this point between his and Pat's attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

The scene is part of a larger pattern in the film that distinguishes Pat and Cliff in terms of how they view their situations in the context of the wider world. Pat repeatedly speaks of her loss as something that thousands of others are suffering. When she first talks about John's disappearance into the 'wild blue yonder' she tells Cliff 'that's what makes it so corny, it's happened to so many.' In the coffee and cigarettes reconciliation scene she says of her hasty marriage and its result, 'There are lots of smart girls like me. We had a choice to make and we made it.'

The demobbed Cliff cannot identify with others. In so far as he understands his problem at all, he thinks of it as an individual loss; it is as if something has been stolen from him. After the visit to Perry's home, Tabeshaw explains to Cliff that leaving the army has turned out to be a movement from being part of a group (your buddies / platoon) to what he ironically sums up as 'rugged individuals'. The implication is that none of these veterans are good at functioning on their own, or even remembering what it was that they once shared with others. The dialogue exchange which I have used as an epigraph to this essay sums up neatly the difference in view that divides Pat and Cliff. For him the war felt as a lost opportunity, here for the questionable social advancement to be found in a group such as a fraternity.<sup>14</sup> Pat's reply is a gentle reminder that Cliff is part of a larger social world, if he could only see and accept it.

What is at stake is the kinds of assistance that Pat and Cliff can give each other – what they can offer, and what they need. What Cliff can give Pat is almost parental, a cup of hot drink, a cigarette, an opportunity to speak her grief, and so to share it with another and thus make it bearable. But just as with the Boy from Idaho, Pat can do little beyond trying to remind the veteran that his unhappiness is part of a larger condition. It is not a matter of looking forward to a change that will be reliably brought about by the nurturing woman; Pat cannot cure Cliff, and they both have to accept that she cannot. The difference between their positions underlies one of their last significant exchanges, which takes place when she has met him in the saloon where he is drinking with Tabeshaw. Cliff is railing at Los Angeles and the conditions of his job. When he tries to insist to Pat that 'we'll be happy' [on a ranch somewhere] she tells him this:

Pat: Actually, you have no beef.

Cliff: Who has?

Pat: Only the men who are never coming back.

Cliff: Here we go. Right back to Johnny Ruscomb. Did you put his picture back on the table again?

Again for Cliff the problem is individualised, even here in his ghostly competition with John Ruscomb for Pat's love. For Pat it is always collective, the loss not only of one man, but of all the servicemen who will never return.

The beginning of the possible resolution of Cliff's problem takes a very American form, that of regeneration through violence.<sup>15</sup> An earlier scene at his workplace, in which an altercation with his supervisor nearly escalates into blows, has indicated that one of the manifestations of Cliff's unhappiness is his itching for a fight, a release of violence that he knows will paradoxically be another disaster and cost him his job. The threat of a pointless and self-destructive fight is now happily displaced by a



legitimate one, the scrap with the recruiters for the American War Patriots. These elements occur, differently arranged, in *Best Years*, where there is also a fight generated by the appearance of a similar organisation, and in this case it does cost Fred his job.

The fight in *End of Time* is prefaced by three moments: Tabeshaw's mention of the four freedoms;<sup>16</sup> the Patriots' rejection of Jews, Catholics and negroes as un-American; and Tabeshaw naming a serviceman, Maxie Klein, who would have spat in the Patriots' eye. Tabeshaw continues: 'but Maxie's dead in Guadalcanal, so I'll spit in your eye'; this is the moment that initiates the fracas.

The fight can be read as a ritual reassertion of the principles behind the war, in terms both of abstractions (the invocation of the four freedoms), and of pressing social issues (a rejection of racism and religious intolerance, underlined by the presence of a black figure, bit part player Bobby Barber, in these scenes). It is also in honour of the war dead, of Maxie Klein and implicitly of John Ruscomb. After it we see Cliff chastened rather than cured; he articulates it by returning to the potential carried by his uninjured body, finally seen not in isolation but in relation to others: he tells his father 'I'm better off than Perry, and luckier than Tabeshaw.' This is not much, but it is an acknowledgement of a starting point; his father seems to be stating a cautiously positive position when he tells Cliff in the hospital that he will need to learn to be a civilian again, just as he learned to be a soldier. C.W.'s attaching of this



insight to the occasion of Cliff's birth, marks it as a scene of potential re-birth: a process of new growth replacing feelings of entrapment and anxiety.

The last image of *End of Time*, with Cliff and Pat in each other's arms, is not surprising, but the shots of them running towards each other seem awkwardly staged, and their final embrace is nearly wordless – each says the other's name, but no more. Looking at the parallel moment in *Best Years*, when Fred ends the film by making a speech to Peggy about how hard their life together promises to be, we see that these conditions seem to draw Wyler's couple together, as expressed by Peggy's ecstatic face as she responds to lover's ramblings as if they were words of seduction. But in Cliff and Pat's case there is no such marvellous resolution, leaving us with the sense that behind their embrace their differences remain unresolved.<sup>17</sup>

The other striking element of the conclusion is a narrative move. We are told that Amy has been waiting in the car 'to keep Pat company', which is surprising in that nothing in the film has suggested that the two women have ever met. But the move makes sense if we see it in terms of the film's treatment of Amy. Her desire to erase the war, expressed in her early enthusiasm for Cliff's interest in Helen,<sup>18</sup> has been replaced here by an acceptance of Pat and thus of the quality that Pat's character has come to express: the ability to acknowledge and accept loss. So the reconciliations asserted here are of the couple with each other, of Cliff with his parents, but also of all of them with the memories and the grief associated with the war years.

### Dorothy McGuire

A final way to reflect on the difference between what the two films choose to stress is to think of their casting, which is clearly reflected through their credit sequences. *Best Years* proclaims its multiple star casting by naming its group of principal players in a single title card: reading down, we have two very well established stars (Myrna Loy and Fredric March) followed by three younger players all of whom had substantial leading roles in the earlier 1940s: Dana Andrews, Teresa Wright, Virginia Mayo.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, *End of Time* has four picture credits: in order – Dorothy McGuire, Guy Madison, Robert Mitchum, and Bill Williams. Of these, the latter two are supporting players here, and Mitchum was not quite yet a big star. Guy Madison had only one other film credit, a small part in the Selznick production *Since You Went Away* (John Cromwell, 1944), leaving a single established star performer: Dorothy McGuire.



So despite the shape of the narrative being the story of the three veterans, we might also approach the film as a star vehicle, strongly reliant on the talents and persona of McGuire. As I have said, Allen Rivkin's screenplay very substantially revises the source novel; could it be that he was writing with the casting of this specific star in mind? McGuire had starred in five previous features between 1943 and this film, and her role here clearly relates to some of them.

Three earlier roles gave McGuire strong associations with both the promise of the future and with coming to terms with death or disfigurement, pressing subjects in the war years. Her initial casting was the central part in *Claudia* (Edmund Goulding, 1943),<sup>20</sup> as a child-bride who learns to accept almost simultaneously that she is pregnant and that her mother is fatally ill. In *The Enchanted Cottage* (John Cromwell, 1945) the plot concerns a veteran (played by Robert Young, who had played the husband in the film version of *Claudia*) overcoming the feelings of worthlessness that have come with the facial disfigurement that he has sustained in the war. The film insists that the disfigurement is a permanent fact for the social world, but individual feelings affirming a positive future are posed against it. The veteran marries the young woman (McGuire) who, played as plain, comes to seem beautiful to him. Equally, she alone can no longer see his disfigurement; he seems handsome to her. So they are both enchanted, while we know that this state is not shared by others. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Elia Kazan, 1945) is a period piece but it shares with *Claudia* the combination of a pregnancy and accepting a death. The mother of the family, the top-billed part played by McGuire, copes with the birth of a third child after her husband has gone off to fight his own lone war against the family's poverty and died in an unknown place, away from home.

So we might say that a thematic in McGuire's films is learning to accept what you cannot change, while keeping hold of the promise of a positive future. *End of Time* does not propose that Pat can resolve Cliff's problems, but she may be able to allow him to address them himself, however slow that process might be.

### Conclusion

I do not wish to make major claims for *End of Time*. It is a companion piece rather than a competitor with *Best Years*, a film with a number of scenes effectively performed by its single star, some convincing supporting players, and a thoughtful and intelligent screenplay. It never gives, nor

wishes to give, the impression of claiming to offer a definitive account of the return from the war years, a quality which I would argue *Best Years* does have, for better or worse, almost throughout. But as I have argued, *End of Time* foregrounds material which *Best Years*, in its assertively optimistic view of the future, leaves behind: the veterans whose mental traumas might be incurable, the concealed mass of America's War Widows,<sup>21</sup> and the vast, spectral body of the American war dead.

By dramatising both the possession and the loss of a feeling that individual experience is part of a greater collective whole, *End of Time* also gives us a different perspective on the returning veteran. The closing gestures towards the supportive family or the nurturing woman seem less substantial than the recording of a period of adjustment: from the lost group spirit of the servicemen to the 'rugged individualism' of the American culture to which they returned.

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<sup>1</sup> A useful overview is Affron & Affron (2009).

<sup>2</sup> I have included an outline of some of the differences after my summary of the film's plot. See footnote 6.

<sup>3</sup> Memo from Selznick to King Vidor, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1952 (see Behmler 1972: 408).

<sup>4</sup> Dmytryk was to go on to be imprisoned as one of the 'Hollywood Ten' but later recanted and acted as a friendly witness to the HUAC in 1951.

<sup>5</sup> This is correctly reflected in the ages of the actors cast: Madison was born in 1922, Porter in 1925, and McGuire in 1916.

<sup>6</sup> The film could be described as a very loose adaptation of Busch's novel, omitting many elements of it. The novel is set during, rather than at the end of the war, and Cliff has been honourably discharged from the army on medical grounds (see footnote 14). The film also partially erases issues of race; in the novel Perry is a black soldier and Tabeshaw an American Indian. Pat is a war widow, but her romance with Cliff ends on a note of distance and loss. Neither the Boy from Idaho nor Helen Ingersoll have equivalents in the novel, and both Scuffy's bar and the 'American War Patriots' are innovations of the screenplay. The single extended scene which the film lifts from the novel is Pat's and Cliff's discussion of their relationship, ending in impasse, after swimming on a beach. (see Ch 43, 245-250 ).

<sup>7</sup> The words are Cliff's description of his memory of it.

<sup>8</sup> These lines are a rare instance of Rivkin's using dialogue that appears in the novel. See Busch (1944: 17).

<sup>9</sup> Al speaks of having taken a Japanese flag from a dead soldier, but this is of course the enemy dead, not the comrade in arms.

<sup>10</sup> The now notorious banning of John Huston's documentary *Let There be Light* (1946) is evidence of the controversial nature of the image of the veteran whose serious injury was mental rather than physical.

<sup>11</sup> The shaking veteran is never given a name, underlining his function as a representative figure. Richard Benedict is credited simply as 'The Boy from Idaho'.

<sup>12</sup> In Busch's novel the shaking soldier and Cliff are one and the same; Cliff suffers periodic fits of shaking throughout the book, and describes himself as having been discharged for a 'psychic disability'. The decision to locate the symptoms of trauma in a separate figure again expresses the controversial nature of the psychologically traumatised veteran. See Busch (1944: 14, 65, 107, 306).

<sup>13</sup> The whole of the skating and café scenes are Rivkin's – they have no equivalent in the source novel.

<sup>14</sup> There is a nice example of the intricacy of Rivkin's script here. Cliff's comment about the fraternity reflects back on a comment made earlier by Ruth. Puffing Helen's qualities as a potential bride for Cliff, she tells him that Helen has made a very good sorority.

<sup>15</sup> The phrase is borrowed from the book which lays out the importance of this formation in American culture, Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860* (1973).

<sup>16</sup> The reference would have been familiar to the audience in 1946. It refers to Franklin D. Roosevelt's then famous formulation in his 1941 State of the Union address: 'Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, Freedom from Fear'.

<sup>17</sup> Possibly the ending reflects a trace of Busch's strikingly downbeat final moves. After refusing to marry Cliff, Pat realises that she is in danger of losing him. She now offers to marry him, but he refuses and announces that he is going 'up north'. This is followed by an ironically comic account of another marriage taking place between two minor characters.

<sup>18</sup> In sharp contrast to her telling Cliff earlier not to talk about the war, Amy speaks enthusiastically to Cliff about Helen's qualities and tells him 'We'll talk some more about it, son. We have so much to talk about'.

<sup>19</sup> On the same card is an 'and introducing' credit for Cathy O'Donnell.

<sup>20</sup> McGuire was reprising her role in Rose Franken's highly successful stage play, which opened in February 1941 and ran for 722 performances.

<sup>21</sup> There were apparently five million American women bringing up children alone after the end of WW2. See <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1692.html>