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Goodbye Blue Sky: The Second World War in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*

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Abstract: This article investigates the portrayal of the Second World War in Pink Floyd's concept album *The Wall* and the homonymous film by director Alan Parker. It will focus on four aspects: the war as trigger for the protagonist's isolation, the experience of the Blitz, the fear of a fascist British Empire, and the portrayal of war from the perspective of an orphan. The article will relate these topics to the critical fortune about the literature of the Second World War and to other fictional works in literature, music and comic books.
Keywords: Second World War; orphanhood; Nazism; progressive rock; war literature.

Resumo: Este artigo investiga a representação da Segunda Guerra Mundial no álbum conceitual *The Wall*, do Pink Floyd, e no filme homônimo do diretor Alan Parker. Focará em quatro aspectos: a guerra enquanto um gatilho para o isolamento do protagonista, a experiência da Blitz, o medo de um Império Britânico fascista e a representação da guerra pela perspectiva de um órfão. O artigo relacionará esses tópicos à fortuna crítica sobre a literatura da Segunda Guerra Mundial e a outros trabalhos de ficção na literatura, música e quadrinhos.
Palavras-chave: Segunda Guerra Mundial; orfandade; Nazismo; rock progressivo; literatura de guerra.

Rock'n'roll has been a musical genre notable for its multiple stylistic ramifications, the so called "sub-genres". Rock has its roots so deep in post-war popular culture that it is, today, one of the very few musical genres whose production can be considered almost omnipresent: that is, in almost every country in the modern world one or another form of rock is being produced.

This has led to an abundance of the aforementioned "sub-genres". These sub-genres are so numerous nowadays that it is very difficult to find a common element to what we call "rock". Among these sub-genres, however, one of the most difficult to define is "progressive rock", or, "prog". Will Romano puts it very well:

> Only gluttons for punishment dare try their hands at the definition of "progressive rock", as it is almost too extensive, too elusive, too amorphous and contradictory to put down on paper. Prog rock is a bit like pornography – the lines and definition can be blurred, but you know it when you see it. (ROMANO, 2010)

If we are to take a historical approach to its origin, we will be traced back to the influence that the psychedelic movement had on the British educated middle-class youth in the late 60's.

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These young men and women who learned music in conservatories but lived their teenage years under the influence of North American Rock'n'roll and the early British rock bands (especially The Beatles) developed a new kind of rock, with a more technical approach to music-making, drawing influences from erudite music and avant-garde genres like free jazz. Romano, once again, is helpful here:

> The textbook definition of progressive rock prescribes an artistic approach to music (which later becomes a genre of music) that developed, initially in Britain, in the late 1960's and into the 1970's, which sought to fuse rock with different musical styles, usually of distinctly European origin – from classical to folk. Prog rock was, generally speaking, written, performed and listened to by white, middle-class kids. (ROMANO, 2010)

Defining prog rock proves to be a rather challenging task but it is a necessary preamble to discuss the importance of the object of this article, the British band Pink Floyd.

Pink Floyd is, perhaps, the only prog rock band that achieved the status of absolute super-stardom. *Dark Side of the Moon*, their 1973 album which is considered their most successful endeavor, has been for over 1,500 weeks in the Billboard Top 200 Chart – an accomplishment no other album has achieved – with roughly 40 millions copies sold worldwide (BILLBOARD, 2006). The band's reunion concert in 2006 for the Live 8 in Hyde Park had 66,500 people in the audience, and other 200,000 people in the streets of London trying to catch a glimpse of the concert, which led London's Secretary of Culture, Communication and Sports, Tessa Jowell, to almost cancel the event, due to the fear of public disorder. (BLAKE, 2012, p. 4)

But the band started, in the mid-to-late sixties, in a much humbler manner. With the guitarist and mentor Syd Barret leading the group, the "Pink Floyd Sound", as the band was called, used to play in the so-called "underground" clubs in London, to a fan base which was establishing the foundation for the city's psychedelic movement. With songs that had enormous and epic instrumental improvisations, revolutionary light effects and the showmanship of Syd Barret, Pink Floyd was, in a sense, too psychedelic to be progressive but too progressive to be psychedelic. Either way, they defined much of the environment of the psychedelic movement (MASON, 2005, p. 46-47).

With Barrett leaving the group after the release of their first album (*The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, 1967) due to serious drug-related issues, the band was lost. Although bassist Roger Waters tried to keep the band together and Barrett's substitute guitarist David Gilmour fit well with the group, the first albums without Syd certainly had the ex-member's influence. A certain lack of objectivity can be felt in this early stage, as the line-up sought their own identity without the

shadow of Barrett looming around. However, as time went by, the band started to find their own sound: many consider *Dark Side of the Moon* to be their turning point, when the band definitely found their own path and created the unique style which rendered them famous.

After *Dark Side...,* however, the internal disputes in the band started to come up. Nick Mason, the band's drummer, gives a very detailed account of the whole process in his auto-biography *Inside Out: A personal history of Pink Floyd* (MASON, 2005). Roger Waters' increasing protagonism in the band led the other members (especially guitarist David Gilmour) to start to complain about lack of creative space. The peak of this tendency was perhaps the 1979 album *The Wall*, Pink Floyd's most daring attempt at making a concept album – that is, an album which revolves around a certain concept, in this case, a narrative. Widely recognized as one of the most important rock albums of its time, its music and lyrics take the listener-reader through a psychological trip on the protagonist's (named "Pink Floyd") memories, traumas and fears, while he goes into his own self-isolation quest. Pink is a British rock star on tour in the US that, one night before a concert, stays at his hotel and starts a session of drug abuse. His state of mind sends him on a journey of self-analysis, recalling events of his life, revisiting memories of his childhood, confronting his traumas and building a "wall" around himself, which isolates him from the outer world. The album also was accompanied by a motion picture, directed by Alan Parker with animated scenes drawn by Gerald Scarfe and the punk musician Bob Geldof in the role of Pink.

The album is profoundly biographical. As the producer Bob Ezrin points out, the record was "Roger Waters' story". He even decided that they should alter some details and incorporate some elements in order for the story not to be a complete auto-biography. Still, the elements of Waters' life are extremely evident. (BLAKE, 2012, p. 293)

This articles intends to track the elements of World War II present in the narrative of *The Wall*, both album and film. Pink's father (and Waters' as well) died in the war, when the musician was still an infant. This has made Pink grow up as a war orphan, without a father. The war left deep scars in his life, which become evident throughout the narrative.

"When the Tigers Broke Free": The World War II and the first few bricks

The album and movie versions of *The Wall* have certain differences that are worth mentioning. The first of them is the presence of the track "When the tigers broke free" in the film, a song that was not in the album version but was included in Pink Floyd's later album *The Final Cut,* because

the other members beside Waters felt it was much too personal and biographical to be included in *The Wall* (BLAKE, 2012, p. 326).

The movie scene presents the setting for the beginning of Pink's journey into self isolation: his father's death in the Battle of Anzio. The song is actually divided into two distinct scenes in the movie, divided by the scene from "Another Brick in the Wall Part I".

In the first scene, we see Pink's father in the war. Dressed up in his uniform, he lights a lamp inside what appears to be a trench and starts to clean the barrels of his pistol. As the song fades out, the scene turns into the image of an open field, with a kid running on the horizon. This is a scene often repeated throughout the film; the child, we later learn, is Pink, as a boy.

The second scene shows Pink as a young teenager, curiously searching through a drawer at his mother's room, in which he finds his father's old personal objects. He finds the notice of his death, his bullets, his razor blade and his old uniform. The song finishes with Pink wearing his father's old uniform, while the scene is interposed with takes of his own father wearing it.

The lyrics deal with a battle, in which "a few ordinary lives" are lost. The battle is actually the Battle of Anzio, also known as "Operation Shingle", a rather futile offensive by the Allies, which consisted of an amphibious landing at the port of Anzio-Nettuno, 35 miles south of Rome. The plan was to secure a beachhead and push twenty miles inland to the Alban Hills. This would allow the Allies to disrupt the paths that led the southern German front to Rome, which could then lead to the capture of Rome and eventually manage to shorten the war (WOODROOF, 1995, p. 62-63). The offensive led to an almost 6-month long battle, which, although ultimately ended with the Allied victory, was considered a military fiasco, with 83,000 total casualties, 43,000 on the Allies side.

The lyrics of "When the Tigers Broke Free" report how the battle went, but not without some important remarks by the speaker. He talks, for instance, about the loss of a "few ordinary lives" due to the High Command's inefficiency; this is evidently an ironic comment, since the "ordinary" lives lost were not few, and one of them was Pink's father. The lyrics also show us how Pink's mother got notice of her husband's death, "in the form of a scroll, with gold leaf and all" which the boy found while looking at old photographs. The last stanza reports the end of the battle, telling how the High Command "took his father from him".

This is a moment where the coincidence between author and character becomes very evident, and *The Wall*'s status as a type of self-fiction is made apparent: Eric Fletcher Waters, Roger Waters' father, served in the 8th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, and died in the battle of Anzio, in February 18th, 1944 – when his son was still 5 months old. Life as a war orphan left a scar in Water, as he

himself puts it: "As soon as I learned how to speak, I asked where my father was". Waters declares, in the same interview, that he grew up seeing the other children's fathers coming back from war, picking them up at school and taking them to playgrounds, and he couldn't accept that these soldiers came back but his father didn't (BLAKE, 2012, p. 327).

The war and the loss of the father are the first bricks that Pink (and, perhaps, Waters) put in the wall he builds around himself. Life as a war orphan and, especially, an orphan's view of war are subjects to which I will return.

"Goodbye Blue Sky": The experience of the Blitz

The Blitz was perhaps the most terrible demonstration of the destructive power of the Third Reich's Luftwaffe. Designed to lower the civilian's morale, it consisted in massively bombing several important civilian areas and leaving a trail of dead and homeless behind. Though pure data cannot actually describe its horror, it can allow us to at least have an image of what it was like: by the end of the war, no less than 28% of the houses in London were damaged or destroyed, 6% beyond any repair. The situation was even more hopeless in central London, where 90% of the houses were damaged. On the worst night of the Blitz in London (May 10th, 1941), 2,200 fires raged; a third of the streets of London were impassable; 155,000 families were left without gas, water or electricity; 1,792 people were seriously injured and 1,436 killed – all in a single night (SINFIELD, 1997, p. 7).

The horror of the Blitz for the Londoners is well captured by Roger Waters in "Goodbye Blue Sky", a very grim song that reveals, more than anything, how disillusioned by the war were its victims. The speaker talks about the bombs falling from the sky over the "frightened ones". The most significant verse is, perhaps, the disturbing question posed by the speaker: "Did you ever wonder why we had to run for shelter while the promise of a brave new world unfurled beneath a clear blue sky?" The advance of high technology imposed upon the people of the early 20th Century the possibility of a brave new world; this brave new world, however, turned out to be that of technological war, the industrialization of genocide, which found in the Nazi Germany its most prominent advocate. The horrors of the Holocaust and the cruelty of the Blitz were examples of these highly advanced methods of massacre.

The movie scene including the song consists of one of the most memorable and powerful parts of the movie. It is the first (of several) animation scenes of the film, drawn by political

cartoonist and illustrator Gerald Scarfe. The animation starts with a white dove (universal symbol of peace) torn apart to blood and rags by a big, black vulture upon a black, stormy sky. The vulture starts to acquire a machine-like appearance until it turns into a hybrid between a bird and an airplane. It flies over London and deploys a monster that turns into a futuristic building. Military airplanes start bombing up from the skies of London. The city's inhabitants are portrayed as skinny humans that walk on all-fours and have gas masks instead of faces; the "frightened ones", as Scarfe (2010, p. 170) himself calls them. They crawl through alleys and sewers, gathering in groups, trying to stay alive. They look at the airplanes, which then become crosses. The following scene shows a British flag which disassembles itself until there's only the red inner cross left. This cross becomes a bleeding Christian cross on a destroyed battlefield. We see several skeletons wearing military uniforms standing up and becoming crosses. The white dove reappears and flies around them. The animation ends with the blood from the bleeding cross falling into a gutter. Its brutal beauty is hard to be described in words, and manages to capture the ideas of the song brilliantly.

The war correspondent Robert Goralski put in words the impact that the model of war of WWII had on our civilization: "What we did to each other is almost beyond human conception" (GORALSKI *apud* FUSSEL, 1991, p.311). The idea of an "inconceivable" horror has permeated the literature regarding the war, especially that written by its veterans. One of the most common themes of World War II literature is silence: the inability to verbalize what happened on the front. Karl Shapiro expresses his feelings towards this fact: "We all came out of the same army and joined the same generation of silence." (SHAPIRO *apud* FUSSEL, 1991, p. 312). Several other authors dealt with this perspective: Gavin Ewart, Randall Jarrell and Milton Acorn, just to name a few (FUSSEL, p. 311-313, 1991).

This perspective of a war that denies verbalization is present in *The Wall* as well; the album version of the song "Empty Spaces", although it doesn't clearly bring up the war, has an idea of "emptiness" in speech which is very similar to that of the authors of the war:

> What shall we use
> to fill the empty spaces
> Where we used
> to talk?
> (PINK FLOYD, 2011)

The question Waters poses is very important: when the war takes away our ability to express our experiences through language, what happens to the "empty spaces" left behind? Perhaps we can claim that, if "talking" can't describe the horrors, singing might just manage to do it. Therefore, a

rock album could, perhaps, serve better than a war novel. This idea is similar to the perspective that many authors of both World Wars had regarding the previous forms of writing: they felt that the language that existed before the war could not convey its reality, and a new form of realism would have to be created. Writing about war consists, then, of recreating language and rejecting previous attempts to verbalize it. James Knibb (1989), in his essay "Literary Strategies of War, Strategies of Literary War" puts it in these terms:

> As war in the twentieth century doubles and then redoubles its claims to newness and uniqueness, so the assertive strength of that rejection of antecedents increases. Implicit in the opposition between "older forms of war writing" and "*this* war text" is the assertion that post-1914 war texts attempt to occupy a space which is non-literary; in so doing, they begin to effect a powerful revocation of the apparent dichotomy between "war" and "words" (KNIBB, 1989, p.21).

"Would you like to see Britannia rule again my friend?": the fear of a Fascist British Empire

A certain degree of apprehension regarding the rise of a totalitarian state in Great Britain and in the United States was subject of many authors in the twentieth century. George Orwell's *1984* is perhaps the most famous example, but definitely not the only one. The fear of a totalitarian takeover in the western democracies in literature can be tracked back at least to 1935, when North American novelist Sinclair Lewis wrote the satirical novel *It can't happen here*, which represents the United States ruled by a fascist dictator.

The so-called pop culture of the post-war (especially after the 1970's) managed to take this trend even further; Alan Moore's 1979 comic book *V for Vendetta*, Frank Zappa's 1979 concept album *Joe's Garage*, Microsoft's 2007 videogame *Crackdown*, and many others are examples of this tendency. Alan Moore, in his introduction to the 1988 edition of *V for Vendetta* expresses this fear very clearly, especially considering the British scenario:

> It's 1988 now. Margaret Thatcher is entering her third term of office and talking confidently of an unbroken Conservative leadership well into the next century. My youngest daughter is seven and the tabloid press are circulating the idea of concentration camps for persons with AIDS. The new riot police wear black visors, as do their horses, and their vans have rotating video cameras mounted on top. The government has expressed a desire to eradicate homosexuality, even as an abstract concept, and one can only speculate as to which minority will be next legislated against. (…) It's cold and it's mean spirited and I don't like it here anymore.
> Goodnight England. Goodnight Home Service and V for Victory.
> Hello the Voice of Fate and V FOR VENDETTA. (MOORE, 1988, p. 6)

Roger Waters too feared this inclination of the British government. He already started to express his concern in Pink Floyd's *Animals*, a concept album consisting of an adaptation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, but placing it in the context of England in the 1970's. *The Wall* takes this even further: while isolated inside his "wall", dealing with his inner demons and traumas, Pink pictures himself as a fascist dictator, strongly inspired by Hitler. The rock star pictures his fans as fanatical followers, organized under his "Hammer Party", while he incites them to take over to the streets "weeding out the weaklings": the "queers and the coons and the reds and the jews". This sequence takes place (both in the album and in the movie) through three songs, which I call "The Fascist Pink Suite": "In the flesh", "Run like hell" and "Waiting for the worms". Waters explains why he chose the image of a fascist dictator to picture rock stardom:

> **Roger Waters**: I remember realizing that I was making no contact with the audience and that performing was no longer doing anything for me. (…) As the tour went on I felt more and more alienated from the people who we were supposed to be there entertaining. (…) These gigs that rock 'n' roll bands do in stadiums are fundamentally about ego and money – they might fulfill some function, some kind of tribal response to being in a place with a large number of people supporting something, like a football match, which is fine – but I don't think they have all that much to do with music anymore. (…) We tried to make shows that were big enough to work in stadiums and people have gone on to do the same thing since. You could say that they work on one level because people go on paying 30 dollars or whatever it is for a ticket. So, on a commercial level they work. But my belief is that fundamentally they owe more to Nuremberg rallies, if you like, than to art. That may sound a bit highfalutin' but that's what I believe. Hence Pink's transformation into a fascist demagogue (SCARFE, 2010, p. 211).

The lyrics to "In the Flesh" set the mood to the suite: the speaker tells the fans that Pink isn't well enough to attend the concert, but he has sent a surrogate band to find out "where his fans really stand". He then proceeds to command the execution of several individuals in the audience:

> Are there any queers in the theatre tonight?
> Get them up against the wall!
> There's one in the spotlight, he don't look right to me
> Get him up against the wall!
> That one looks Jewish!
> And that one's a coon!
> Who let all of this riff-raff into the room?
> There's one smoking a joint,
> And another with spots
> If I had my way,
> I'd have all of you shot!
> (PINK FLOYD, 2011)

The incitement becomes even more violent when one observes the film version. The sequence starts with Pink, the dictator, inside his limousine going to a public presentation. He leaves the car and walks alongside his officers into the arena. Once inside, he smiles, kisses babies (a recurrent image when dealing with government leaders) and greets acquaintances. Once he gets to the stage, we see a giant roaring audience of his followers cheering and hailing with the crossed arms symbol (which imitate the crossed-hammer symbol of Pink's party). What was supposed to be a rock concert is completely transformed into a political rally of an extreme right-wing authoritarian party. When he starts to sing, the audience pays close attention. The arena and the stage are a mix between a fascist congress and a rock concert. When Pink starts telling people to be put against the wall, his officers promptly obey. One by one, people are violently pulled out of the crowd. When he finishes his speech, "I'd have all of you shot", the crowd bursts into cheers and applause.

"In the flesh" is followed by the later-to-become single "Run like hell", when Pink's followers take to the streets in a wave of violence. The message sent by Pink's Neo-Nazi followers is very clear: "you'd better run". The movie version is perhaps the most savage scene in the motion picture.

The opening sequence of the song is presented with Pink's followers dancing in synchrony to the rhythm of the song, following a choreography which disturbingly remarks the Nazi salute. The rest of the scene consists on the followers running around the neighborhood and attacking any social minority they can find. They break into an Indian restaurant and proceed to kick its owners out and destroy all furniture in the place. The image of three people hung on a gallows pole against the sunset also reminds of the lynchings of African-Americans in the USA. The fanatics proceed to attack an interracial couple which is making out in the back of a car, beating the black man and raping the white woman.

Pink's followers are typical British Neo-Nazi skinheads: strong, young, white men with shaved heads. The actors were recruited by the director Alan Parker from London's East End, among real skinheads. A scene in "Run like hell" where the skinheads fight against the police kept going after the cameras stopped rolling (BLAKE, 2012, p. 325); the result on screen is a terrifying scene.

The suite finishes with "Waiting for the worms", in which Pink leads a rally with his partisans, evoking through a megaphone the image of the returning rule of the British Empire. "Would you like to see Britannia rule again my friend?" and "Would you like to send our colored

cousins home again, my friend?" are among the most disturbing verses of the song. The ideas of ethnic cleansing and eugenics echo throughout the entire song, with images such as "cutting out the deadwood", "cleaning up the city", "weeding out the weaklings", and "waiting for the final solution to strengthen the strain": an evident reference to Hitler's final solution to "purify" Germany, the Holocaust. Another clear reference is "Waiting to turn on the showers / and fire the ovens", which refers to how the Jewish prisoners were killed in the Nazi concentration camps.

The movie sequence presents Pink – in his fascist outfit – parading with his followers through the streets of the city. As they walk by, curtains are closed and doors are shut. The skinheads put pamphlets with the crossed hammer sign and the saying "Britannia Rules" on the windshields of cars. They also bear banners which strongly resemble those of the III Reich.

The sequence finishes with a quick montage of animation (excerpts from the clips of "Empty Spaces" and "Goodbye Blue Sky") which transitions to the famous "Marching Hammer" sequence: we see an animation of hundreds of crossed hammers "marching" while the song can be heard in the back, with Pink's voice commanding the skinheads. The voice of a huge crowd screaming "Hammer, Hammer, Hammer" gains volume until it suddenly stops. This "crossed hammer" montage is quite strong; the illustrator Gerald Scarfe declared that he came up with the sign for Pink's party by thinking about the "most violent image" he could conceive (SCARFE, 2011, p. 210).

It's not a coincidence that when choosing to picture his own inner dystopia, Roger Waters did not use the image of a Stalinist totalitarian government like George Orwell did, or a world of total consumerist alienation like the one portrayed by Aldous Huxley, but the image of a Hitlerian dictatorship: the Second World War, as we've seen before, left a deep scar in his life – the death of his father, fighting against Nazism, being the first "bricks in his wall". Therefore, the strongest image a war orphan of the World War II can evoke is that of that war. Besides, World War II and the Holocaust are, perhaps, the easiest images of war one can relate to nowadays, due to its massive appearances in mass culture. As Tom Burns puts it:

> For people who came to adulthood in the twentieth century, the Second World War is in fact the "great war" even if that title has been officially co-opted by the prior conflict. (…) Not only its supreme importance in the history of the world but the sheer size and length of the war ensured that the most varied literary works about it would be written. (…) For narrative fiction, in particular, more than half a century later, the war is still the source of an annual outpouring of both serious and popular novels. One reason is surely the ready availability of a perennial villain, the Nazi (BURNS, 2009, p. 291).

Not only World War II would produce the most "perennial villain" for Waters, but it also brings up the worst part of his personae.

"Bring the boys back home": the war through the eyes of its orphan

The Second World War was perhaps the war with the greatest amount of literary works related to it in the 20th Century. The numbers, though approximate, are impressive: Michael Paris lists over 2,000 novels, and Myron J. Smith lists 593 "combat novels" alone (excluding Navy, prisoners of war or homefront fiction) (BURNS, 2009, p. 295).

But an aspect shared by many of these narratives is the central aspect of "experience": even fictions written long after the war make explicit the intention of describing how it felt to be in the war, whether as a soldier, a prisoner, a bombarded citizen, and so on. Upon analyzing the war correspondence of soldiers, Fussell (1991) argues that there is a central idea according to which the arts or the discussion spaces of the civilian world ("library, film theater, debating society or classroom") cannot really perceive the experience of war; only that experience itself can do it. Therefore, combat novels are frequently an attempt of "describing the indescribable", as previously discussed. This aspect of "experience", however, does not limit itself to combat novels, but is present in many types of war novels. Burns (2009) discusses how these novels vary in treatment and scope, with the presence of both combat novels or, for instance, "civilian novels set in wartime".

The Wall, however, shows us a different perspective on war. Roger Waters (or his character/alter-ego Pink) is not a veteran of war; he was born in 1943 and was less than two years old when the war ended. Therefore, we don't have the perspective of the "experience" of war; we have the perspective of the orphan who was deeply scarred by it.

As we've previously pointed out, the death of his father makes Pink start his process of self-isolation inside his wall. Being the first "brick in the wall", it's not without reason that the war recurrently appears in different moments of his journey. Shortly after "When the tigers broke free", in the movie version, the song "The Thin Ice" deals with the beginning of Pink's life:

> If you should go skating
> On the thin ice of modern life
> Dragging behind you the silent reproach
> Of a million tear stained eyes
> Don't be surprised, when a crack in the ice
> Appears under your feet
> You slip out of your depth and out of your mind

With your fear flowing out behind you
As you claw the thin ice
(PINK FLOYD, 2011)

After the death of his father, the young boy finds out that the sea is not actually warm and the sky might not be that blue. Modern life (in reality, "post-war life") reveals itself as a "thin ice" that cracks under Pink's feet when his father dies. Here starts his slow journey into his own inner abyss.

In the movie version, the first part of the song is played to the image of the aftermath of Pink's father's last battle. The surviving soldiers are carried to medical units, and the dead are left there. We see several wounded, with strong graphic imagery. The sequence ends with soldiers marching through a smoky battlefield. This is the closest to "combat" the movie ever gets in its portrayal. The reason is evident: we have a perspective of war as "consequences" and not as "experience"; Pink has never actually lived the war, but he has mourned from it. The image of wounded soldiers is much more concrete for him than that of "heroic" combat.

The second sequence presents Pink's messy hotel room in the United States, where he is touring with his band. Pink is floating on the swimming pool, eyes gazing vaguely at the sky. When the lyrics end ("as you claw the thin ice") Pink starts drowning in the pool. His drowning is interposed with more scenes of the war and, specially, of his dead father. The pool's water soon becomes blood, the blood of soldiers.

"Another Brick in the Wall Pt. I" once again brings up the perspective of the war orphan. Pink talks about the death of his father and about how he felt after it. His dad has "flown across the ocean/leaving just a memory/snapshot in the family album". A "snapshot in the family album", his razor blade, pistol and bullets, uniform (as we can see in the movie version of "When the tigers broke free"): this is all his father could leave him, mementos. He has, of course, no actual memories of his father; he then tries to "build" a memory, by gathering together pieces: objects, testimonies, movies and songs about the war, and so on. In that way, he also "builds" an image of war, and that is essential for the orphan's perspective: since he didn't actually live the war, he has to make sense out of it by the experiences of others, which, as we've already previously discussed, is often seen as impossible. And making sense out of the war is essential, because otherwise he can't understand why he lost his father. But how can one make sense out of something which is not describable, and

that maybe has no sense to begin with? The result is an unsolved conflict, which will haunt Pink until his adulthood.

The novelist Bobbie Ann Mason wrote a novel which reaches this exact point: how can the orphan understand war*? In Country* tells the story of Sam, a seventeen-year-old girl from the small town of Hopewell, who loses her father in the Vietnam War, and lives with her uncle (who is a Vietnam veteran himself). Through the book, Sam's greatest frustration is the fact that though she tries to understand what the war was, there is an uneasiness in dealing with the subject by other people. No one is willing to help her understand it, because no one wishes to talk about it. In a certain point in the book, another veteran tells Sam:

> Sam, you might as well stop asking questions about the war. Nobody gives a shit. They've got it twisted around in their heads what it was about, so they can live with it and not have to think about it. The thing is, they never spit on us here. They treated the vets O.K., because the anti-war feeling never got stirred up good around here. But that means they've got a notion in their heads of who we are, and that image just don't fit all of us. Around here, nobody wants to rock the boat (MASON, p. 79, 1993).

War is ugly, and after it happens, nobody wants to talk about it. So what can an orphan do to grasp the meaning of the tragic event that took his/her father? Once again, the song "Empty Spaces" becomes very meaningful: what indeed can be done to fill the empty spaces where people used to talk before the war? Water's approach on war is, therefore, essentially that of an orphan; several other songs bring evidence about that. In "Vera", Waters sings accompanied by a soft piano harmony: "Does anybody here remember Vera Lynn?".

Vera Lynn was a British singer-songwriter whose songs were enormously popular among British troops during the Second World War. During the war she toured Egypt, India and Burma, giving outdoor concerts for the troops. She became known, and is still referred to, as "The Forces' Sweetheart". One of her most famous songs, "We will meet again" is referred to in the lyrics: "Remember how she said that/We would meet again". Pink remembers well how she said that "We would meet again", because, in reality, he didn't meet his father again. He feels isolated and lonely. War took him his father and scarred his life. The song goes on: "Vera, Vera / what has become of you?". What has become of Vera? Since no one wants to talk about the war, he is left listening to old promises sung in her radio-friendly voice. "Does anybody else in here / feel the way I do?", he asks. Probably many people do, but to the orphan, he will always be alone.

The movie scene is rather touching: first of all we see a young Pink walking around a battlefield, observing the corpses of dead soldiers. Once again, Pink sees war only as consequence and never as an experience. He then goes to a military medical ward and wanders around aimlessly, until he finds his older self, maniacally crouched against the corner of a wall and reading a book. He touches his older self and the adult looks back with a maniacal laugh. The child runs away and proceeds to walk around muddy trenches where more corpses pile up. The young kid then gets to a train station, where soldiers are coming back from war and their families are meeting them. As "Vera" plays in the background, the young Pink looks for his father but, of course, doesn't find him. As we know by now, he is dead.

In the train station, the stage is set to the next song, "Bring the boys back home". By the end of "Vera", the sound of martial drums is heard. This is a military song, with the accompaniment of a big choir. Its lyrics are simple and straightforward: "Bring the boys back home", it asks. The families are asking them to be brought back. But who are they asking to? Most probably the government. This is yet another interesting aspect of Waters' political perspective: during World War II, although the families did miss the boys and wanted them to come back, the official discourse was very different: "Our policy must be victory at all costs", said Churchill (BURNS, 2009). Bringing the boys back home without winning the war was something inconceivable. Asking the boys to come back reveals an anti-military and anti-belligerent point of view that strongly suits Waters. The lyrics go on: "Don't leave the Children on their own, no, no". This is, of course, an almost ironic remark; at least one child is already left on its own: Pink, the young war orphan.

The film sequence picks up right where "Vera" stopped: Pink is at the train station, when a martial band walks in, singing the song. Everyone in the station sings along, except for Pink. Scenes of soldiers on the front singing the song are alternated with the scenes from the train station. When the marching band walks out, an image of soldier's on the battlefield walking towards the sunset appears. At the end of the song, Pink is left alone at the station. He is, of course, forever an orphan, isolated in his own adult mind.

Near the end of the movie, Pink is already completely lost inside his own mind and has delusions about himself as a fascist dictator (discussed previously). In a moment of desperation, in the song "Stop", he cries: "I wanna go home/take off this uniform/and leave the show". This song consists on the end of Pink's fascist hallucination, in which he prepares to be "go to trial" for his "crimes" of self-isolation and self-humiliation. The image of "going home" and "taking off the uniform" also resembles the war; if we are to maintain the relation between Pink and his father, we

might even remember that Pink's father never got the chance to "go home and take off the uniform". And which uniform does Pink want to take off? We might say that he wants to take off his fascist garments, but it is also reasonable to say that he wants to take off his father's uniform, which he put on in the beginning of the story, in the movie scene of "When the tigers broke free".

The war is, for Pink and Waters, essentially, an experience of absence: not having a father, not experiencing the war, not being able to communicate. It is, in fact, a non-experience: while the narratives produced by veterans often revolve around the omnipresence of the war, *The Wall* presents war as an empty space, which the orphan tries to fill.

Through the decades, wars have left behind them several orphans. Unfortunately, their voices are often silenced. Roger Waters, today, plays an important role in exposing these voices. As a war orphan, he created a narrative which evidences a perspective we often forget when talking about armed conflicts: the voices left behind at home, away from the trenches.

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