

Now a major motion picture: War films and
Hollywood's new patriotism.

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"Now a Major Motion Picture": War Films and Hollywood's New Patriotism

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The "New Patriotism" that has appeared in recent American films is not a revival of older, reassuring versions of patriotic fervor and ideological conviction. In actuality, the "New Patriotism" can be seen as a repudiation of sentimental and ideological concepts that put nation and cause ahead of individual survival. The "New Patriotism" celebrates, in essence, loyalty to one's comrades in battle, the ability to survive the horrific face of modern hyper-lethal weaponry and warfare, and the shared experience of battle. Films such as *The Patriot*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *We Were Soldiers*, and *Black Hawk Down* do not revive patriotism so much as turn it inside out so that the private motivations and goals of the individual soldier supersede any stated or understood national or public rationales for whatever war is being fought.

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In *From Movie Lot to Beachhead*, a tribute to the role of filmmakers in the victory over the Axis Powers published in 1945, Robert St. John noted that at one time “it was considered to be smart to be cynical about Hollywood.” But, “that was before Hollywood started making

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Martin A. Novelli received his Ph.D. in English from Temple University. He is Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts at Ocean County College. He has taught, written on, and presented papers on post-World War II culture and politics; the films and literature of the Vietnam war; the American Western; American Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction and Film; and the Vampire in Literature and Film.



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