

Why I Watch Michael Kitchen in Foyle's War

By Phyllis Chesler

Our world is completely upside down; some American politicians absolutely insist that the ongoing riots in LA are “peaceful” when every night, I see with my own eyes, videos of cars being torched, American flags being burned, shops being looted, rocks and other objects being thrown at cops, foreign flags being flown, and mobs surging Jihad-style. I also see their counterpart riots in New York City, in which streets and traffic are being blocked.

Are my eyes lying to me? Or are the politicians in charge of LA lying to me? In what way are these George Floyd or pro-Palestine-style riots “peaceful”?

Well, we live in a time where the Nazis of the Red-Green alliance are viewed as “freedom fighters,” where Hamas’s massacre of civilian Israelis on 10/7 either did not happen, or was an act of justified “resistance;” where young female American students consider face-masking, aka niqab, as an “anti-racist” statement, where hate speech, guaranteed to lead to attacks upon and even the killing of Jews, must be protected as “free speech” or is seen as an “academic freedom.”

This linguistic reversal of reality has plagued me for the last twenty-five years. So—what do I do when I am totally fatigued after a long day of monitoring headlines and writing All About It?

Lately, I’ve been watching Michael Kitchen, Honeysuckle Weeks (yes, that is her name), and Anthony Howell in *Foyle’s War*. This first aired in 2003 and ran for eight seasons. It is set on the south coast of England during World War Two at a time

in which everyone (at least on camera) was clear about who the enemy was, why they were fighting—and for what. More interestingly, Foyle is a detective whose job it is to investigate so-called ordinary crime—theft, extortion, murder *during* a world war. The show claims that this, too, remains important.

Kitchen has the kindest face. He dresses in the 1940's style, in a long coat, suspenders, a vest, and a fedora perched just so on his head. He is a calm and stable figure. Foyle has standards, savvy, and morals. He actually has manners as do all the other characters. How utterly refreshing! Kitchen's Foyle inspires trust. He is really a very smart detective. But even more importantly, the series is set in the past; we know (more or less) how it all ends. In a way, this is comforting given our present reality.

There are also cows, fields, and glorious gardens. The show is not naive. Here we have very cranky farmers, champion pub crawlers, crooked cops, crooked war profiteers, passionate pacifists, Catholics who are tormented about breaking the sixth commandment (against murder) even if only in a war. We have left-wing agitators, Soviet spies, the discovery of radar, breaking the Nazi code, the beginning of a new "dirty tricks" department, Britain's version of America's OSS (Office of Strategic Services).

I actually once met and interviewed an American soldier who shared some off-the-record anecdotes with me about what he did in Europe during WW2 in the OSS. He was a most impressive spy, a man who still stood "at attention" even in his early nineties.

For me, *Foyle's War* is also time-travel. It is, in a sense, a costume drama too. It's why I've watched *Outlander* and *Discovery of Witches*. (I won't ever watch the most excellent *Outlander* again. Go ahead, ask me why.)

Of course, I watch all the quality British dramas as well. The Brits really have a handle on both theater and movies. They have Maggie Smith, Judy Dench, Joan Plowright, Helen Mirren, Emma Thompson, Lawrence Olivier, Mark Rylance's Cromwell, Ian McKellen, Colin Firth, Ben Kingsley—need I go on?

Here is a photo of the three main actors. Kitchen's on the left.



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