

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE BEST LAID PLANS OF MICE AND
MEN: OFFICIAL NARRATIVES AND
AMERICAN MEANING-MAKING IN
WORLD WAR II

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History

During World War II, the U.S. government attempted to shape how Americans made sense of the war and control how they understood its meaning. Despite the government's comprehensive efforts and major accomplishments like changing American geographic identity and reinterpreting enduring cultural artifacts, they could not comprehensively define the war. Audiences, then as now, brought their own perspectives to media and propaganda, interpreting governmental messages and narratives in their own ways and according to their preexisting opinions and worldviews. Ultimately, the government could not control or anticipate how their messages were received. And in fact, a great deal of World War II propaganda continues to circulate today in new ways that its creators probably never anticipated, accruing new meanings as changes in context and culture offer new interpretive possibilities.

THE BEST LAID PLANS OF MICE AND MEN: OFFICIAL NARRATIVES
AND AMERICAN MEANING-MAKING IN WORLD WAR II

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, without whom it would have been impossible, and to my grandfather, who taught me how to see the world.

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List of Abbreviations

COVID-19 — Coronavirus disease 2019

FDR — President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

OWI — Office of War Information

U.S. — United States

U.S.S. — United States Ship

Prologue

Bernadette Marcellino was a teenager during World War II, when her brother Salvatore served in the United States Navy. Describing the war to me in April 2015, she began, “That was a sad time,” and told me that her family, being religious Catholics, would often go to church and pray Novenas for the safe return of Salvatore and of all their relatives and neighbors away at war.¹ Bernadette’s brother sent many letters home and, eventually, Salvatore returned from the war unharmed. “He got home safe,” Bernadette said, “but he didn’t stay home too long.”² On New Year’s Eve, Salvatore attended a party, but did not return home in time for the family to use his car to drive to church, so the next morning Bernadette instead walked to church and then to work. That day, however, a policeman knocked on the door of the Marcellino home. “He told my mother and father that my brother was dead,” Bernadette recalled.³ Although he survived the war, Salvatore passed away less than a year after coming home. In her grief, Salvatore’s mother destroyed nearly all of the many letters Salvatore had sent her during his time in the Navy, and other members of the family followed suit. None wanted to remember any longer the “sad time” that had, despite a brief period of happiness after the American victory in the Pacific, ended in unexpected tragedy.⁴ Salvatore’s family never asked him questions about his wartime experiences; they had been warned by others not to talk to returning servicemen about the war

¹ Bernadette Semeniuk, Anthropological Interview with Bernadette Semeniuk (nee Marcellino) conducted by Christine Kirchner, April 2015, Author’s personal collection.

² Semeniuk.

³ Semeniuk.

⁴ Semeniuk.

until the veterans had time to fully readjust to civilian life.⁵ Salvadore passed away before that happened, and any questions his family had for him will remain forever unasked and unanswered. It would be for the best to destroy Salvadore's wartime letters, his mother may have thought, when to read each line would only remind her anew that she would never again hear her son's voice. One by one, the letters disappeared into the flames, crackling away into nothing, each word fading into oblivion.

Sixty-two years after Salvadore Marcellino's death, in 2008, I sat in the living room in the home of Bernadette, my grandmother, paging through a photo album I had found on her bookshelf. The album itself could not have been more than ten or fifteen years old, but its contents were much older. It contained numerous pictures of Bernadette's brother, Salvadore, almost all of them depicting Salvadore as a young man (he was 19), often in a Navy uniform, in a number of scenes from military life. The album also contained, in addition to the photographs, a small handful of letters and cards from Salvadore. Most of the letters were addressed to Salvadore's uncle (it would later occur to me that this was how they escaped the flames of grief). One letter caught my eye; early in his time in the Navy, Salvadore wrote a letter to his uncle, establishing a code:

Listen I think we are going to Pearl Harbor on convoying duty. Do not say any think [sic] to my Mother. "Now listen at this, if I ever write you a letter asking you if you have sold your truck yet, well that will mean I am in Pearl Harbor." Do you get me[?] If you ever receive a letter with that in it you will know where I am at. I want you to tell my father

⁵ Semeniuk.

and if he wants to tell Mom, it is ok. But do not say any think [sic] to him unless you receive the letter saying I am there.⁶

Intrigued, I carefully read through the few other letters in the album, wondering if Salvadore ever did use the code to signal to his uncle that he was at Pearl Harbor. Sure enough, I found another letter, the handwriting more cramped and difficult to read, but with the code phrase clearly emphasized in several places.⁷ Curiosity satisfied, I set the album back on the shelf.

Over time, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the experience of finding the letter and, later, of interviewing my grandmother about her own experience of World War II. What struck me the most, however, was the way that my great-uncle Salvadore's short life, at least as indicated by the fragments of it that were available to me, was dominated by the war, by Naval service in the Pacific Theater, and especially by Pearl Harbor, a subject seemingly tinged with trepidation — he was concerned his mother would be very distressed to hear of his presence there — though he traveled to Hawaii nearly two years after Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese. Of course, my perspective is limited by the constraints of the (informal) archive — most of the historical evidence of Salvadore Marcellino's wartime life was destroyed many years ago. Was his military service truly so marked by the shadow of Pearl Harbor? And what was he like as a person, before and beyond the seemingly all-consuming forces of war, death, and grief? What did *he* think of the war? For me, these reflections on family history began an interest in researching, with a broader lens, the intersections of archives — especially archival fragments,

⁶ "Letter from Salvadore Marcellino to John Marcellino," September 2, 1943, Author's personal collection.

⁷ "Letter from Salvadore Marcellino to John Marcellino," October 3, 1943, Author's personal collection.

identity, memory, historical and temporal contexts, and the ways that the meanings even of very familiar documents unfold and change over time, yielding new perspectives on the past.

In my thesis I attempt to bring these interests to bear in a re-examination of familiar documents and images, several of which are prominent in the everyday public, now largely digital, memory of World War II. These documents — including speeches, books, posters, and animated cartoons — would have been part of the political and popular cultural landscape of many Americans before, during, and after World War II. Many remain in our cultural landscape today, particularly on the internet, where they exist in digital and sometimes crowdsourced forms. New contexts exist for many historical documents, contexts that almost certainly could never have been predicted or accounted for by these documents' creators. I have chosen to embrace this complication of context in my research and analyses. Almost all of the research for this thesis was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic; I was unable to access most of the physical archives that I had originally planned to consult, and I conducted the bulk of my research online, using digital sources. The shape and focus that this project has taken reflect the limitations imposed by the pandemic, but these restrictions also presented me with a unique opportunity to reflect on context with regard to historical research. Not only are many of my sources divorced from their original contexts by the necessities of time and archive, but my research itself has taken place in a context (at home, online) very different from that of much traditional historical research (in physical archives or libraries). I have adopted an interdisciplinary approach, using skills developed through my background in English language and literature to perform close readings on a selection of primary sources.

My thesis explores how different kinds of messages about American involvement in World War II were framed by the U.S. government and by propagandists, and how those

messages could be interpreted. Despite the U.S. government's enormous effort to frame the war in specific conceptual terms through official narratives, wartime America had no single frame for meaning-making; even the most carefully crafted messages were ultimately open-ended and could be misinterpreted, depending in part on audiences' contexts. My argument is also partly a methodological one. In my three chapters, I apply techniques of close reading in the style of a literary analysis on the primary sources I analyze. Some of my sources will be familiar to many people — President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR)'s speech after the attack on Pearl Harbor, propaganda posters, and propaganda cartoons, for example — but my methodology yields novel interpretations, for example a reading of music in wartime propaganda cartoons as subversive of propaganda's racist underpinnings, among others.

Historiography

My work engages with social and cultural histories of World War II and of American memory of the war. Among the works that have influenced my own is Emily S. Rosenberg's *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*. In this book, Rosenberg argues that in American memory the attack on Pearl Harbor is not a discrete historical event but rather a highly charged symbol that is always being refashioned and reinterpreted in various "cultural contexts and contests."⁸ Rosenberg draws upon many narratives and memories of Pearl Harbor, tracing the chronology of these memories and reimaginings of the attack from its immediate aftermath into the early 2000s. I attempt to demonstrate a similar process of refashioning with regard to the changing meanings, arising from changing contexts, of much World War II

⁸ Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

propaganda, extending far beyond narratives about the attack on Pearl Harbor even though Pearl Harbor also acted as a window through which Americans viewed and interpreted the Pacific War.⁹ In her book, Rosenberg suggests that an “infamy framework” shapes the memory of Pearl Harbor and illustrates “the various rhetorical and narrative components that came to structure the most influential remembering of the attack.”¹⁰ In other words, it was the theme of infamy that characterized early American memories of Pearl Harbor, beginning with FDR’s famous speech. Rosenberg is correct that our “media-saturated culture” has rendered Pearl Harbor especially “volatile,” but the same was actually true regarding narratives surrounding other aspects of the war; this was true during the war itself, as Rosenberg acknowledges with respect to Pearl Harbor.¹¹

Rosenberg’s infamy framework served as a compelling starting point for my own investigation into American war rhetoric and propaganda. The “infamy framework” was adopted to lead Americans to graft the official narrative of the attack established in FDR’s “Infamy” speech onto “familiar patterns and narrative structures” already very important to them, making Pearl Harbor an especially potent symbol.¹² Rosenberg explains that the “infamy framework” actually originated in the popular memory of “America’s most celebrated frontier legends: Custer’s Last Stand and the Alamo.”¹³ Like Pearl Harbor, she writes, these events were also “terrible defeats that provided rallying cries for overwhelming military counterforce leading to total victory.”¹⁴ The idea of defeat producing a greater desire for victory rather than submission

⁹ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 36.

¹⁰ Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 12.

¹¹ Rosenberg, 5. Rosenberg discusses contemporary and long-subsequent American memories of Pearl Harbor throughout her book.

¹² Rosenberg, 12.

¹³ Rosenberg, 12.

¹⁴ Rosenberg, 12.

to inevitable failure was already an extant theme in American cultural memory. Rosenberg also points out that some contemporary narratives about the attack on Pearl Harbor asserted American “innocence” and that the nation had been attacked while it was sleeping, making the Japanese attack seem especially vile.¹⁵ She writes that “[t]he ‘sleeping’ metaphor—Americans as innocent, naive, and appallingly ignorant of a dangerous world—became a common part of the infamy story, reinforced by the dawn timing of the raid and the ‘rising sun’ symbol of Japan itself.”¹⁶ It seems that Pearl Harbor was used as a way to establish and reinforce an American identity of innocence and goodness in comparison to villainous foes. Rosenberg explains that “Roosevelt’s speech also emphasized that the attack hit U.S. territory itself” and that “[t]he infamy trope worked better if the attack was positioned on American soil.”¹⁷ Rosenberg’s point here reveals that it is recognized that the status of Hawaii as an American territory mattered in FDR’s speech, but in my view, there was more to it than that, and the subject of American space is related to the subject of American identity of the period. In this thesis I explain that American identity itself was bound up in part with conceptions of American space, not only with cultural memories of past events.

Meanings and memories during and after the war could be multiple and contradictory, and the popular American memory of World War II is, as scholars have shown, not always accurate. In *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II*, for example, Kenneth D. Rose argues that the so-called ‘Greatest Generation’ of World War II Americans “was no ‘greater’ than any other” generation; that it consisted of a mix of people in which “scoundrels coexisted with heroes” and that, further, patriotism was not a universally

¹⁵ Rosenberg, 17.

¹⁶ Rosenberg, 17.

¹⁷ Rosenberg, 14, 15.

meaningful or impactful concept for these Americans, particularly in the face of harsh economic realities.¹⁸ To do this, Rose relies on primary sources — textual and visual — produced by members of the World War II generation.¹⁹ Americans’ interpretations of propaganda during the war may not always have been patriotic — Americans likely experienced a range of reactions to propaganda and in fact any media, including news information, to which they were exposed. And one individual’s interpretation of a speech, a book, or a film, may not have been aligned with others’ interpretations, nor with the intentions of the producer of that cultural or political or informational artifact.

In my research I have chosen to especially consider media that would have been accessible to the American public during World War II, in order to gain insight into governmental efforts to shape Americans’ understanding of the war. In *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*, James T. Sparrow argues that it was during World War II, more so than during FDR’s New Deal as other historians have argued, that the U.S. federal government became larger than ever before and “dramatically extended the scope and nature of its authority.”²⁰ Sparrow emphasizes the legitimacy lent to this transformation of government power by ordinary American citizens, and, in doing so, focuses on “the social politics of the state, where the great structures of the nation touch everyday life.”²¹ I explore through my selection and analysis of primary sources a facet of this “grassroots” legitimization of government power that Sparrow identifies.²²

¹⁸ Kenneth Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 5.

¹⁹ Rose, 7.

²⁰ James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

²¹ Sparrow, 11.

²² Sparrow, 9.

Some additional works have influenced my research and writing in a less-direct way. The first of these is *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* by Michael Kammen.²³ Kammen also points out that FDR successfully used Americans' patriotism in order to increase his own political power, often associating himself with the cultural memory of Abraham Lincoln.²⁴ FDR was not necessarily unique in his deployment of American cultural memory; American "leaders [including Abraham Lincoln] have invoked and utilized mythic pasts in diverse ways," Kammen writes.²⁵ More broadly, Kammen addresses several themes important in my thesis, including the connections between cultural memory and national identity, the role of government in shaping American meaning making, and the function of war in shaping cultural memory.²⁶ At least prior to (and perhaps also after) American entry into World War II, Kammen suggests, propagandists and American leaders had ambiguous agendas and the content of their messages — pro-isolationist or pro-interventionist before the war, or whatever attempt they made to shape the war's meaning while the war was underway — could be difficult to clearly discern.²⁷ My thesis engages with and embraces these ambiguities and changeable meanings.

My views on the multiple possible meanings and interpretations of American wartime propaganda are also informed by John Bodnar's *The "Good War" in American Memory*.²⁸ Bodnar argues that the meaning of World War II was a contested subject among Americans and, because their views differed, "Americans were forced to create three powerful narratives to

²³ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

²⁴ Kammen, 452, 459.

²⁵ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, 448.

²⁶ Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. See Kammen 13–14 for a discussion of the major themes encapsulated in *Mystic Chords of Memory*.

²⁷ Kammen, 479.

²⁸ John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

explain the event that can be labeled traditional, critical, and humanitarian” that formed the basis of twentieth century American understandings of the war.²⁹ Although my own study of war rhetoric and propaganda and their interpretations does not condense the war’s multiple meanings into so few categories, my analyses are nonetheless influenced by my reading of Bodnar’s treatment of World War II in American memory, as well as in American forgetting.³⁰ What I have ultimately gained from Bodnar’s work is an increased understanding of the different yet overlapping ways that Americans conceived of the war, including the purpose of the war and the role of individuals in the war effort. As my thesis explores, one reason Americans had different conceptions of the war was that even the most well-crafted official — government produced or influenced — narratives of the war and articulations of its meaning could not account for the diversity of interpretations Americans brought to bear on such narratives, especially as contexts changed and over time.

My discussion of how much or little the government guided the creation and distribution of propagandic messages is indirectly informed by two authors’ — Michael S. Sweeney and Gerd Horten — treatments of the relatively hands-off approach that the U.S. government took regarding censorship (of print media and of radio broadcasts) and radio propaganda, respectively, during the war. Both authors heavily emphasize radio, which although not a main focus of my thesis provides an excellent case example of the different possible views on the outcome of the U.S. government’s approach to censorship and propaganda during the war. Sweeney, in *Secrets of Victory*, and Horten, in *Radio Goes to War*, draw differing conclusions about the effect U.S.

²⁹ Bodnar, 4.

³⁰ Bodnar mentions a “fusion of the real and the mythical [that] was driven not simply by a need to remember but also by a desire to forget” in narratives of the war in “American public memory,” 3. I am intrigued by the view that forgetting is inherently a part of memory.

government restraint with respect to control of radio broadcasts had on American democracy.³¹ Both authors argue, in fact, that the U.S. government's greatest influence over narratives of the war comes through what it did not do — that is, the government did not assume forcible control over the content of radio or other media broadcasts, but instead provided guidelines that were followed voluntarily by producers of media.

The government's choices regarding the management of propaganda had political ramifications. In *Secrets of Victory* and *Radio Goes to War*, governmental restraint is seen to have had significant political — not just cultural — effects: Michael Sweeney sees radio's independence in World War II as reinforcing democracy in America, whereas Gerd Horten sees it as having had an opposite effect.³² Michael Sweeney's *Secrets of Victory* is notable for its commitment to idealizing the government's preservation of free speech in the face of war and for its impressive base of primary sources. Sweeney argues that voluntary censorship was so successful during World War II because of good leadership in the Office of Censorship (an emergency wartime agency of the U.S. government) and an understanding shared by all Americans, including journalists, that victory in the war was a team effort. Sweeney goes as far as to suggest that the restraint adopted by the Office of Censorship not only helped to preserve freedom of the press but also maintained American democracy despite the stress of war.³³ In *Radio Goes to War*, however, Gerd Horten argues that the U.S. government's decision to leave radio propaganda largely in private hands during World War II resulted in the increased

³¹ Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³² Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II*; Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II*.

³³ Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II*, 1.

privatization of the public sphere, weakening democracy in favor of consumerism.³⁴ Horten goes as far as to call the U.S. “propaganda war” in World War II a “privatized war” fought for consumerism.³⁵ Horten maintains a focus throughout *Radio Goes to War* on the connections between radio and politics and takes a very critical view that Sweeney does not share, but both authors’ treatments of government’s hands-off approach to media have informed my own thinking on the subject. My thesis ultimately adopts a different focus and scope than that of either author, emphasizing some of the visual and textual artifacts of the American war effort. I also keep in consideration the knowledge that the government relinquished control over the exact shaping of its wartime messaging even as it attempted to carefully craft understandings of the war’s meaning. The long-term effects of this decision, though not universally agreed upon, have influenced American politics.

Methodology and Significance

Before proceeding, it is important to provide a more detailed overview of my methodology for analyzing the various primary sources I use in this thesis as well as to explain the significance of my methodological choices. In my first chapter, I examine a selection of speeches, including FDR’s famous “Infamy” speech, delivered in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor. I have chosen to analyze textual, rather than auditory, versions of the speeches to enable me to conduct literary analysis-style close readings on these sources. In one case, that of the “Infamy” speech, I analyze a draft version of the speech, including FDR’s notes and revisions on the document. This choice leads to a richer analysis of the source material, one that

³⁴ Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda During World War II*, 183.

³⁵ Horten, 9.

makes use of clues to FDR's intentions in the speech. In my second chapter I examine James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* as an example of how interwar popular culture could be reshaped, especially by the U.S. government, for purposes of war. I conduct an analysis of the novel that draws out key themes and I explain the novel's place in interwar and World War II culture. In my third chapter I focus on two types of propaganda: posters and cartoons. In analyzing the posters, I perform close readings that take into account aspects of the posters' words and images and discuss the meanings that these evoke in combination with one another. My poster analyses establish the tone and themes for my analyses of cartoons, which I perform with attention to the dramatic changes in the context in which most people encounter these cartoons today. No longer viewable in movie theaters as they were originally, these cartoons currently have a home on the internet, in a world much different from that in which they were produced. By reveling in this contextual change rather than resisting it, I produce fresh readings of propaganda that highlight the interpretive possibilities present in re-examining the documents of the past in the present day. All of my analyses of primary sources maintain a similar ethos — an appreciation of the way in which new contexts offer new possibilities for interpretation and analysis of texts and documents of all kinds. Changes of context have also impacted my own circumstances and position — both literally and figuratively — as a researcher. I refer specifically to the necessity I faced of shifting from plans for traditional archival research to instead emphasize digitally-accessible sources retrieved at home during a global pandemic.

But what does it mean to suggest that context not only affects but also enables certain interpretations? To answer this question, I offer a discussion of a couple of the types of repositories or mediators through which researchers may access primary sources for historical research: physical archives and digital archives. I use “digital archives” as a broad term, also

incorporating the less-structured sharing of documents on the internet on various websites. Repositories — digital and physical, formal and informal — serve as mediators of information, and preserve sources of information about the past beyond their temporal and geographical points of origin and beyond the context and significance of their original use. Sometimes, researchers privilege physical archives over digital ones for the additional historical context that physical access to sources appears to offer. Researchers might understandably approach digital sources more cautiously and more critically, intentionally noticing and attempting to peel back layers of added meaning — and reduced historical contextual information — to come to a greater understanding of the past. The same researchers, however, might let their guard down somewhat more in a physical archive, trusting in the familiarity and tradition of conducting archival research in such institutions. Digital sources exist in a newer medium and are still less trusted by some researchers than are physical archival sources. Thus, digital sources' limitations are more visible and sometimes easier to identify than those of their physical counterparts. Excessive trust in physical archives — or even digital archives — may create unnecessary blind spots for researchers.

It is true that in examining digital sources we sometimes find ourselves with an incomplete picture of a document, but the same is true in physical archives, although this fact may often be overlooked. For example, in digital archives we may not be able to view the back of a scanned photograph, thus missing out on scrawled notes or signs of use on the physical photograph. Or, we might not be able to discern the texture of the paper on which a document is written or printed, thus missing out on a layer of the source's significance when it is represented digitally. Aspects of visual, tactile, and other information held in physical sources may simply disappear, unable to be fully translated onto a computer or smartphone screen. But what the

screen and its limitations can help us see, through practice in working with digital sources applying the same critical perspective in other areas, is that the oft-prized physical archives and sources have limitations too. Though as researchers we may feel secure knowing, as we sit with a box of documents in the archives, that we are engaging in the long-established and trusted process of historical research, we may overlook what we *do not* see there, particularly if we are distracted by the evidence that we do find.

Physical archives are familiar and vital institutions for many researchers, but within their closed confines archival sources are inevitably stripped of the fullness of their original contexts, just as they are in digital formats. While physical archives may allow us to touch documents and see them from multiple angles more than is typical of digital archives, there is much that the physical archives cannot tell us about the documents they hold, even when they are transparent about their procedures for the collection, cataloguing, and arrangement of documents. While any document of history may provide clues to the past, both digital and physical versions of documents available to us today are inherently torn from the past from their full original contexts — much of this original context may be unrecoverable. And, going beyond concerns about original context, the passage of time also further removes us from the other multiple contexts in which these documents have been used and studied by other researchers, reducing our ability to deepen our knowledge of the past, particularly with respect to historiography.

Parts of the meaning of documents of the past are lost with the removal of context from documents in physical and digital archives alike, but these limitations permit researchers to create new knowledge through the production of fresh and thoughtful analyses of primary source documents. In fact, more restrictive limitations such as those sometimes associated with digital primary sources — like not being able to view all sides or angles of a document or engage

directly with a source's materiality — enable researchers to be more creative and more original in their analyses than would be possible otherwise. While such creativity cannot ameliorate the inherent problems posed by contextual change when conducting primary source research, it does allow us to embrace limitations to produce new readings even of very familiar and well-known primary sources. It is exactly this that I achieve with my methodology: the fresh re-examination of very familiar primary sources documents, leveraging the limitations imposed by time and circumstance to produce new perspectives. It is my hope that readers of this thesis will do the same, adapting my methodology and creating new ones that yield new insights about the past and about our present-day relationship with the past. Rather than viewing challenges and limitations as exclusively constricting possibilities for research, we can also come to view them as unique opportunities to create new and responsive lenses which we can use to address the difficulties of our time as we deepen our understanding of the past.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 establishes the themes of U.S. governmental attempts to control American meaning-making as well as the impact World War II had on American identity, particularly as it connected to a reimagining of American geographical space. I explain how and why geographic space mattered to interwar and wartime conceptions of American identity and why FDR's "Infamy" speech prompted a change in that identity when his previous rhetoric, even about attacks on U.S. ships in fall 1941, did not. I argue in this chapter that the reason that Americans were so receptive to FDR's "Infamy" speech, as compared to his other speeches, was because his "Infamy" speech was vague and, in some respects, abstract. I focus on what I term popular political culture — my key primary sources in this chapter are FDR's speeches to the American

public. Although the speeches were broadcast over radio, I have chosen to analyze textual versions of the speeches in accordance with my methodology of close reading.

Chapter 2 focuses on popular culture *and* popular political culture — specifically, how FDR used popular culture in his interwar and wartime rhetoric directed toward the American public. This chapter begins a two-part exploration (continued in my third chapter) of how popular culture shaped American perspectives of Asia and especially of Japan and the Japanese people. This chapter emphasizes FDR's use of a popular interwar adventure novel, *Lost Horizon*, and the enduring mythical utopia it created, Shangri-La — originally a symbol of the preservation of art and knowledge against the destruction of war — as wartime propaganda. In this chapter I argue that American perspectives on Japan in particular and on Asia more broadly were informed partly by fiction, like the novel *Lost Horizon*. FDR effectively weaponized *Lost Horizon*, bringing the novel into a new context and reshaping the meaning of Shangri-La for Americans.

Chapter 3 brings my discussion on American perspectives on Japan to completion with close readings of popular culture in the form of wartime propaganda — which I have arranged around the themes of national myth and symbol, race and racism, and music — and a discussion of postwar changes in American perspectives. I analyze a selection of wartime propaganda posters and short animated cartoons to explore common themes between them, with the added goal of demonstrating for readers the possibilities for interpretation and re-interpretation that arise with changes in context. I conclude with an explanation of the changes to American perception of the Japanese that occurred in the postwar period, as well as subsequent changes in the perception of animation as a medium. As with the entire thesis, my argument in this chapter is partly historical and partly methodological: Through my analyses of American propaganda, I

attempt to demonstrate the usefulness of taking a present-day lens to historic sources for understanding the effects of and opportunities for analysis offered by contextual change more deeply. I also discuss how American perceptions of the Japanese changed (or sometimes did not change) before, during, and after World War II.

Across all three chapters I develop my argument that despite the great care that the government and propagandists used to construct their persuasive messages, people's interpretations could defy the best of narrative intentions, and the meaning of World War II, or even of discrete events like the attack on Pearl Harbor, has never been settled and in fact continues to evolve. These events have never been settled in terms of agreement on a specific interpretation nor in terms of a confinement of the event to the past. Moreover, it appears that within historical sources and narratives as well as in present-day archives of many kinds, it is sometimes in the absence of concrete or comprehensive detail that the most powerful narratives can take root and grow. What people cannot know, they can — and often do — imagine and treat as fact. Narratives continue to shape how we understand conflict and war. Partly because of new technological developments, new and old narratives still circulate, often in fragmentary ways, among new and sometimes unpredictable audiences. The challenges posed by these apparent limitations, however, offer unique possibilities for new analysis. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate some of these possibilities.

Chapter 1: Illustrating American Identity: FDR's Rhetoric and the Importance of American Space

Introduction

"America has been attacked," President Roosevelt said, "our ships have been sunk and our sailors have been killed." The victims of the attack hailed from "Illinois, Alabama, California, North Carolina, Ohio, Louisiana[,] Texas, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Arkansas, New York, Virginia—those are the home states of the honored dead and wounded."³⁶ FDR, who spoke these words, was not talking about the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, but about another maritime disaster that happened beforehand. "The *U.S.S. Kearny* is not just a Navy ship," Roosevelt explained, "She belongs to every man, woman, and child in this nation."³⁷ FDR spoke on October 27, 1941, more than a month before the United States entered World War II. In stark contrast to the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, when many Americans enlisted in the Navy the next day, after the *Kearny* incident enlistment in the Navy decreased to the point where the Navy considered obtaining new recruits by drafting them, even though the U.S. had not yet entered the war.³⁸ Why wouldn't FDR's insistence that "America [had] been attacked" prompt a

³⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "President Roosevelt 'Navy Day Address' on the Attack on the Destroyer Kearney (October 1941)," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/president-roosevelt-ldquo-navy-day-address-rdquo-on-the-attack-on-the-destroyer-kearney-october-1941>.

³⁷ Roosevelt.

³⁸ "Hundreds Rush to Enlist in Armed Forces: Army, Navy and Marine Stations Here Swamped By Applicants: Some Offices Stay Open All Night to Take Care of Big Influx," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 1941; "RUSH OF RECRUITS CROWDS STATIONS: Number of Applicants Said to Be Twice That of First Day of Earlier War: SCHEDULES PUSHED AHEAD: Offices Open Hour Before Time to Interview Men Who Had Been on Line All Night," *New York Times*, December 9, 1941; "ENLISTMENTS RISE TO NEW HIGHS HERE: All Recruiting Statistics for Armed Forces in the Area Found Surpassed: LARGEST GROUP FOR NAVY: Former Soldier Seeking Service Again Says 'Japs Are Most Fanatical Fighters,'" *New York Times*, December 10, 1941;

greater response from the American public? Pearl Harbor is widely considered as the point of U.S. entry into World War II precisely because in his speech following the event FDR had successfully convinced Americans that Pearl Harbor represented an attack on the United States. That the attack on Pearl Harbor was the inciting incident for American entrance into World War II is further complicated by the fact that most Americans had never heard of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii before December 7, 1941, and even those that had did not necessarily consider Hawaii to be an American space. It seems strange, in contrast, that Americans would apparently be so unresponsive to FDR's earlier and more explicit assertion that the U.S. was under attack.

FDR, in attempting to engage the American people in national defense, had to oppose not only those who disliked him and his policies, but those who believed that the U.S. should try to stay out of global conflict. When FDR made, as he did after the attack on the *Kearney*, explicit statements like "America has been attacked," Americans did not respond as they would after the attack on Pearl Harbor.³⁹ Perhaps they did not feel, certainly not as strongly as FDR did, that the U.S. Navy's ships "[belonged] to every man, woman and child in this nation."⁴⁰ Furthermore, prior to December 1941 most Americans did not feel that American territories like Hawaii, the location of Pearl Harbor, "belonged" to them — in fact, many were not particularly well-

"Remembering Pearl Harbor; OUR VIEW," *The Journal*, December 7, 2019; Personal stories of enlistment in the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor, especially on December 8, 1941, abound, and such stories have been remembered as significant events or turning points in many of these men's lives and thus highlighted in many obituaries. See for example "Zappia, Joseph M. (Obituary)," *South Bend Tribune*, September 22, 2019; "John Lawson, 92 (Obituary)," *The Daily News of Newburyport*, April 6, 2016; "Edward F. Stefanik (Obituary)," *Asbury Park Press*, February 11, 2015. According to his obituary, "[Stefanik] was one of the thousands of other patriotic young men who swarmed Times Square on December 8, 1941 to enlist after the attack on Pearl Harbor."; John G. Morris, "Recruiting Drops, Navy Eyes Draft: Enlistments Fall 15% After Loss of Kearny, James," *The Washington Post*, November 27, 1941.

³⁹ Quotation from Roosevelt, "President Roosevelt 'Navy Day Address' on the Attack on the Destroyer *Kearney* (October 1941)."

⁴⁰ Roosevelt; "F. D. R. Talk Rouses Pastors; Proof of War Intentions: Wood Blasts 'Cajolery,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 30, 1941; Jay G. Hayden, "New York Mayoral Fight Transcends Local Issues," *Daily Boston Globe*, October 30, 1941.

informed on the U.S. colonial holdings at all.⁴¹ Indeed, many Americans appeared to have little interest in their nation's territorial possessions. Why was this the case? And what, eventually, made the attack on Pearl Harbor different than recent attacks on U.S. ships?

Prior to December 7, 1941, most Americans understood their nation to consist of the mainland United States and saw their country as a force for good in the world but tended to believe that they should not be actively involved in armed conflict.⁴² As this chapter will detail, Americans were not responsive to claims that attacks conducted beyond their borders were, as FDR sometimes argued, attacks on the U.S. itself. In FDR's speech after the Pearl Harbor attack, however, he was vague enough that Americans could extend their imaginations, their understandings of themselves, to comprehend the attack on Pearl Harbor as a direct strike against the United States. They were not told what to envision; they were not even given casualty numbers. In fact, FDR actively suppressed such information: "[FDR] was also concerned that American citizens would be demoralized if they knew the full extent of the devastation [at Pearl Harbor]. He ordered naval intelligence to listen in on radio broadcasts and telephone calls from Hawaii and cut short anyone discussing details of the attack."⁴³ Images were kept secret, too: "The Navy Department did not release photos that provided a view of the damage at Pearl Harbor for several weeks, and not until the first anniversary of the attack did an extensive photo spread appear in *Life* magazine."⁴⁴ Americans had no visual aids to help them understand the attack on Pearl Harbor in its immediate aftermath. Many Americans could not have located

⁴¹ For more on American attitudes toward their territorial holdings and colonial possessions, see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 4–13; Christopher Capozzola, *Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America's First Pacific Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

⁴² Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 6; Christopher McKnight Nichols, *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 314–19.

⁴³ Craig Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness* (New York: Scribner, 2016), 320.

⁴⁴ Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 15.

Hawaii on a map (if their map even depicted Hawaii), but because of this limitation of knowledge, Hawaii could become a blank slate in the minds of Americans, a slate on which they could inscribe whatever they believed was worth defending — American space, as they understood it.⁴⁵ They could inscribe on that blank slate their memories, experiences, and feelings of their own hometowns, or the names of loved ones. Following the attack, many would literally inscribe their own names on paper in various settings, volunteering for military service or responding to the attack in other ways.⁴⁶

In this chapter I will argue that Americans' sense of what constituted American territory was limited mainly to their conception of the mainland United States and that American culture of the late 1930s and early 1940s was deeply isolationist in orientation, with many Americans believing that if the U.S. had any role on the world stage, it was as a force for good and not necessarily for war. It was the difference between FDR's rhetoric in response to German attacks on American ships in the Atlantic prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and his "Infamy" speech after the attack on Pearl Harbor that, I will argue, made a critical difference in changing American opinions. Analysis of the rhetoric FDR used in these earlier speeches helps explain why the public was not moved to want to enter the war at those times. One might expect FDR to have spoken to Americans about Pearl Harbor in the same way he did about those earlier incidents, with explicit claims about the loss of American life and destruction of American property, but he did not. Though the attack on Pearl Harbor was much more devastating in terms of loss of life and damage to the fleet than the sum of the attacks on the

⁴⁵ For more information on American interactions with maps in 1941, see Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*.

⁴⁶ "ENLISTMENTS RISE TO NEW HIGHS HERE: All Recruiting Statistics for Armed Forces in the Area Found Surpassed: LARGEST GROUP FOR NAVY: Former Soldier Seeking Service Again Says 'Japs Are Most Fanatical Fighters'"; "Hundreds Rush to Enlist in Armed Forces: Army, Navy and Marine Stations Here Swamped By Applicants: Some Offices Stay Open All Night to Take Care of Big Influx."

ships *Greer*, *Kearny*, and *Reuben James* in the Atlantic, FDR left out all of these details in his famous “Infamy” speech, founding his argument on the abstract instead.⁴⁷ FDR effectively wrote a blank check, which Americans would fill with their own ideas, and which would be written over by others as the war progressed — it was this that would move American public opinion to support U.S. entry into the war. In the latter two parts of the chapter, I will focus my analysis on a reading of three documents: FDR’s Fireside Chat on the *Greer* incident, delivered by radio on September 11, 1941; FDR’s Navy Day Address delivered October 27, 1941 which focused on the *Kearny* incident; and FDR’s famous “Infamy” speech to Congress asking for a declaration of war on Japan after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, read in Congress and broadcast throughout the United States by radio on December 8, 1941.

Isolationism: FDR Versus the American People

During his first campaign and throughout his long presidency, FDR effectively leveraged radio to reach directly into the homes and hearts of the American people. He also famously used correspondence and opinion polling to discern the public’s thoughts and made frequent use of press conferences to keep the public informed while maintaining his own image. In fact, in the

⁴⁷ The National WWII Museum, “Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet,” n.d., accessed September 13, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/pearl-harbor-fact-sheet-1.pdf>; “Greer (Destroyer No. 145),” Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/g/greer.html>; Major Dan, “September 4, 1941: The First American Ship to Fire on a German Ship in World War II (The Greer Incident) - History and Headlines,” September 5, 2018, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://www.historyandheadlines.com/september-4-1941-the-first-american-ship-to-fire-on-a-german-ship-in-world-war-ii-the-greer-incident/>; “U.S.S. Kearny (DD-432)---Torpedoed Oct. 17, 1941 by U-568 in the North Atlantic,” Destroyers.org, accessed September 13, 2021, <http://www.destroyers.org/bensonlivermore/USS%20Kearny/USSKearny.htm>; National Archives and Records Administration, “Prelude to War: The U.S.S. Reuben James,” A People at War, accessed September 13, 2021, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/a_people_at_war/prelude_to_war/uss_reuben_james.html; “US Navy Personnel in World War II: Service and Casualty Statistics,” Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed September 13, 2021, <http://public1.nhhcaws.local/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/u/us-navy-personnel-in-world-war-ii-service-and-casualty-statistics.html>.

late 1920s and early 1930s, radio had a massive effect on United States politics, and an individual's radio presence could make them a household name.⁴⁸ FDR was known for being a powerful speaker and was renowned for his effective use of radio, especially for delivering his "Fireside Chats," intimate radio addresses designed to give Americans the feeling that he was speaking to them directly. As Anthony Rudel writes, FDR's Fireside Chats made "[Americans] feel as if he were sitting right in their living rooms with them; he spoke to Americans as individuals, not as blocks of voters."⁴⁹ These Fireside Chats were unique and effective, and many people responded by writing letters to FDR throughout his presidency, contributing to what they felt to be a personal conversation despite radio's role as a mass medium.⁵⁰

FDR's speaking style in Fireside Chats and press conferences alike assured listeners of his trustworthiness and Americans fondly recognized "the famous Rooseveltian twinkle" in FDR's voice.⁵¹ FDR's first inaugural address and subsequent Fireside Chat, for example, conveyed a sense of intimacy and of the personal.⁵² He was also "the first president to hold regular press conferences," establishing himself as unique at the time in his desire to communicate with the public.⁵³ Some letter-writers to FDR emphasized the spellbinding quality of FDR's voice, and some people saw FDR as a kind of savior figure who was capable of rescuing Americans from the despair of the Great Depression. One radio listener-turned-letter writer shared that he and his listening companions were "hypnotized" by FDR's voice as they heard his first inaugural address and that afterward "as if one voice were speaking [we] all spoke

⁴⁸ Anthony Rudel, *Hello, Everybody!: The Dawn of American Radio* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008), 291–92, 294, 305.

⁴⁹ Rudel, 320.

⁵⁰ Rudel, 320; Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40.

⁵¹ Rudel, *Hello, Everybody!: The Dawn of American Radio*, 305–6.; Sidney Shalett, "The Hornet Was 'Shangri-La' for Doolittle's Tokyo Raid," *The New York Times*, April 21, 1943.

⁵² Rudel, *Hello, Everybody!: The Dawn of American Radio*, 320.

⁵³ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40.

in unison ‘We are saved.’”⁵⁴ Another letter-writer shared in response to the same speech that, “We all felt the magnetism, the tone of your Voice—that you were sent for our delivery.”⁵⁵ The language used in such letters, particularly the phrases “we are saved” and “sent for our delivery” suggest that some Americans viewed FDR as a kind of quasi-religious figure, a savior, perhaps with divine power to help bring an end to the Great Depression through the New Deal — FDR’s national economic recovery program — when no mortal could be capable of doing so. This won FDR immense popularity with many Americans, and this popularity would even increase in response to the disaster at Pearl Harbor.⁵⁶

Throughout his presidency, FDR paid close attention to and based some of his decision-making on public opinion; he was not likely to go ahead on a course of action, such as declaring war on a foreign nation, without at least some support from the American people.⁵⁷ FDR’s mindfulness of the wishes of the American people and the heed he paid to his critics were not wholly selfless in intention; he also sought to protect his chances of reelection.⁵⁸ Public opinion polls were a novelty at the time, and FDR paid attention to them to track American sentiment on important issues.⁵⁹ FDR believed that in a democracy, leaders should act in accordance with

⁵⁴ Letter from Frank Cregg to Franklin D. Roosevelt, quoted in Rudel, *Hello, Everybody!: The Dawn of American Radio*, 320.

⁵⁵ Letter from “[a] widow from Alabama” to Franklin D. Roosevelt, quoted in Rudel, 320.

⁵⁶ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 47.

⁵⁷ William L. O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20.

⁵⁸ Nicholas Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 135; O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 20.

⁵⁹ William L. O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 26–27; Research on effective polling methods was conducted by a number of scientific and other specialists during the war at the behest of the U.S. government, which sought to effectively leverage the new medium. See for example Edwin G. Boring, ed., *Psychology for the Armed Services* (Washington Infantry Journal, National Academy of Sciences, 1945).

public opinion, whether or not that public opinion was well-informed.⁶⁰ In keeping with this view, FDR sought to obtain a comprehensive view of public opinion from a variety of sources, including the press, polls, and the letters written to him by members of the public.⁶¹

Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States was not purely isolationist, though poll results indicated that many Americans preferred to stay out of world affairs.⁶² World War I was regarded by many as having been a mistake, and the political and social landscape of the mid to late 1930s and early 1940s was marked by the Great Depression and the New Deal. Radio and other news media reporting meant that Americans were not ignorant that war was being fought in other places, but the “space-annihilating ability of radio” did not necessarily prompt Americans to feel that their own country should fight.⁶³ During the 1930s and 1940s many Americans preferred not to devote too many of their personal resources (including attention) to world affairs, but still valued the preservation of American power and values within the world.⁶⁴

Although many Americans saw themselves collectively as a nation acting as a force of good within a global context, societal divisions along lines of race, class, and gender persisted despite state attempts to conceal them, such as through propaganda posters that presented a

⁶⁰ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16; O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 73.

⁶¹ Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany*, 16–19; Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 31.

⁶² Gallup Inc, “Gallup Vault: U.S. Opinion and the Start of World War II,” Gallup.com, August 29, 2019, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/vault/265865/gallup-vault-opinion-start-world-war.aspx>.

⁶³ J. C. McQuiston, “Radio: A Social Force,” *The Pittsburgh Record*, June 1930, Box 17, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland; Harold N. Graves Jr., “War on the Short Wave” (Foreign Policy Association, 1941), Box 12, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland; National Broadcasting Company, “A Tense World Speaks for Itself,” 1938, Box 28, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland; H.V. Kaltenborn, “Kaltenborn Edits the War News,” 1942, 92, Box 64, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

⁶⁴ Nichols, *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age*, 319.

unified image of Americans.⁶⁵ FDR tried before the war to promote this view of unity, giving his vision a global scale: In his inaugural address, for instance, FDR outlined his vision for American foreign policy, highlighting the U.S. as a kind and respectful nation: “In the field of world policy,” FDR explained, “I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor -- the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others -- the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.”⁶⁶ In 1935, however, a couple years after FDR’s election, Americans were not necessarily strongly engaged with foreign policy: only 11% of Americans believed that foreign policy should be the United States’ top concern, and far more people believed that the U.S. should focus on remaining neutral in the face of foreign conflict.⁶⁷ Their country’s involvement in world affairs, and even activities in their nations’ own territories, was not always visible to all Americans — the information was not taught in schools, and some American families did not receive newspapers.⁶⁸ But even for some of those who read or listened to the news, foreign policy was not a top priority.

Despite some Americans’ lack of awareness of the U.S.’s role in global affairs, a number of Americans actually did see themselves as involved in the world to an extent, particularly as a force for good, and, to this end, supported FDR’s Lend-Lease program. In describing his Lend-Lease program, established in March 1941 to provide material aid to the British war effort, FDR

⁶⁵ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 169–71, 184–87.

⁶⁶ “Franklin D. Roosevelt’s First Inaugural Address,” Papers as President, President’s Personal File, 1933-1945, Speeches of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945, First Carbon Files, 1933-1945, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/197333/1/public?contributionType=tag>.

⁶⁷ Mary E. Stuckey, “Franklin D. Roosevelt, ‘Address of the President to the Congress of the United States Broadcast from the Capitol, Washington D.C.’ (8 December 1941),” *Voices of Democracy* 12 (2017): 3.

⁶⁸ Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 12; Murry R. Nelson, “An Alternative Medium of Social Education--The ‘Horrors of War’ Picture Cards,” *The Social Studies* 88, no. 3 (June 1997): 100–101.

used a metaphor of one neighbor helping another extinguish a housefire, an image appealing to Americans who believed that they should “do the right thing.”⁶⁹ Many Americans generally *did* see themselves as a nation who aided her allies: In early 1941, more than half of Americans (56%) believed that the U.S. should aid Britain through the provision of military supplies by way of a U.S. Navy convoy, even if relatively few Americans (only 8%) wanted to send American military forces to Europe at that time.⁷⁰ It is important to keep in mind that the American people registered a clear distinction between the provision of military aid and actual official military participation in war. William L. O’Neill reports that in March of 1941, “a Gallup poll showed that 83 percent of the public would vote to remain neutral, although 67 percent now favored more aid to Britain even at the risk of war.”⁷¹ FDR was careful to avoid a too-direct association of U.S. naval activities with war, preferring to use the term “patrolling” instead of “convoying,” though some Americans eventually did come to see these activities as part of an “open” but “undeclared war.”⁷² Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, likewise preferred the term “protection.”⁷³ Terms of formal war were not yet acceptable.

Government efforts to bring about economic recovery from the Great Depression through the New Deal increased many Americans’ trust in government, though this was not universally true.⁷⁴ FDR had enemies among Republicans and wealthy businessmen who feared, respectively, that FDR was bringing the U.S. closer to socialism and had ruined the reputation of the rich

⁶⁹ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 23–24.

⁷⁰ Boring, *Psychology for the Armed Services*, 471.

⁷¹ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 26.

⁷² Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II*, 300–301; “OPEN WAR IN THE ATLANTIC,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1941.

⁷³ “U.S. Sweeping Pirates From Sea, Knox Says: Secretary Does Not Like Word ‘Convoy,’ Prefers ‘Protection.’,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 2, 1941.

⁷⁴ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 9.

through the New Deal.⁷⁵ Those who attempted to persuade businessmen otherwise drew ire from the business community.⁷⁶ FDR was resented, attacked, and criticized by a number of right-wing individuals and groups, some of whom believed that the state centralization fostered by the New Deal constituted a step toward socialism and dictatorship in the United States.⁷⁷ Even some previous supporters of FDR, such as firebrand preacher and pro-German radio presence Father Coughlin, increasingly saw FDR as an enemy and sought to undercut the New Deal.⁷⁸ Many of the Republicans in Congress did not favor FDR's policies and resented not only the New Deal itself but also FDR's 1937 attempt to pack the Supreme Court by adding new justices more sympathetic to the New Deal.⁷⁹ The Congress that FDR dealt with in the early 1940s was one largely against him; In *A Democracy at War*, historian William O' Neill writes that even before the 1942 election brought in a very conservative Congress, FDR was harangued by Republicans, isolationists, business interests, and "independent legislators."⁸⁰ Outside of Congress, business owners and wealthy Americans who felt that the Great Depression and New Deal alike had tarnished their reputation as the source of American economic prosperity did not like or trust FDR.⁸¹ In addition to FDR's critics, leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, many Americans commitment to isolationism was reinforced by notable voices such as Charles Lindbergh who urged Americans to seek the avoidance of entry into the war.⁸²

⁷⁵ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 5; O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 9–10.

⁷⁶ Nicholas Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 42, 48.

⁷⁷ Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*; "F. D. R. Talk Rouses Pastors; Proof of War Intentions: Wood Blasts 'Cajolery.'" See also Nichols, *Promise and Peril*.

⁷⁸ Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II*, 37–38.

⁷⁹ Wapshott, 39–40.

⁸⁰ O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 101–2, 9–10.

⁸¹ Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*.

⁸² Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II*, 143.

Furthermore, the geography that Americans perceived as ‘the United States’ typically did not include American territories such as Hawaii (which did not become a state until 1959), or the Philippines, which was still a U.S. colony in 1941.⁸³ For Americans of the period, an attack against a ‘foreign’ place would not necessarily be as shocking or paradigm-changing as an attack on any part of the mainland United States would have been. Further, Americans tended not to view American territories or even colonies like Hawaii and the Philippines, respectively, as American spaces.⁸⁴ Compounding this was the problem that some Americans had never heard of Pearl Harbor in the first place.⁸⁵ How could an attack on a place Americans had never heard of impact them so strongly that they would be motivated to sacrifice so much for their country’s total war effort, putting trust in their government’s decisions and motivations? In attempting to bring the U.S. into World War II as he desired, FDR would have to consider American public opinion. Poll results were important to FDR, and the picture of public opinion they revealed indicated that Americans were not all willing to follow FDR into battle: Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, only 24% of Americans believed that the U.S. would ever need to go to war with Japan, for instance.⁸⁶ And as this chapter explores, German attacks on U.S. ships would not fully erase Americans’ unwillingness to go to war. Pearl Harbor would have to be Americanized, incorporated into Americans’ conceptions of what constituted American space.

In American popular culture images or representations of war could further entrench Americans’ isolationism rather than ameliorate it. GUM, Inc.’s “Horrors of War” bubble gum

⁸³ Capozzola, *Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America’s First Pacific Century*; Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*.

⁸⁴ Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 10–12.

⁸⁵ Jack Smiles, “Local Veterans Fear Pearl Harbor Is Being Forgotten,” *The Citizens’ Voice*, December 8, 2018.

⁸⁶ “In a Gallup Poll taken only four months before [the attack on Pearl Harbor], just 24% of the [U.S.] population felt such a war would be necessary.” Delaware County (Pa.) Daily Times; Monday, Dec. 7, “We Cannot Ever Forget Pearl Harbor,” *The Daily Herald*, December 7, 2015. See also Mercury Editorial Board, “Pearl Harbor Altered the Course of America,” *San Jose Mercury News*, December 8, 2016.

cards, for example, demonstrate how images and representations of war could even be used intentionally to instill perspectives that contributed to American isolationism. The card series featured, among other subjects, portrayals of an attack on an American ship, the *U.S.S Panay*, which, similar to the attacks on the *Greer* and the *Kearny*, did not prompt Americans to seek entry into war. In December 1937 the Japanese sunk the *U.S.S. Panay* in the Yangtze river, but the American press and government treated the sinking as largely an economic issue and declared that issue resolved in April 1938 after Japan sent the U.S. monetary compensation.⁸⁷ Still, the incident was featured in three cards of Gum, Inc.’s “Horrors of War” bubblegum card series.⁸⁸ The series’ slogan, “To know the HORRORS OF WAR is to want PEACE,” (capitalization reproduced from original slogan) implied that awareness of war’s horrors would bring about a desire for peace in the viewers, and the card series was designed for this purpose.⁸⁹ The cards even acted as a news source for children whose schools did not teach about current events and who may not have had much exposure to other print news media like magazines or newspapers.⁹⁰

Contemporary commentators were aware of the card series’ pacific intentions, and those with isolationist viewpoints feared that children would miss the point of the cards and develop a

⁸⁷ “U. S. INSISTS JAPAN AGREE TO KEEP CHINA DOOR OPEN: STRONG NOTE SENT AS TOKYO VOICES PANAY APOLOGIES ‘UNCONTESTED RIGHTS’ OF AMERICAN CITIZENS AND BUSINESS INTERESTS IN ORIENTAL BATTLE AREA ASSERTED BY SECRETARY: PEOPLE IN NIPPON EXPRESS SORROW: JAPAN ALSO TRANSMITS APOLOGIES TO BRITAIN AND ITALY FOR ATTACKS AND OFFERS: INDEMNITY FLAG WAS FLYING WHEN PANAY SANK: JAPANESE AMBASSADOR REGRETS PANAY SINKING,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 15, 1937; “TOKIO EXPRESSES HOPES APOLOGIES WILL BE ACCEPTED: BENDS EFFORTS TO SETTLE PANAY INCIDENT,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 15, 1937; “ITEMIZED DEMAND FOR PANAY IS SENT: U. S. DISPATCHES \$2,214,007 BILL TO JAPAN,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 19, 1938; “PANAY INCIDENT CLOSED; JAPS PAY U. S. \$2,214,007: STANDARD OIL GETS MORE THAN HALF OF SUM,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 23, 1938.

⁸⁸ “PR-5 Panay,” accessed August 25, 2021, NavSource Online: Gunboat Photo Archive, accessed August 25, 2021, <http://www.navsource.org/archives/12/1205.htm>.

⁸⁹ Nelson, “An Alternative Medium of Social Education--The ‘Horrors of War’ Picture Cards,” 100–103; Gail K. Hart, “The Nanking Massacre on Gum Cards: The Blony Horrors of War Series,” *The Journal of American Culture* 41, no. 2 (June 2018): 189, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.12871>.

⁹⁰ Nelson, “An Alternative Medium of Social Education--The ‘Horrors of War’ Picture Cards.”

pro-war stance. *Life* magazine, for example, feared not that present-day adults would use the cards to justify war, but instead that “some future historian may trace a cause for a U.S.-Japanese war to the fact the generation which was pre-adolescent in 1938 had received severe anti-Japanese prejudices through its curious liking for blowing bubbles with Blony gum.” In other words, the cards’ popularity was perceived as a risk that there would be wars in the future, not necessarily that the U.S. would enter World War II. Scholar Gail Hart suggests that the cards indeed promoted interventionism among children.⁹¹ Children, however, did not lead the U.S. into World War II.

Although the “Horrors of War” bubble gum cards were thought to promote children’s interest in war, they had an opposite effect on adults. Many American adults were isolationist to begin with, and exposure to graphic depictions of war that circulated in American culture could reinforce their existing viewpoints; Lee Jones writes that the violent themes of the 1938 “Horrors of War” card set “angered some parents” who disapproved of American involvement in war.⁹² And *Life*’s admonition speaks to this idea too, implying that adults should negatively view the idea that the children of 1938 could grow up to seek war because of childhood exposure to violent and potentially also racist bubble gum cards. One might even say that in the late 1930s, war was for children: In “The Nanking Massacre on Gum Cards,” Gail Hart cites an apocryphal story that FDR referenced the “Horrors of War” cards in an attempt to convince Congress to approve U.S. entry into the war, but that this was received as childish and immature.⁹³ That

⁹¹ “This Is Bubble Gum’s War in China,” *Life*, May 9, 1938, 5; Perhaps amusingly, these concerns did not dissuade *Life* magazine from providing children with instructions on how to “[blow] bubbles with Blony gum,” 5, 6; Hart, “The Nanking Massacre on Gum Cards,” 193.

⁹² Lee W. Jones, “STACKED FOR WAR: A Children’s Pastime Is Transformed after the Pearl Harbor Attack Sets America Reeling,” *World War II*, February 2019.

⁹³ Hart, “The Nanking Massacre on Gum Cards,” 193; This story is also briefly evoked in Jones, “STACKED FOR WAR: A Children’s Pastime Is Transformed after the Pearl Harbor Attack Sets America Reeling.”

particular story need not be true to be instructive; there is a clear association between the bubble gum cards and a perception of interventionism (or “internationalism”) as childish — isolationism, by implication, was a more mature view.⁹⁴ Such products of American culture reflected isolationist sentiments even more deeply than did poll results.

The power of graphic propaganda like the prewar “Horrors of War” cards can be compared to that of propaganda that leveraged words more than explicit images, such as the hugely popular “Remember Pearl Harbor” slogan. Eventually, the slogan would cover all kinds of objects, and Americans used it in their daily lives to adorn their own property, like letters and bikes, as well as frequently saw the slogan in newspapers; the Office of Production Management (OPM) even decided by December 10, 1941 to use the slogan on all their official press releases.⁹⁵ In its use on various items, the slogan was sometimes paired with images that reminded people of the attack on Pearl Harbor, like a bloody knife (with a Japanese flag adorning its handle) sticking out of the ground, but some items bore unrelated images (like the American Mythic figure Uncle Sam) or no images at all.⁹⁶ Americans embraced the slogan and gave it their own meaning, enabled partly by the elasticity it possessed — Americans were encouraged to “Remember Pearl Harbor” but such invocations did not explicitly define the attack’s details or significance; Americans could fill in the blanks with their own imaginations, informed by the patriotic imagery that surrounded them. The popular song sung by Sammy Kaye after the attack

⁹⁴ The term “internationalist” was used at the time to describe those who supported American intervention in the war (as opposed to isolationism). See O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 9–10.

⁹⁵ By the Associated Press, “Thousands Forward Gifts for Bombers: ‘Remember Pearl Harbor’ They Say as Contributions Come In,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1941; “Police Seek Stolen Bike With American Colors And Patriotic Words,” *The Baltimore Sun*, March 19, 1942; “REMEMBER Pearl Harbor! OPM Captions Press Releases,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 11, 1941.

⁹⁶ Martin Jacobs, “Remember Pearl Harbor!: Striking a Match, Sending a Postcard, or Even Getting Dressed, WWII Americans Heard the Same Rallying Cry over and over: Remember Pearl Harbor!,” *America in WWII*, December 2006.

on Pearl Harbor, “Remember Pearl Harbor,” is just as vague about the details of the attacks and says of the Americans killed that “they died for liberty,” but makes no mention of the extent of the carnage and destruction, its cheery tune and insistence that “History in every century / records an act that lives forevermore,” making the attack on Pearl Harbor seem more like an American victory than a setback. In contrast, the 1942 Woody Guthrie Song “Sinking of the Reuben James” (the *U.S.S. Reuben James* was sunk in German U-boat attack on October 31, 1941) revels in the literal representation of events, explaining that 100 men were killed in the U-boat attack and that the ship now rested “on the cold ocean floor.” Guthrie’s song repeatedly implores “Tell me what were their names, tell me what were their names / Did you have a friend on the good Reuben James?”, encouraging listeners to ask themselves about the Americans impacted by the attack even as they move forward in patriotic remembrance and participate in the fight.

A discussion of American isolationist attitudes cannot be reduced to poll results or to bubble gum cards, nor to the influence of FDR’s political opponents: Americans’ perceptions regarding their place in the world were also shaped by the way the world had been presented for them. Relative distances between the U.S. American territories and other countries such as Japan as depicted on maps likely contributed to perceptions of national boundaries and relevance of the respective places to their own lives, and the logo map of the United States typically only represented the mainland and did not include other areas under U.S. control. Americans may not have perceived Hawaii, for example, as American (despite its status as an incorporated American territory) or as being metaphorically or literally near the mainland United States.⁹⁷ Brad St.

⁹⁷ A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Croix also posits an inversion of this idea, explaining that many Hawaiians likewise did not perceive themselves as (and did not wish to be) American.⁹⁸

The map, true of the logo map as well as the world map, has special power as an *image* to define borders and the people who reside within them. It immediately confronts viewers with a concrete definition of reality, allegedly objective and irrefutable. Craig Cameron's *American Samurai* offers some insight into the relationship between images, language, and emotion: "Visual images tend to provoke immediate, often heightened emotional responses, whereas verbal images go through an interpretive process in an individual's mind that may be just as evocative as a visual image, but more muted."⁹⁹ In the case of the map, visual imagery combines with textual labels for a double effect, ingraining ideas about the presence and location of definitive borders as well as the control of territory in the minds of viewers, even charging these ideas with emotion.¹⁰⁰ Because the United States logo map depicted only the mainland United States, it implicitly suggested to Americans their country's isolation, without emphasizing American sovereignty over other places. This was certainly true in the United States population map published in the 1940 U.S. census, which, because it was literally a map that represented population and population density, showed where Americans were located, beyond simply inking out the shape of the nation's borders.¹⁰¹ Implied in the map's representation of the American population is a statement that "Americans" only lived and worked within the defined

⁹⁸ Brad St. Croix, "Hawaii, U.S.A.?: The Role of Pearl Harbor in Making a Hawaiian-American Identity" (unpublished manuscript, 2011).

⁹⁹ Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-1951* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁰⁰ Perhaps such emotions could also contribute to nationalism. For more on nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised (London: Verso, 2016).

¹⁰¹ Census Bureau, "United States Summary," in *1940 Census of Population: Volume 1. Number of Inhabitants*, 1942, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/dedcennial/1940/population-volume-1/3397538v1ch02.pdf>.

borders; Americans at sea or in other nations, or the people who resided in U.S. territories did not count for that particular visual representation.¹⁰² All of this is not to suggest that world maps did not exist nor that Americans were necessarily ignorant of them or of the fact that Americans — including military servicemen, diplomats, and tourists, among many others — could at any given time be present in places not represented on the logo map. Indeed, Americans looked at maps and made judgements about places like Hawaii based on their observations.¹⁰³ Rather, I argue, the map of the United States with which many Americans were familiar, and which was taught to students in American schools, subtly reinforced through its existence, and exacerbated by its popularity, the idea of American remoteness and isolation from the rest of the world, fostering the idea that American territories were “foreign” spaces rather than American spaces.¹⁰⁴ So, Americans had been taught from childhood, regardless of their individual political stances on isolationism, that their nation was isolated and separate from other nations, an island unto itself. The boundaries on the logo map especially, though they were not necessarily reflective of the extensive reach of U.S. power in the world, told a clear story about the geographic limits of the United States, defining for Americans the shape and dimensions of their home, with no neighbors in sight to protect or to hide from, and no fellow Americans outside to be in potential danger.

¹⁰² Census Bureau.

¹⁰³ William Atherton Du Puy and United States Department of the Interior, *Hawaii and its Race Problem* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1932).

¹⁰⁴ Immerwahr, 12; A map of any single country would likely elicit a similar sense of national isolation. For more on the use of specific maps in American education during the 1930s and early 1940s, see St. Croix (2011). As an example (also cited by St. Croix), see J. Paul Goode, *Goode's School Atlas: Physical, Political, and Economic for American Schools and Colleges Revised and Enlarged* (New York: Rand McNally and Company, 1932-1933), 74–75, 58–59. In *Goode's School Atlas*, Hawaii is depicted as part of the Pacific Ocean region but not as a U.S. Territory. Goode, 172–173. After World War II, Hawaii and other island territories were more often depicted on maps of America (St. Croix, 48). This change may have reflected the United States' postwar status as a global superpower; it no longer served to ignore territories. 11/30/21 11:21:00 AM

Moreover, despite their self-image as moral and helpful, some Americans did not have an interest in defending American territory beyond the continental United States.¹⁰⁵ In fact, many Americans were more willing to fight for the sake of other countries than for their nation's own territory. For example, the results of a January 1940 poll published in *Fortune* magazine, as reported in a 1963 reference guide to Hawaii and Alaska, "showed that only 55 per cent of the mainlanders questioned believed the United States should go to the rescue of Hawaii if the Islands were attacked, while 74 per cent favored the defense of Canada."¹⁰⁶ In other words, more than half of the Americans polled preferred to defend another country before defending their own nation's territory.

Hawaii, as a U.S. territory, was seen by many Americans as distant and different from the U.S. mainland geographically, culturally, and linguistically; ideas that were enforced in part by representations of Hawaii and the United States such as those present in the 1940 U.S. Census. In the 1940 Census, the mainland United States and U.S. territories were represented separately.¹⁰⁷ This is an understandable compartmentalization for reasons of clarity and space, but one that inevitably underscored that there was an important distinction between the categories of "United States" and "Territory."¹⁰⁸ The 1940 Census's summary of the population of Hawaii explains that Hawaii had "ceded its sovereignty to the United States in 1898," and that it was subsequently "organized as a Territory on June 14, 1900."¹⁰⁹ It does not ever specify that Hawaii was "American," only that it was a "Territory."¹¹⁰ And the map of "Hawaii and Nearby Islands"

¹⁰⁵ Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ William P. Lineberry, ed., *The New States: Alaska and Hawaii*, vol. 35, no. 5, The Reference Shelf, (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1963), 49.

¹⁰⁷ Census Bureau, "United States Summary."

¹⁰⁸ Census Bureau, "Hawaii," in *1940 Census of Population: Volume 1. Number of Inhabitants*, 1942, 1209, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/1940hawaiiipop-12-2016.pdf>.

¹⁰⁹ Census Bureau, 1209.

¹¹⁰ Census Bureau, 1209.

included in the same section visually isolates Hawaii from the United States and from other nations.¹¹¹ Even though the government formally considered Hawaiians to be American citizens even though most were nonwhite), a majority of mainland Americans considered Hawaii to be too distant from them to really *be* American or indeed to be of great concern to them at all.¹¹² Maps published in the 1930s and early 1940s, even those published in Hawaii, tended to portray Hawaii as geographically distant from the U.S. and simultaneously as proximal to Asia, unless for the purposes of attracting American tourists to the islands.¹¹³ Even tourists, however, were not likely to gain a comprehensive understanding of the islands; most only visited Oahu.¹¹⁴ Some Americans believed that Hawaii was mysterious and exotic in origin, holding the Islands up as a vacation paradise even as they perceived Hawaiian workers as lazy and as separate from, and inferior to, “ordinary mainland white Americans.”¹¹⁵ Hawaiians were also believed to possess “racial peculiarities” as a result of geographic isolation.¹¹⁶ An additional and significant site of discrimination against Hawaiians, which lasted even into the 1960s, was linguistic. *The New*

¹¹¹ Census Bureau, 1208.

¹¹² William Atherton Du Puy and United States Department of the Interior, *Hawaii and its Race Problem*, 4, ix, 1, 28, 121–22.

¹¹³ Brad St. Croix, “Hawaii, U.S.A?: The Role Of Pearl Harbor in Making A Hawaiian-American Identity” (Master’s Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 2011), 46–49. In contrast, see the map in Lineberry, *The New States: Alaska and Hawaii*, 41. This map acts as a visual representation of geographic proximity between the mainland United States and post-statehood Hawaii. As an example of material that illustrated the implied proximity between the mainland United States and pre-statehood and in fact pre-World War II Hawaii used to increase tourism, see for example Pan American Airways Corporation. *Hawaii by Flying Clipper--Pan American Airways System*. c.a 1938. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., accessed September 15, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3g03307/>. The image implies that though Hawaii and Hawaiians may not be “American,” Hawaii and Hawaiian culture are easily accessible for American tourists.

¹¹⁴ William Atherton Du Puy and United States Department of the Interior, *Hawaii and its Race Problem*, 37.

¹¹⁵ Lineberry, *The New States: Alaska and Hawaii*, 66, 40, 65–67, 71–72. Lineberry does not claim to espouse these views; he cites them in this discussion of the historical past of Hawaii and in attempting to dispel Americans’ long-held stereotypes about Hawaiians’ work ethic and culture. The same acknowledgement and refutation of the view of Hawaiians as lazy can be found in *Hawaii and its Race Problem*, although Du Puy also claims that white missionaries and other white immigrants to Hawaii have made the most meaningful contribution to the islands’ “industrial, commercial, and social development.” William Atherton Du Puy and United States Department of the Interior, *Hawaii and its Race Problem*, 91, 94, 122–23, 129–30.

¹¹⁶ William Atherton Du Puy and United States Department of the Interior, *Hawaii and its Race Problem*, 100, 98–100.

States: Alaska and Hawaii rails against Hawaiian “pidgin English,” calling it a “plague” and “a damnable burden,” and, affirming the historicity of this view, concluding that “one generation after another hampers itself by addiction to this folly.”¹¹⁷ Even the local vernacular of Hawaii was rejected by some mainland Americans as alien.

FDR was not likely to seek a declaration of war with Japan or Germany without at least some support and cooperation from the American public. He did, however, want the U.S. to enter the war.¹¹⁸ The question of who had the power to determine if and when the United States would enter World War II seemingly points to Congress and FDR, the commander-in-chief — people often view the state as the center of power in a nation — but because the United States has civilian control of the military, and due to the use of the draft during the war, power was a little more complicated. The U.S. government had power to make decisions and to direct the military, and it seems apparent that FDR at least wanted the U.S. to enter the war to fight Nazi Germany and eventually Japan, but FDR would need support from the American people and from Congress in entering and fighting a total war that would demand the participation or at least cooperation of the vast majority of the American population, especially because FDR had been reelected in 1940 on the promise that he would not needlessly drag the U.S. into war.¹¹⁹ He tried to garner public support for greater involvement in the war and a reduction in the strength of neutrality laws through press conferences and speeches made to the public, including conferences and speeches given in response to incidents that might have stirred Americans to act, like attacks on American ships by German submarines.

¹¹⁷ Lineberry, *The New States: Alaska and Hawaii*, 70–71.

¹¹⁸ Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II*, 141.

¹¹⁹ Hayden, “New York Mayoral Fight Transcends Local Issues.”

German attacks on American ships in the Atlantic Ocean and speeches FDR made in response to these incidents increased American public support for relaxing neutrality laws but decreased support for official U.S. entrance into the war. On September 4, 1941, a German submarine fired a torpedo at the *U.S.S. Greer* but missed; the *Greer* incident prompted a presidential press conference and one of FDR's Fireside Chats was devoted to the subject. On October 17, 1941, the *U.S.S. Kearny* fired on a German submarine in defense of a British convoy; it was hit by a German torpedo, resulting in the deaths of 11 U.S. Navy personnel, and injuring twice as many others. FDR devoted his Navy Day Address to the subject of the *Kearny* incident. On October 31, 1941, the *U.S.S. Reuben James* was sunk by German submarines, resulting in the deaths of 100 Americans, including every Navy officer that had been onboard the *Reuben James*. None of these incidents prompted the American people to seek retribution or to convince them that the incidents merited their country's official involvement in the war. Though the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would prompt the U.S. to enter World War II — at least in part because of FDR's rhetoric — in spite of the American people's lack of prior knowledge of the significance, location, or mere existence of the now-famous American naval base, other attacks on American ships did little to provoke Americans to action. The attacks did have some effect on the American public view of the war; some polls and press reports after the *Greer* incident reflected an increased desire for American entry into the war, and 62% approved FDR's loosening of neutrality law, but this sentiment would not last in the face of other attacks that resulted in the loss of American life.¹²⁰ Press reports on Congressional

¹²⁰ George Gallup, "Majority Favors More Outright U. S. Intervention, Gallup Says: Believes Nazi Defeat More Important than Avoiding War," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 5, 1941; George Gallup, "Shoot-on-Sight Policy Favored, Gallup Reveals: Isolationist Sections Give Order Support South Shows Highest Interventionist Vote in Study," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 3, 1941; "62 percent" of Americans approved FDR's request that the Navy "shoot Axis warships on sight" after the *Greer* incident: O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 31.

reactions to the sinking of another American ship, the *U.S.S. Reuben James* — torpedoed by a German submarine on October 31, 1941 — reflected controversy in the aftermath of the attack as more Americans began to favor increased involvement of the war although many still opposed entering the war formally, and the number of Navy enlistments actually fell after the *Kearny* incident as well as after the sinking of the *Reuben James*.¹²¹ In fact, Navy recruiting fell so much after these events that on December 6, 1941 — coincidentally the day before the attack on Pearl Harbor, after which Navy recruitment would rise dramatically — the Navy announced that it was lowering physical requirements for new recruits in the hope of attracting more men for the service.¹²²

Evidently, Americans did not care to avenge their countrymen's deaths. Both the attack on the *Kearny* and the sinking of the *Reuben James* involved the deaths of American sailors — 11 from the *Kearny* and 100 from the *Reuben James*. Both incidents sparked Congress' interest in the relaxation or abandonment of neutrality laws, but this did not mean that they or the American people wanted to formally declare war.¹²³ When American life was lost, Americans seemed to retreat further inward and shy away from the prospect of war. Neither FDR's rhetoric

¹²¹ "Congressional Reaction on Sinking of Destroyer Reuben James Split," *Daily Boston Globe*, November 1, 1941; By a Staff Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor, "Sinking of Reuben James Aids Neutrality Change: Shift in Opposition Right to Expect Support Answer Sought Called Inevitable," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 31, 1941; Arthur Sears Henning, "Senator Calls Kearny Victim of F. D. R. Order: Walsh Says Policy Is Leading to War," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 21, 1941; Morris, "Recruiting Drops, Navy Eyes Draft: Enlistments Fall 15% After Loss of Kearny, James."

¹²² The *Baltimore Sun* article that announced the change was dated for December 6 and published on December 7: "Navy Lowers Physical Standards for Recruits," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 7, 1941; "ENLISTMENTS RISE TO NEW HIGHS HERE: All Recruiting Statistics for Armed Forces in the Area Found Surpassed: LARGEST GROUP FOR NAVY: Former Soldier Seeking Service Again Says 'Japs Are Most Fanatical Fighters.'"

¹²³ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, "Senate Republicans and Democrats Join Drive Demanding Neutrality Act Repeal as Hull Says U.S. Will 'Act' Instead of Talk in Kearny Attack: Willkie's Suggestion Followed by Trio's Measure for Repeal Bridges, Gurney and Austin Offer Bill Urging Change; 'Gag Rule' Brushed Aside," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 21, 1941; By a Staff Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor, "Sinking Speeds Neutral Revision; Soviet Forces Battle to Hold Tula:44 Are Saved In Sinking Of Reuben James Barkley Defends Roosevelt at Hyde Park President Assailed Effective Blockade Willkie Asks Repeal," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 1, 1941; "Clear Raiders From Oceans, McKellar Says: Reuben James Sinking Termed 'Clincher' for Neutrality Repeal," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 1, 1941.

about the *Greer* and *Kearny* incidents nor American press coverage of these pre-Pearl Harbor incidents could overcome Americans' isolationist tendencies and shift public opinion to favor entry into the war, but in fact served to further entrench isolationism, just as the "Horrors of War" cards did.

And the vulnerability of American territory mattered more than loss of American life in motivating Americans to enter World War II: Whereas during World War I and even earlier, attacks on ships that resulted in the loss of American life were enough to motivate the American people for war, post-World War I America was weary of war, wary of lofty ideals deployed in attempts to persuade them to engage in global conflict, and desensitized even to the pain of American sailors and their families. In World War I, the sinking of the British ship *Lusitania*, which resulted in the deaths of 123 Americans, was sufficient to draw the United States into the war. In 1898, the sinking of the *U.S.S. Maine* prompted Americans to pursue war against Spain.¹²⁴ However, the attacks on American merchant and military ships in 1941 — resulting in loss of American life rivaling that which had occurred in the attack on the *Lusitania* — even combined with the explicit rhetoric of FDR, a famously persuasive speaker, were not enough to provoke Americans to action. So why weren't attacks on American ships, especially those that involved the death or injury of American servicemen, as provocative for the American people as past attacks and losses had been? In 1922, historian Bruce Bliven explained that America itself was "shell-shocked" after World War I, and that the American people did not want to rebuild Europe.¹²⁵ Bliven wrote:

¹²⁴ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 2004), 3.

¹²⁵ Bruce Bliven, "Shell-Shocked America," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 102 (July 1922): 205–7; See also Stuckey, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, 'Address of the President to the Congress of the United States Broadcast from the Capitol, Washington D.C.' (8 December 1941)."

Whatever may have been true in the past, most Americans today are in a condition which might be described as spiritual shell-shock. The terrific emotional experience of the War exhausted us, left us in a state which to the eye of a practiced psychiatrist must exhibit many of the characteristics of hysteria. With our spirits battered by the war, we are even more calloused than normally to the sufferings of all persons at a distance.¹²⁶

Bliven's words, that Americans could no longer as easily feel moved by "the sufferings of all persons at a distance" also meant that Americans were no longer necessarily moved by the "sufferings" of other Americans.¹²⁷ American deaths far away, including at sea, did not have the power to move American public opinion the same way they did in 1915. It seems that by 1941, some of this "shell-shock" had subsided; press coverage on German attacks on American ships in 1941 reported that the attacks – and FDR's subsequent rhetoric — did increase public and Congressional support for the repeal of neutrality laws that prevented more active American involvement in the war.¹²⁸ Isolationism had not vanished, though. In fact, by the autumn of 1941, at least some Americans responded to news of deaths of American sailors, even those who hailed from the same towns, with an increased reluctance to support U.S. involvement in the war.¹²⁹ Following the sinking of the *U.S.S. Reuben James* on October 31, FDR shared in a press conference that despite the notable U.S. losses, he was not planning to bring America into the war.¹³⁰ William L. O'Neill points out that after the sinking of the *Reuben James*, "only 26 percent" of Americans "[wanted] to get into the war, making no such demands as had followed

¹²⁶ Bliven, "Shell-Shocked America," 205–7.

¹²⁷ Bliven, 206.

¹²⁸ Bliven, 206.

¹²⁹ "REUBEN JAMES TRAGEDY FAILS TO STIR WAR SPIRIT: Home Towns of Victims Oppose Intervention," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 13, 1941; Morris, "Recruiting Drops, Navy Eyes Draft: Enlistments Fall 15% After Loss of Kearny, James."

¹³⁰ "GERMANS SINK FIRST U.S. WARSHIP; BRITAIN AT WAR," *The Daily Telegraph*, November 1, 1941.

submarine attacks a quarter of a century earlier.”¹³¹ FDR’s promise was likely well received, though O’Neill’s reference to past German U-boat attacks is even more appropriate with regard to a British ship that had been sunk in 1939 — the *Athenia*.

FDR’s response to the sinking of the *Reuben James* followed a pattern he had already established after the sinking of the *Athenia*. In response to the German attack on the British ship *Athenia* on September 3, 1939 that had killed 28 Americans, FDR reassured Americans that the U.S. government would do all it could to avoid entering the war, even while he simultaneously sought changes to the neutrality laws in place at the time.¹³² The case of the *Athenia* begs comparison with the attack on the *Lusitania*, the British ship with Americans among its passengers killed in a German attack, which prompted the U.S. to enter World War I. The similarities were not lost on Adolf Hitler, who ordered that German U-boats not attack French or British liners for a time to avoid provoking the U.S. into declaring war, but it seems Hitler need not have worried.¹³³ As we have seen, Americans were no longer prepared to go to war to avenge American lives lost at sea.

Accordingly, immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans’ desire for revenge was *not* a response to knowledge of a specific number of casualties or quantifiable damage to the American fleet. Concerned that detailed updates would discourage rather than inspire the American people, just as exposure to the news of attacks on American ships had already done, FDR intentionally concealed casualty numbers from the American people during and in the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹³⁴ What *would* prompt Americans to enter the

¹³¹ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 31–32.

¹³² Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II*, 138, 140–141.

¹³³ Wapshott, 136.

¹³⁴ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 320, 343.

war, however, is implied by Bliven's qualifying phrase — "at a distance."¹³⁵ I will explain: As we have already seen, showing images of distant war could have the effect of increasing isolationist attitudes, as did news of American deaths far away. To have the opposite effect, to break through barriers of isolationism, FDR would have to show that war had come to American soil, that American territory, as understood by the public, had been violated, but without relying on explicit details.

In his discussion of attacks on American ships prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, FDR did not successfully construct the targets — ships on the ocean — as American space. Although attacks on American ships like the *Greer*, and in particular the *Kearny* and *Reuben James* resulted in risk to and destruction of American lives, they were not enough to change public sentiment about U.S. entrance into the war, despite FDR's rhetoric on the subjects. What follows will include an analysis of examples of FDR's rhetoric surrounding two of the German attacks on American ships in the Atlantic Ocean, the *Greer* and the *Kearny*, and FDR's famous "Infamy" speech before Congress on the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. My analysis illustrates the similarities and differences between the speeches and explains why FDR's rhetoric in the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was so persuasive to Americans of the period.

Drawing a New Picture?: The Limitations of FDR's Explicit Rhetoric

On September 4, 1941, the *U.S.S. Greer* was attacked by a German submarine off Iceland. The ship was not sunk or even damaged, but FDR treated the incident as significant. FDR not only held a press conference about the event but also gave a Fireside Chat to the nation

¹³⁵ Bliven, "Shell-Shocked America," 206.

on September 11, 1941. In his Fireside Chat, FDR spoke of Americans as a good and moral people on the world stage. The Fireside Chat emphasized the Nazi attack as immoral and attempted to appeal to Americans' sense of themselves as moral and good. FDR repeatedly emphasized that the U.S. was morally innocent (in stark contrast to the piratical Germany), for example repeating the word "piracy" early on when he explained that the German attack "was piracy - piracy legally and morally" that the attack "was not the first nor the last act of piracy" conducted by Nazi Germany.¹³⁶ Implicit in such repetitions is an interest in getting Americans to respond with righteous indignation - how could a good and moral people allow such piracy to continue?

He also offered a broad definition of what constituted an enemy attack on the United States, yet he then undermined a call to action. Through a discussion of actions in terms of temporal continuity, FDR emphasized what was *already* being done rather than focus on what *still needed* to be done in response to the attack. For example, he begins two close-together 'paragraphs' in his talk with the phrases "Do not let us be hair-splitters" and "Do not let us split hairs."¹³⁷ This repetition of phrases about hair-splitting first and foremost serves to emphasize that FDR wanted the American people to take his words seriously, and the slight twisting of the word order between the phrases is just jarring enough to pull a listener along, deepening their interest in the statements that follow. In fact, FDR pairs these 'hair-splitting' near-repetitions

¹³⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "88. Fireside Chat on National Defense: 'When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike, You Do Not Wait Until He Has Struck Before You Crush Him' — Fireside Chat to the Nation. September 11, 1941," in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt. 1941 Volume, The Call to Battle Stations* "Compiled with Special Material and Explanatory Notes by Samuel I. Rosenman. [Book 1]" (New York: Harper, 1950), 385, *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, University of Michigan Digital Library, accessed July 17, 2021, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/ppotpus/4926590.1941.001/426>. American innocence would also be a theme in early commentaries on the shocking attack on Pearl Harbor. See Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 17.

¹³⁷ Roosevelt, "88. Fireside Chat on National Defense: 'When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike, You Do Not Wait Until He Has Struck Before You Crush Him' — Fireside Chat to the Nation. September 11, 1941," 390.

with another pair of near-repetitions that follows each respective hair-splitting sentence: “The time for active defense is now” and “This is the time for prevention of attack.”¹³⁸ FDR establishes here a very interesting structure of near-repetitions that serves to rouse listeners’ attention, emphasizing that FDR believes the U.S. needs to adopt a more active role in its own defense. Perhaps unfortunately for FDR, however, this section of the talk is so caught up in establishing what constitutes an attack and construes this definition so broadly — “Their [Nazi craft’s] presence *in any waters which America deems vital to its defense* constitutes an attack” (emphasis mine) — that it takes away from FDR’s intricate patterns of phrase.¹³⁹ It is slightly problematic, at least for the sake of analyzing FDR’s rhetoric, that FDR construed the definition of attack and avoided making a specific mention of the exact waters in which the attack had taken place. In other words, he did not claim that any ship attacked in the Atlantic would result in a U.S. declaration of war.

In his Fireside Chat about the *Greer*, FDR, like many rhetorically savvy politicians, spoke as if his own viewpoint was inherently that of all Americans. FDR used collective language, such as the phrase “we Americans” to emphasize this point. For example, “we Americans,” he said, “are taking a long range point of view...” narrating for Americans what he believed their perspective was or should be.¹⁴⁰ As another example, FDR referred to Americans in this talk at another point by saying “you and I,” associating himself with Americans in a casual, personal, even potentially one-on-one manner — the phrase likely functioned well to build rapport whether his radio listeners listened alone or with other people.¹⁴¹ FDR was also careful to outline, at least in a metaphorical way, what Americans were capable of thinking. For

¹³⁸ Roosevelt, 390.

¹³⁹ Roosevelt, 391.

¹⁴⁰ Roosevelt, 386.

¹⁴¹ Roosevelt, 389.

example, in saying that “The American people *can have no further illusions* about [Hitler’s intentions]” (emphasis mine), FDR thinks *for* the American people, using a statement that sought to instruct Americans to adopt a particular view.¹⁴² He does this in a strange way, though, particularly when he says “There has now come a time when you and I must see the cold, inexorable necessity [of confronting Nazi Germany].”¹⁴³ He says “you and I *must*” (emphasis mine), not that “you and I” *already* see the situation in that particular way; ultimately, he expresses only that “you and I” *should* see things his way. FDR’s telling the American people what they are supposed to think might also have been interpreted by some listeners as condescending. Certainly, Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* saw it this way, arguing in a speech that FDR treated Americans as though they were schoolchildren, despite the sense of urgency that Krock personally felt in the wake of the attacks on the *Greer* and other American ships.¹⁴⁴

Despite the rhetoric of morality and perspective that FDR employed in his Fireside Chat about the *Greer*, his call to action was ultimately ineffective. In fact, parts of it can be read as the opposite of a call to action; as a call to *inaction* or a call to complacency, though this was clearly not FDR’s intention. In fact, it was definitely *not* FDR’s intention to foster complacency in the American people in response to the attack on the *Greer*. This is evidenced by statements like “There has now come a time when you and I must see the cold, inexorable necessity [of confronting Nazi Germany]” and “The time for active defense is now” that suggest that FDR *did* want to call the American people to action.¹⁴⁵ However, FDR, who recognized that he was still

¹⁴² Roosevelt, 389.

¹⁴³ Roosevelt, 389.

¹⁴⁴ Arthur Krock, “BUT ALWAYS IT SHOULD BE NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH,” IBIBLIO, November 5, 1941, accessed August 26, 2021, www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/1941-11-05a.html.

¹⁴⁵ Roosevelt, 389, 390.

navigating the currents of isolationist sentiment, severely dampened the effect of his call to action in other parts of the Fireside Chat. For instance, FDR strongly suggested that the U.S. was already resisting Hitler and implied, even if unintentionally, that existing U.S. efforts were sufficient to meet this goal. As an example, FDR stated that “To be ultimately successful in world mastery, ... [Hitler] must first destroy the bridge of ships *which we are building* across the Atlantic and over which *we shall continue* to roll the implements of war to help destroy him... He must *wipe out our patrol on sea and in the air* if he is to do it. He must silence the British Navy” (emphasis mine).¹⁴⁶ FDR presented in the preceding text an image of an America already actively engaged in the fight, through support of a U.S. ally, Great Britain. FDR, perhaps in an effort to reassure the public, mentioned that “our patrol” was already active in two types of terrain (water and air) and says that the U.S. was already building up its capacities to fight Germany.¹⁴⁷ Within these phrases there is no suggestion that the United States needs to give more resources or actively send more men to war; the events of the war, very remote from the daily lives of most Americans and therefore beyond the scope of their concern, are already unfolding without much need for their contribution.

FDR’s speech about the *Kearny* incident was more succinct than his Fireside Chat about the *Greer* incident but had similar shortcomings that rendered it ultimately ineffective in motivating the American people to take a more active role in the war. On October 17, 1941, the *U.S.S. Kearny* was attacked by a German submarine, killing 11 Americans and damaging but not sinking the ship. FDR made the incident the subject of his “Navy Day Address,” delivered ten days later. FDR’s Navy Day Address was broadcast to the nation on October 27, 1941. In the

¹⁴⁶ Roosevelt, 387–88.

¹⁴⁷ Roosevelt, “88. Fireside Chat on National Defense: ‘When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike, You Do Not Wait Until He Has Struck Before You Crush Him’ — Fireside Chat to the Nation. September 11, 1941.”

Navy Day Address, FDR was even more explicit than he had been in his Fireside Chat about the *Greer* incident: “America has been attacked,” he said. Some Americans took issue with FDR’s claim that the nation had been attacked; some, including the chairman of the America First Committee’s (an isolationist Organization vehemently opposed to FDR’s policies) complained that FDR was trying to equate an attack on a distant U.S. ship with the idea that “Illinois and California have been attacked.”¹⁴⁸ Others resented what they viewed as an excuse by FDR to prevent appearing to have violated his “Democratic 1940 campaign pledge that ‘we will not participate in foreign wars, and we will not send our Army, Navy or Air Force to fight in foreign lands outside the Americas, except in case of attack.’”¹⁴⁹ Overall, FDR’s speech on the *Greer* incident implied that all needed action was already being taken and, as the quote above regarding Illinois and California demonstrates, failed to convince a preponderance of Americans that the incidents were not just attacks on U.S. property but attacks on American space.

To be sure, FDR claimed that the attack on the *Kearny* was a violation of American space because it was a violation of American property. FDR explained that the ship was the possession not only of the U.S. Navy but of every American. And America would respond, Roosevelt reassured the nation: “Yes, our nation will and must speak from every assembly line. Yes, from every coal mine—the all-inclusive whole of our vast industrial machine. Our factories and our shipyards are constantly expanding. Our output must be multiplied.”¹⁵⁰ Here again, FDR made the same mistake he made in his Fireside Chat about the *Greer* incident. He claimed that after the attack on the *Kearny*, “Our factories [...] *are constantly expanding*” (emphasis mine). The

¹⁴⁸ “F. D. R. Talk Rouses Pastors; Proof of War Intentions: Wood Blasts ‘Cajolery,’” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 30, 1941; For more about the America First Committee, see D. J. Mulloy, *Enemies of the State: The Radical Right in America from FDR to Trump* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 21–22.

¹⁴⁹ Hayden, “New York Mayoral Fight Transcends Local Issues.”

¹⁵⁰ Roosevelt, “President Roosevelt ‘Navy Day Address’ on the Attack on the Destroyer Kearney (October 1941).”

process of gearing up for war, FDR implied, was already ongoing and, more importantly, that the U.S. role in the war would primarily be one of manufacturing supplies for allied countries. Through such lines as “This is not the first time [Hitler] has misjudged the American spirit. That spirit is now aroused,” FDR infused his speech with a patriotic call to action.¹⁵¹ In saying “Each day that passes we are producing and providing more and more arms for the men who are fighting on actual battle-fronts,” FDR implied that the actions that were most important were already in progress; already “we *are producing*” (emphasis mine), without additional input from the American people.¹⁵² FDR even goes so far as to call this war production “our primary task.”¹⁵³ Moreover, FDR assured the American people of success: “It can never be doubted,” he explained, “that the goods will be delivered by this nation, whose Navy believes in the tradition of ‘Damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead!’”¹⁵⁴ In adding the detail that the American “Navy believes in the tradition,” FDR also emphasized the separation between the Navy and the American public as a whole. Simply because the Navy believed in the ideal FDR shared did not necessarily mean that all Americans — especially isolationists — believed in the same ideal.

The American reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor, though, would be quite different. The attack on Pearl Harbor, despite its literal and figurative distance from most Americans, provoked a reaction from the American people. It was FDR’s “Infamy” speech that brought Pearl Harbor close to home for Americans, not only through radio waves, but through reaching Americans’ imaginations and conceptions of their homeland. And radio as a medium generates

¹⁵¹ Roosevelt.

¹⁵² Roosevelt.

¹⁵³ Roosevelt.

¹⁵⁴ Roosevelt.

emotion, reaching people individually and prompting them to visualize what they hear.¹⁵⁵ The American response to the attack on Pearl Harbor was not straightforward, however, and American's prior knowledge or more often lack of prior knowledge introduced potential complications to achieving public support for total war.

“Why would anyone do such a thing to a nice old lady like THAT?”: The Personal Pearl¹⁵⁶

It should not be taken for granted that the American public finally supported U.S. entrance into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, not least of all because so many Americans had no familiarity with or even knowledge of the place. As late as November 7, 1941, despite increasing Japanese expansion in Asia and the Pacific, FDR expressed uncertainty that the American public would support an attack on Japan.¹⁵⁷ Some historical treatments of the event, however, seem to take for granted that the U.S. public would support a declaration of war.¹⁵⁸ The American position *did* shift toward interventionism after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and many former isolationists including Charles Lindbergh publicly reversed their views.¹⁵⁹ Yet, given what we know about American attitudes towards the territories at the time, it is worth

¹⁵⁵ Paul Chantler and Peter Stewart, “Understanding Radio,” in *Basic Radio Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2013); For more on the sense of personal immediacy evoked by radio during World War II, see O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 252–53.

¹⁵⁶ A woman interviewed for a newspaper article later in life recalled her childhood memory of hearing the news on the attack on Pearl Harbor, explaining that “There was a boardinghouse across from the fire station called the Harbor House, managed by Mrs. Pearl Harbor. I remember thinking to myself, ‘Why would anyone do such a thing to a nice old lady like THAT?’”: Jeane Brittain, qtd. in “Readers Share Memories of Hearing about Shocking News; Pearl Harbor Remembered,” *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 4, 2016.

¹⁵⁷ Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II*, 337.

¹⁵⁸ Wapshott, 337.

¹⁵⁹ Wapshott, 338; Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 346; O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 106.

considering what Americans envisioned when they first heard the news of the Attack on Pearl Harbor. Indeed, the attack on Pearl Harbor was shocking to Americans, as evidenced by the surprise and confusion left among civilians, military personnel, and military leaders in its wake. Americans' shock and confusion were also likely deepened by the fact that they heard the news in a fragmentary way through their radio sets and in the course of normal daily events, for instance while attending movies, sports events, and concerts.¹⁶⁰ But because in 1941 Hawaii and specifically Pearl Harbor were far from the everyday awareness of most Americans, not all Americans understood the significance of the Japanese attack, partly because many had not heard of Pearl Harbor or were unaware of its military importance, and partly because the extent of the damage and number of casualties were kept hidden from the public.¹⁶¹

Some American civilians, however, and particularly those with relatives in the military, were in fact familiar with the names of Pearl Harbor and of Hawaii. One man recalled later that, as a teenager first hearing of the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, he heard a friend exclaim: "I don't know if you guys know where Pearl Harbor is, but I sure do. My big brother is

¹⁶⁰ "Most Americans got the news in bits and pieces over the radio," and through word of mouth or phone calls, in some cases in the midst of other activities like "athletic and cultural events" according to O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 5; Gordon William Prange, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon, *December 7, 1941 the Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 255, cited by O'Neill; See also Smiles, "Local Veterans Fear Pearl Harbor Is Being Forgotten"; Leon Hale, "Remembering Pearl Harbor," *Houston Chronicle*, December 6, 1990; Smiles and Hale quote Americans who heard the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor while in the midst of their daily activities. Many of the people interviewed for the oral histories and newspaper articles on memories of Pearl Harbor cited in this thesis mention that they were listening to music at the time they heard the news of the attack on the radio. Perhaps some were listening to Sammy Kaye; An obituary following Sammy Kaye's death in 1987 that at the time the attack on Pearl Harbor was announced on the radio, Sammy Kaye's radio program was broadcasting (and was interrupted) by the news. This inspired Kaye to write the 1941 hit song, "Remember Pearl Harbor." "Band Leader Sammy Kaye Dead at 77," *Houston Chronicle*, June 4, 1987.

¹⁶¹ "Readers Share Memories of Hearing about Shocking News; Pearl Harbor Remembered"; President (1933-1945 : Roosevelt). 1933-1945, *Fireside Chat on the Declaration of War with Japan*, December 9, 1941, Papers as President, President's Personal File, 1933-1945, Speeches of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945, First Carbon Files, 1933-1945, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/197320>; Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 320.

out there.”¹⁶² Simply because people were aware of the threat of war or of the location and significance of Pearl Harbor to the U.S. Navy did not mean that they were not also surprised and confused by the attack, however. Stephen Dobrenchuck, a young adult who planned to sign up for the Army even before the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred, later recalled that prior to December 7, 1941, “We were very conscious that there was a war going on” but that after the attack “[t]here was a sense of shock.”¹⁶³ Even American military leaders like Frank Knox, the Secretary of the Navy, were in disbelief. Knox, “visibly shocked and incredulous,” is alleged to have exclaimed “My God! This can’t be true. This must mean the Philippines.”¹⁶⁴ Harold Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, had to assure Knox: “No, sir, this is Pearl.”¹⁶⁵ FDR himself allegedly thought the news “must have been ‘some mistake’” before deciding that it was “‘probably true,’ and the kind of ‘unexpected thing’ that the Japanese might do.”¹⁶⁶ Leaders’ initial disbelief speaks to how shocking the attack was even to those familiar with the military situation in the Pacific.

The majority of Americans had no personal connection to the Pacific or to military experience and their recollections of their first reactions to hearing the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor help illustrate how little many Americans knew about the place, in some cases so little that they did not immediately realize that it was a place at all. A man who heard the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor as an 18-year-old later recalled, “We didn’t know anything about

¹⁶² “James Bowling” in Henry Berry, *“This Is No Drill!”: Living Memories Of The Attack on Pearl Harbor* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1992), 112. The speaker of the quotation is not named in the text.

¹⁶³ Stephen Dobrenchuck, quoted in Ashley Archibald, “WWII Veterans Look Back on Pearl Harbor; The Day That Would Live in Infamy Was Never Forgotten,” *Santa Monica Daily Press*, December 7, 2011.

¹⁶⁴ Hoehling, 187. Knox quoted in Christopher Capozzola, *Bound By War: How The United States And The Philippines Built America’s First Pacific Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2020), 151; Louis Morton, *Fall of the Philippines*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1993), 78 and Hoehling, 187.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in A. A. Hoehling, *The Week Before Pearl Harbor* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), 187.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Hoehling, 187–88.

Pearl Harbor. The morning of December 7, [1941], by nine o'clock in the morning, for some reason I was listening to the radio, and they said the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. [...] But Pearl Harbor itself had no meaning whatsoever geographically speaking in its relationship with the United States. None.”¹⁶⁷ Another man who heard the news as a child recalled many years later that he wondered “What is Pearl Harbor? Is it a woman, a place?”¹⁶⁸ And many others were equally confused.¹⁶⁹ One Texas man recalled that, when the movie he was watching was interrupted by news of the attack, he and others wondered aloud “Pearl who?” and many of those around him were equally unfamiliar with the pronunciation of “Hawaiian” in the term “Hawaiian Islands.”¹⁷⁰ Emil Wroblicky, who was a teenager in Chicago at the time of the attack recalled that after hearing the news, “It occurred to me, ‘Where the hell is Pearl Harbor?’”¹⁷¹ Another woman who was a young girl at the time of the attack likewise recalled that after hearing the news, “I knew something important was going on so I went and asked my parents, ‘What is Pearl Harbor?’ They did not know but they turned on the radio.”¹⁷² The shock of the attack, in other words, was paired with a confusion about just what had been attacked and where the attack had taken place in relation to the continental United States.

Radio broadcasts throughout that day informed the nation that Pearl Harbor (whatever, wherever, whoever it was) had been attacked, and eventually the first lady spoke to them as well, summing up their collective shock, though, like her husband would in his speech before

¹⁶⁷ Ernest L. Golden, qtd. in Warren Nishimoto, “Oral History Interview #462-2 with Ernest L. Golden,” April 28, 1993, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/perl/learn/historyculture/oral-history-interviews.htm>.

¹⁶⁸ John Phillips, qtd. in Smiles, “Local Veterans Fear Pearl Harbor Is Being Forgotten.”

¹⁶⁹ “Readers Share Memories of Hearing about Shocking News; Pearl Harbor Remembered.”

¹⁷⁰ Hale, “Remembering Pearl Harbor.”

¹⁷¹ Emil Wroblicky, qtd. in Archibald.

¹⁷² Shirley Williams, qtd. in Marilyn Meyer, “Pearl Harbor Changed Everything for Young Woman, Teenage Girl,” *The Ledger*, December 7, 2016.

Congress the next day, Elenore Roosevelt offered sparse details.¹⁷³ In a radio address given on December 7, 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt summed up the nation's shock while emphasizing — perhaps to calm fears — the United States' alleged preparedness, saying:

[W]e the people are already prepared for action. For months now, the knowledge that something of this kind might happen has been hanging over our heads and yet it seemed impossible to believe, impossible to drop the everyday things of life and feel that there was only one thing which was important — preparation to meet an enemy no matter where he struck. That is all over now and there is no more uncertainty.¹⁷⁴

FDR, too, would claim that the American people were ready to meet the challenge ahead of them. But what, for listeners to Eleanor Roosevelt, did “something of this kind” mean? An attack on the United States? An attack on “our citizens” but not on the U.S.? A question remained as to what extent Americans of 1941 would have seen an attack on Hawaii as an attack on their homeland. After all, Eleanor Roosevelt explained in her address only that the Japanese had attacked “our citizens in Hawaii and the Philippines,” which, again, many Americans considered to be foreign places.¹⁷⁵

FDR's “Infamy” speech would not provide much more detail, but it was effective in guiding Americans, and Congress, to finally lend their support to a formal declaration of war, at least against Japan if not quite yet against Germany. A Gallup poll seeking information on Americans' opinions after the declaration revealed that FDR's speech had done its work, and “a

¹⁷³ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 320–24; Katie Mettler, “75 Years Later, Remembering FDR's Day of ‘Infamy,’ a Phrase That Almost Wasn't,” *The Washington Post*, December 7, 2016, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/12/07/75-years-later-remembering-fdrs-day-of-infamy-a-phrase-that-almost-wasnt/>.

¹⁷⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt, qtd. in Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 323.

¹⁷⁵ Eleanor Roosevelt, qtd. Nelson, 323; Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 12.

staggering 97 percent of Americans approved the declaration of war.”¹⁷⁶ And furthermore, polls suggested, “Americans were also standing fast [...] including 51 percent who predicted the war against Japan would be a lengthy one and 65 percent [who] foresaw that the conflict would be difficult.”¹⁷⁷ Within a short span of time, Americans had mostly reversed their views on whether the United States should be actively involved in the war.¹⁷⁸

“A Date Which Will Live in Infamy”: FDR’s Speech to Congress

FDR’s speech before Congress on December 8, 1941 — simultaneously broadcast to the nation over radio — was powerful but, in some ways, as in the use of the term “infamy,” FDR’s sole authorship of the speech, and its vagueness — also unconventional. Regarding the speech’s vagueness, present-day speechwriter Robert Lehrman argues that the inclusion of explicit descriptions of events is “a rule of good speechwriting.” It was a rule, however, that FDR chose not to follow in his “Infamy” speech; FDR used, according to Lehrman, “bland abstractions” to describe what had happened at Pearl Harbor.¹⁷⁹ Throughout this chapter I have referred to this speech as FDR’s “Infamy” speech, but the word “infamy” was, in fact, not in FDR’s first draft; he only included it in the final version of the speech.¹⁸⁰ FDR did not collaborate with his

¹⁷⁶ Jennifer Harper, “Historic Gallup Poll Reveals What Americans Really Thought After the Attack on Pearl Harbor,” *The Washington Times*, December 7, 2016.

¹⁷⁷ Harper.

¹⁷⁸ “Pearl Harbor Attack Lessons Carry Over to Today,” *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 6, 2020.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Lehrman, “Rhetoric Revisited: FDR’s ‘Infamy’ Speech,” PBS: American Experience, December 6, 2016, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/rhetoric-revisited-fdrs-infamy-speech/>.

¹⁸⁰ Mettler, “75 Years Later, Remembering FDR’s Day of ‘Infamy,’ a Phrase That Almost Wasn’t”; Stuckey, “Franklin D. Roosevelt, ‘Address of the President to the Congress of the United States Broadcast from the Capitol, Washington D.C.’ (8 December 1941).”

speechwriters in creating the memorable address, as he typically did.¹⁸¹ In my analysis of FDR's speech that follows, I have done my best to reproduce in my quotations FDR's edits to the speech, including strikethroughs and insertions. The punctuation and strikethroughs in the quoted text are original to the source document; a copy of FDR's "Infamy" speech with his handwritten revisions reproduced in Richard Overy's *War in the Pacific*. The speech will be cited under the title "Speech Notes," as it is labeled in Overy's book.

FDR's "Infamy" speech placed great emphasis on the shocking nature of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the term "infamy" has remained synonymous with the attack. But there was more at stake in Roosevelt's speech than this term alone. It is particularly useful to study this through the draft of Roosevelt's speech rather than an audio recording of the final version, because the typewritten and hand-edited draft shows the changes in FDR's plans for his speech and thus provides more evidence for a richer analysis of what he believed was at stake in his address. Indeed, aspects of the speech as it exists in draft form offer possible insights into FDR's thought process in response to the attack on Pearl Harbor. For example, in the draft of his speech, Roosevelt crossed out and replaced the word "simultaneously" (attacked the Philippines and Hawaii) with the word "suddenly."¹⁸² He also added but then crossed out the words "without warning."¹⁸³ Of course, it is impossible to know what FDR's thoughts were; he may have chosen the word "suddenly" over his original "without warning" and then also removed the word "simultaneously" to avoid unneeded length or redundancy. It is possible that the addition and subsequent removal of the phrase "without warning" are reflective of Roosevelt's own shock and

¹⁸¹ "FDR's 'Day of Infamy' Speech: Crafting a Call to Arms," *Prologue Magazine*, Winter 2001, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2001/winter/crafting-day-of-infamy-speech.html>; Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40.

¹⁸² "Speech Notes" in Richard Overy, *War in the Pacific* (Long Island City: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2010).

¹⁸³ "Speech Notes" in Overy.

measure of disbelief, which he ultimately censored. But there is something especially intriguing about the late addition and removal of “without warning” and perhaps was struck from the final version to divert attention away from the fact that there *were* warnings that U.S military intelligence either missed or ignored. In fact, perhaps in an effort to downplay what could—and in fact was — perceived by FDR’s detractors to be an indication of an intelligence failure, FDR rejected the suggestions of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who asked that FDR use their 17-page document enumerating Japan’s many sins.¹⁸⁴ However, FDR did take some influence from Hull, and may have even derived the famous term “infamy” from the Secretary of State. On December 8, the *New York Times* published remarks that Hull had made the day before, using the word ‘Infamy’ in their title and quoting Hull as having said Japan was “*infamously* false and fraudulent,” (emphasis mine), almost certainly before FDR edited the phrase into his own speech.¹⁸⁵ As present-day speechwriter Robert Lehrman has pointed out, FDR’s “usage of ‘infamy’ was at odds with conventions of the day; a descriptive word, ‘infamy’ usually appeared the way people talking about FDR often misquote him: ‘day of infamy.’”¹⁸⁶ This out-of-place quality of FDR’s use of the word “infamy” seems particularly odd given FDR’s conscious tendency to use language accessible to his audiences.¹⁸⁷ However, it could have come from its last-minute addition to the speech, especially if FDR dropped it into his text after hearing or reading Hull’s remarks or the report on them in the *New York Times*.

¹⁸⁴ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 320; Paul M Sparrow, “Day of Infamy,” *Forward with Roosevelt* (blog), December 2, 2016, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://fdr.blogs.archives.gov/2016/12/02/day-of-infamy/>; Paul M. Sparrow, “How Roosevelt Crafted His ‘Day of Infamy’ Speech,” *Poughkeepsie Journal*, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/news/local/2016/12/06/how-roosevelt-crafted-his-day-infamy-speech/95039282/>; Mettler, “75 Years Later, Remembering FDR’s Day of ‘Infamy,’ a Phrase That Almost Wasn’t.”

¹⁸⁵ “HULL DENOUNCES TOKYO ‘INFAMY’: Brands Japan ‘Fraudulent’ in Preparing Attack While Carrying on Parleys,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1941.

¹⁸⁶ Lehrman, “Rhetoric Revisited: FDR’s ‘Infamy’ Speech.”

¹⁸⁷ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40.

Nonetheless, in contrast with his speeches in response to the *Greer* and *Kearny* incidents, FDR's "Infamy" speech effectively leveraged language to invoke temporal continuity. FDR used temporal continuity to situate action in the *past* and *future*, rather than in the present as he did in his discussions of the *Greer* and *Kearny* incidents. "It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii and Japan" FDR wrote, invoking the future, and Congress should acknowledge that "a state of war has existed" since a past time.¹⁸⁸ These passive remarks about the future invoke a sense of continuity that highlights for Americans what had happened, and what would happen, rather than what was happening in the present moment. The war had already begun, FDR explained to Congress, asking them to acknowledge the same. And, he reminded them, further steps would be taken to understand the war's igniting incident. All that remained was for Congress to make things official in the present moment and, implicitly, for the American public to lend its own support. On the subject of continuity, there is also an important point to be made about time and time zones. In *How to Hide an Empire*, Daniel Immerwahr points out that the U.S. was and is the only place where the Japanese surprise attack occurred on December 7; For Japan and other places affected by the attack, it occurred on December 8.¹⁸⁹ In a metaphorical sense, Roosevelt's next-day (December 8) speech after the attack on Pearl Harbor might even be said to have occurred the same day, adding, at least in retrospect, another dimension of urgency and enriching the sense of continuity across time in Roosevelt's speech.

In the "Infamy" speech, FDR also carefully emphasized certain aspects of geography to underscore the shocking nature of an attack on Hawaii, which, importantly, FDR defined as an American space. For example, he changed his original "Hawaii and the Philippines" to "Oahu"

¹⁸⁸ "Speech Notes" in Overy, *War in the Pacific*.

¹⁸⁹ Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 7.

— so Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox had made a half-accurate observation when he said after hearing of the attack on Pearl Harbor, “this must mean the Philippines,” since it was also attacked and FDR had at least initially considered that fact to be significant.¹⁹⁰ In the speech that Roosevelt gave to Congress, he intentionally removed his reference to the Philippines, thereby putting greater emphasis on the shock and seriousness of an attack on the U.S. itself — never mind the fact that Hawaii did not become a state until 1959, more than ten years after the end of World War II.¹⁹¹ Even some Navy servicemen and some military leaders, who had much greater knowledge of the military situation in the Pacific than did most Americans, believed an attack on the Philippines was more likely to occur than an attack on Hawaii.¹⁹² General MacArthur also perceived Pearl Harbor as being better-defended and therefore a more costly — and perhaps also less likely — target for the Japanese.¹⁹³ Because of these widespread beliefs, an overt focus on the Philippines — which had by 1941 become a U.S. commonwealth and begun a ten-year transition period to full independence — in FDR’s speech would likely have drawn attention to that more believable (and ostensibly more distant and more ‘foreign’) target and thereby mitigated the shock value associated with an attack on American space.

FDR used place names in his speech in a way that helped construct Pearl Harbor as American space. In changing “Hawaii and the Philippines” to “Oahu,” FDR also censored a mention of “Hawaii,” which makes sense because Oahu was the destination of most American

¹⁹⁰ “Speech Notes” in Overy, *War in the Pacific*; Capozzola, *Bound by War: How the United States and the Philippines Built America’s First Pacific Century*, 151.

¹⁹¹ Lineberry, *The New States: Alaska and Hawaii*.

¹⁹² See for example “James Benham, Lt. Junior Grade, U.S.S. *Farragut*” in Berry, *“This Is No Drill!”: Living Memories of the Attack on Pearl Harbor*, 70–78; and Capozzola, *Bound By War: How The United States And The Philippines Built America’s First Pacific Century*, 151.

¹⁹³ Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences: General of the Army Douglas MacArthur* (Annapolis: Bluejacket Books, 2001), 117.

tourists who traveled to Hawaii.¹⁹⁴ This may have played into the effect of the speech, emphasizing a place with which many Americans were extremely unfamiliar, but which some had visited, and permitting them to forge whatever associations between Oahu and America they could. But how could FDR construct Hawaii as more American (so to speak) than the Philippines, when Americans saw both as “foreign”?¹⁹⁵ The presence of an American Navy base probably made Oahu specifically more American than Hawaii in general, and Oahu consists of a smaller area than the entirety of the Hawaiian Islands. And perhaps it would have been easier to persuade Americans by focusing on an attack on an American naval base, rather than discussing Hawaii as a whole or attempting to spread Americans’ conception of American space over a span of ocean.¹⁹⁶ Further, beginning with a relatively smaller area could have served to create a gateway for expanding Americans’ concern for the Hawaiian Islands broadly speaking — if they could be convinced that a portion of Hawaii contained American space, perhaps FDR’s focus more broadly on “Hawaii” later could be taken for granted.¹⁹⁷ Despite the Hawaiian islands’ location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Roosevelt, in his speech to Congress, placed great emphasis on the geographical distance between Hawaii and Japan: “It will be recorded that the distances of Manila, and especially Hawaii from Japan...” (strikethrough reproduced from draft of FDR’s speech) again erasing the U.S. colony of the Philippines and placing greater emphasis on the U.S. territory of Hawaii.¹⁹⁸ At first glance it seems surprising that FDR did not mention Oahu here, considering that Oahu specifically was farther from Japan than was the easternmost

¹⁹⁴ William Atherton Du Puy and United States Department of the Interior, *Hawaii and its Race Problem*, 37.

¹⁹⁵ Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, 12.

¹⁹⁶ “Speech Notes” in Overy, *War in the Pacific*; Roosevelt, “88. Fireside Chat on National Defense: ‘When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike, You Do Not Wait Until He Has Struck Before You Crush Him’ — Fireside Chat to the Nation. September 11, 1941,” 391.

¹⁹⁷ “Speech Notes” in Overy, *War in the Pacific*.

¹⁹⁸ “Speech Notes” in Overy.

point of the Hawaiian Islands. However, using the entirety of Hawaii here may have helped FDR's point; if Hawaii as a whole was far from Japan, then an attack anywhere in the islands may have seemed even more outrageous. The distance indicated, Roosevelt said, that the attack was "planned many days ~~or some weeks~~ ago" (strikethrough reproduced from draft of FDR's speech).¹⁹⁹ But perhaps the geographical distance between Hawaii and the mainland United States mattered too, as well as the comparative distance between the Philippines and the United States, in constructing American space — Hawaii may have been figuratively nearer than the Philippines for many Americans.

FDR also used collective language in a different way in the "Infamy" speech than he did in the Fireside Chat about the *Greer* incident or in the Navy Day Address. He did not explicitly associate himself with Americans by saying "we," or "you and I," and then outlining an opinion, but simply declared that Americans "have already formed their opinions."²⁰⁰ But FDR did credit the events of December 7, 1941 with a lot of power: He wrote that "The facts of yesterday speak for themselves" and "The people of the United States have already formed their opinions" but FDR did not make those facts entirely clear in his speech, even hinting at gaps and delays with phrases like "It *will be recorded* that the distance" (emphasis mine) that imply that all the facts actually had not been determined and assembled at that point in time.²⁰¹ He also did not hint at who would be determining those facts. But in his speech, Roosevelt's focus was more on

¹⁹⁹ "Speech Notes" in Overy.

²⁰⁰ Roosevelt, "88. Fireside Chat on National Defense: 'When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike, You Do Not Wait Until He Has Struck Before You Crush Him' — Fireside Chat to the Nation. September 11, 1941"; Roosevelt, "President Roosevelt 'Navy Day Address' on the Attack on the Destroyer Kearney (October 1941)"; "Speech Notes" in Overy, *War in the Pacific*.

²⁰¹ "Speech Notes" in Overy, *War in the Pacific*; FDR's comment about the facts speaking for themselves was also contradicted by a statement he made the next day in a Fireside Chat to the nation that the number of Pearl Harbor was not yet known, nor was the extent of damage to the American fleet not yet understood. The facts had not yet been assembled; how could they speak for themselves? President (1933-1945 : Roosevelt). 1933-1945, *Fireside Chat on the Declaration of War with Japan*.

interpretation than on fact. Roosevelt also did not explain, when he wrote and said that “The people of the United States have already formed their opinions,” to whose opinions he referred, nor what those opinions were.²⁰² The reaction of at least some U.S. citizens appears to have been disbelief that an attack on the U.S. was even possible — some first believed that the news was a joke, or that reporters who mentioned it to them in person could not possibly be referring to an attack on America — and many Americans were upset, afraid, or angry.²⁰³

Perhaps FDR was ahead of himself when he said that “The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the safety of our nation.”²⁰⁴ More likely, FDR saw his speech as a tool to form and shape those opinions by calling them into existence — saying they existed — without explicitly defining them. He made it sound as though he were responding to the nation’s desire for action rather than making an unsolicited call for action. This is a stark contrast to the language used in FDR’s Fireside Chat after the attack on the *Greer*. In speaking about the *Greer* incident, FDR said: “There has now come a time when you and I *must* see the cold, inexorable necessity [of confronting Nazi Germany]” (emphasis mine).²⁰⁵ FDR would later go on to encourage a type of silence regarding Pearl Harbor that would leave space for personal interpretation — interpretation likely informed by patriotism and propaganda — and suggested that Americans observe December 7, 1942 as a

²⁰²“Speech Notes” in Overy, *War in the Pacific*.

²⁰³ “Public Believed First War Reports Only Gag: Reporter Finds It Difficult to Make People Grasp Facts of Japanese Hawaii Attack,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1941; Michael J. Curley, “Statement by Archbishop Curley,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 1941; Berry, “*This Is No Drill!*”: *Living Memories of the Attack on Pearl Harbor*; “DEC 7, 1941: Remembering a Day of Infamy; Several Ferris Hills and Clark Meadows Residents Have Lasting Memories, 75 Years Later,” *Daily Messenger*, December 4, 2016; “Readers Share Memories of Hearing about Shocking News; Pearl Harbor Remembered”; “Survivor Recalled Shock of Pearl Harbor Attack,” *Naples Daily News*, December 7, 2019.

²⁰⁴ “Speech Notes” in Overy, *War in the Pacific*.

²⁰⁵ Roosevelt, “88. Fireside Chat on National Defense: ‘When You See a Rattlesnake Poised to Strike, You Do Not Wait Until He Has Struck Before You Crush Him’ — Fireside Chat to the Nation. September 11, 1941,” 389.

“day of silence” and of memory.²⁰⁶ And for some Americans, original meanings would be preserved, and Pearl Harbor would be associated with fear and destruction well into the war.²⁰⁷ Although the mainland United States would not be invaded by enemy troops, the ubiquity of war work and the availability of mass media like radio, especially in the face of wartime restrictions on fuel and therefore on travel, for instance, would bring war home to all Americans.²⁰⁸

FDR’s speech was effective in convincing Americans that war was, if not exactly geographically close to them, a strike on an American space. FDR framed the attack on Pearl Harbor as an attack on the United States, not as an attack on a distant territory that most Americans likely would not have cared much about. It seems unlikely that all Americans really had formed their opinions by December 8, especially considering that a substantial number of people were unaware of the existence of Pearl Harbor and its importance to the United States Navy. But by articulating anyway that Americans understood the issue as well as were prepared to make great sacrifices in war as a result, FDR perhaps took the first step in making those things true. Propaganda, combined with Americans’ patriotism, would carry on that same mission, filling the gaps between reality and understanding with orders first to remember and understand the need for revenge and then actively seek that revenge.

²⁰⁶ “Day of Silence, Roosevelt Idea for December 7,” *The Baltimore Sun*, November 21, 1942.

²⁰⁷ “Letter from Salvatore Marcellino to John Marcellino,” September 2, 1943, Author’s personal collection. Kaltenborn, “Kaltenborn Edits the War News,” 43–45, 92; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 104.

²⁰⁸ James G. Harbord, “The Front Line Runs Right by Your Door,” 1942, 5, 6, Box 12, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland; National Broadcasting Company, “In the Service of the People,” 1943, Oversize Box 3, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland; Kaltenborn, “Kaltenborn Edits the War News,” 92.

Conclusion: An Illusion of Unity

FDR's speech highlighted the power of words to shape perceived reality as well as revealed a need for the government to protect its own power in managing the language and narrative meaning of Pearl Harbor as well as the broader war effort. By making statements like "The people of the United States have already formed their opinions" FDR not only permitted Americans to complement his ambiguity with their own patriotism and personal perspectives, but also somewhat relinquished long-term narrative control over the meaning of Pearl Harbor in doing so; this is something he did not do in his speeches following the *Greer* and *Kearny* incidents. It was not unreasonable for FDR to do this, especially given that the U.S. has long been a country that has prided itself on individual freedoms, and in addition it was also effective in cutting through American isolationism, but FDR's decision carried with it a certain degree of risk that some Americans' opinions will not align with a formal or informal government narrative. Such differences are not wrong in themselves, either but could have led to a decrease in Americans' morale or in their willingness to fight a total war.

In a sense Americans were not necessarily united in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor — they were free to fill FDR's blank check with their own imaginings, but FDR certainly created through his speech, at least for a moment, the illusion of a united people. The illusion can be shown to have been an illusion by the comprehensive U.S. domestic propaganda effort that followed and persisted throughout the war; the state — as well as societal institutions that worked with the state — had to provide that single image, that single opinion, to maintain the illusion of national unity and attempt to get Americans to internalize it and reproduce the narrative for themselves, and this process began in the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, notably using the slogan "Remember Pearl Harbor" but also incorporating other themes. Had

Americans truly been united after Pearl Harbor, at least some of this propaganda would probably not have been necessary. With Americans' images of Pearl Harbor mostly drawn by themselves in response to FDR's invitation, propagandists would work toward further uniting the nation by outlining and coloring an appropriate wartime worldview to stock Americans' imaginations with images and words that would best suit the wartime needs of the state. However, as the rest of this thesis will explore, even though the government had power to change symbolic meanings and shape narratives, propagandists could not control how audiences would interpret their creations.

Chapter 2: Changing Utopia, Shaping Perspectives: Repurposing Fiction for War

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed why Americans were motivated to enter World War II not by the destruction of American property or loss of American lives, but by an event — the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. By casting the attack as a violation of American space, which was closely tied to conceptions of American identity, FDR successfully framed the attack so that Americans could understand the event as an attack on *all* Americans rather than only those living in a American territory that many perceived as ‘foreign,’ or those serving on seemingly-distant Navy ships. Americans’ willingness to go to war depended, therefore, on this reframing of the American geographic imagination.²⁰⁹ While an identity tied to geographic space may seem permanent, it is not; such an identity is rendered particularly unstable by war, which can literally and figuratively separate people from the places that help form their identities. Having already explored how Americans saw themselves and responded to public political culture in the form of FDR’s speeches, we can now devote attention to how Americans saw others and how they understood themselves in relation to others during wartime, focusing in particular on popular culture and wartime propaganda.²¹⁰ Both popular culture and propaganda

²⁰⁹ For more on geography and American identity see Susan Schulten, *The Geographical Imagination in America, 1880-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). Schulten writes that the attack on Pearl Harbor shattered Americans’ sense of hemispheric isolation and “initiated a new era of geography,” 205.

²¹⁰ I define propaganda to mean media artifacts (including newspaper articles, songs, images, films, and more) produced by or in explicit or implicit cooperation with a government to achieve a specific purpose, especially to persuade audiences to be in favor of or against a specific viewpoint or action, inclusive of a broad range of possible purposes. This is in keeping with dictionary definitions used by other authors. See for example Arnold Perris, *Music*

— carefully controlled by the government, at least to an extent — had a significant impact on how Americans interpreted World War II, and how they made sense of their wartime lives and the war-torn world.²¹¹

I concluded the previous chapter by stating that FDR’s “Infamy” speech created a powerful illusion — an illusion that the American people were united for the war effort — that American propagandists would seek to maintain and attempt to make real through the creation and control of fictional narratives in the form of propaganda. It is important to state here, though, that illusion (including narrative fiction) and reality could also combine in powerful ways. This chapter will explore in part how American perspectives of one wartime enemy, Japan, were informed by interwar literary fiction. I will examine how FDR attempted to leverage the power of one such fiction — the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* by British author James Hilton — in prewar and wartime rhetoric. I will also demonstrate how a reading of *Lost Horizon* and of the exoticization of the “Orient” can contribute to an understanding of the importance of place in shaping American identity in the 1930s and 1940s.

In this chapter, I illuminate the importance of literature, focusing on the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* by British author James Hilton, to the development of American perspectives on Asia, especially China and Japan, as well as to American involvement in World War II. I have selected *Lost Horizon* as a focus of this chapter because the novel was highly popular with American servicepeople during the war and was also popular among Americans in general beginning soon after its publication in 1933.²¹² Furthermore, *Lost Horizon* was the first in publisher Simon &

as *Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 5. Non-governmental propaganda also exists (and has existed historically), but is not the precise focus of this thesis.

²¹¹ Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 18.

²¹² Bruce Bliven, “Books for Soldiers,” *New Republic* 112, no. 15 (April 9, 1945): 480; Fred Eastman, *Books That Have Shaped the World* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1937), 43–52; Sigrid A. Edge, “A Friendly Little

Schuster's Pocket Books series, an early series of mass-market paperbacks published in 1939.²¹³ Many copies of the novel circulated among American servicemen, and the book has an enduring place in literary history both for the story of its publication in paperback and especially for its addition of the word "Shangri-La" to English vocabulary.²¹⁴ Hilton's novel had a significant impact on the history of the American interwar period and American involvement in World War II, and even served as propaganda, as this chapter will discuss.

The novel was deployed for propaganda purposes during the war, as well: *Lost Horizon* was even known and referenced by FDR in a 1937 public address before U.S. entry into World War II, as well as at a press conference after the entry of the U.S. into the war. Moreover, Shangri-La, the mythical paradise created for and popularized by *Lost Horizon*, was a source of inspiration for FDR in his naming of the presidential retreat that would later come to be known as Camp David.²¹⁵ In ways similar to the changes he prompted in American (geographic) identity regarding Pearl Harbor, FDR's usage of the novel changed the meaning of Shangri-La for many Americans.

Wartime American identity was not defined by patriotism alone. In *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II*, historian Kenneth D. Rose claims that patriotism and propaganda did not have as much of a hold on Americans as some

Guide," *Bulletin of the American Library Association* 31, no. 7 (July 1937): 400; Ada Pettingill, "Do They Read the Classics?," *The English Journal* 29, no. 9 (November 1940): 761.

²¹³ Thomas W. Ennis, "Robert F. De Graff Dies at 86; Was Pocket Books Founder: Publishers Back Venture Spock Book Is Top Seller," *New York Times*, November 3, 1981.

²¹⁴ Christine Kirchner, "Dreams and Nightmares: Lost Horizon's Shangri-La" (Unpublished Thesis, University of Maryland, 2018); Frank Colby, "Better Speech: Where Is Shangri-La?," *Daily Boston Globe*, September 8, 1942.

²¹⁵ Dorothy Borg, "Notes on Roosevelt's 'Quarantine' Speech," *Political Science Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1957): 415, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2145326>; Shalett, "The Hornet Was 'Shangri-La' for Doolittle's Tokyo Raid"; Special to The New York Times, "Talks on Berlin Crisis Are Held In Scene of Well-Guarded Peace: Ordered Tranquility Prevails at Camp David, Which Was Roosevelt's Shangri-La," *New York Times*, March 21, 1959; "FDR Found 'Shangri-La' in Ship, Retreat," *Pensacola News Journal*, April 17, 2016.

accounts, and American historical memory, would lead readers to believe.²¹⁶ Rose is correct, because, as I have argued, American identity was also informed by conceptions of the nature and importance of geographic space — not on idealistic cultural narratives alone. In fact, Americans of the early 1940s were suspicious of appeals to “idealistic and lofty goals” with regard to involvement in war, like those that had been invoked by President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 to “justify [American] participation” in World War I.²¹⁷ Here, I expand on what I established in the previous chapter: American identity in 1941 and into World War II remained rooted in interwar identity — there was not a seamless shift to a ‘wartime identity’ like that often on display in popular historical narratives. As I discussed in Chapter 1, this interwar identity was in part an identity confined to geographic space, not only to the vocabulary of national myths, symbols, and culture deployed in American propaganda, nor exclusively to ideological appeals. We may think of geography as grounded in physical reality, but it is also in some respects imaginative and therefore changeable. War renders many connections and conceptual relationships unstable; World War II altered the imaginative relationship that Americans had to Hawaii. The physical geography of Hawaii relative to the United States did not change; what changed was the way Americans thought about the relationship between Hawaii and the continental United States. The exact meanings of propaganda were similarly unstable, and Americans made sense of the war in different ways.

I will also approach this chapter and the following chapter in part as a case study emphasizing Americans’ interwar and wartime perspectives on Asia. In this chapter I introduce the theme of prewar American perspectives on Japan. In Chapter 3 I will analyze a selection of

²¹⁶ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 4, 163.

²¹⁷ Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 12.

propaganda cartoons with an eye toward the way these cartoons played with existing American perceptions of Asia — especially Japan — and how they altered and became somewhat less explicitly racist over time. Historian John Dower has demonstrated the pernicious racialization of the Japanese as sub-human in American World War II propaganda across various types of media.²¹⁸ Throughout the war, and especially toward the end of the war, propaganda also contained paternalistic messages that ultimately suggested that the Japanese were childlike and in need of parental — and imperial — guidance from the United States to set them on the proper course. These messages had roots in prewar American conceptions of Japan and Asia.

Prewar American Perspectives on Asia and Japan

Outside of the conflicting accounts produced in fiction, most Americans in the 1930s and early 1940s knew little about Asia, especially Japan, and many viewed nonwhite civilizations as inferior to their white counterparts, a view that persisted even after the end of World War II.²¹⁹ In *Cultures of War*, historian John Dower explains that American unpreparedness for an attack on Pearl Harbor, for example, can be attributed to a lack of imagination partly attributable to racism — specifically a belief that the Japanese, as Asians, were inferior to Americans (assumed to mean white Americans in particular) and therefore incapable of planning and launching a devastating attack on the U.S. — but not reducible to this racism.²²⁰ Dower's view is intriguing

²¹⁸ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*.

²¹⁹ Braden, "The Novelist Discovers the Orient"; Prado-Fonts, "China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction"; Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 2, 56, 65, 77–80.

²²⁰ Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor / Hiroshima / 9-11 / Iraq*, 47, 50.

but does not fully acknowledge the extent to which racism played a role in the failure of American imagination that he identifies.

Many Americans, including some government officials, viewed Japan as uniquely incapable of declaring war on the United States and denied that Japan could have any possible justification for doing so. Stanley Hornbeck, advisor to Secretary of State Cordell Hull and former head of the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs, for example, expressed feelings on the subject that highlight his and others' shared failure of imagination regarding the possible actions Japan could have taken in the early 1940s: "Tell me of one case in history when a nation went to war out of desperation."²²¹ Hornbeck could not conceive of Japanese "desperation," — a potential consequence of excessive American economic demands on Japan that diplomats brought to his attention — leading to an attack on the United States.²²² Nor, surprisingly, could Hornbeck even imagine that the Japanese might do something he would consider abnormal despite the prevalent American view at the time that the Japanese were not rational.²²³ A significant part of the American failure of imagination with regard to the attack on Pearl Harbor was, in fact, attributable to American anti-Japanese racism. Craig Nelson writes in *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness* that most "Americans [...] held Japan in low regard, thinking them slow brained, irrational, primitive, neurotic, compulsive, and mechanically incompetent [...] — racially inferior."²²⁴ Nelson goes as far as to claim that "[a] significant element in the surprise at Pearl Harbor was the great number of Americans who couldn't

²²¹ Stanley Hornbeck, qtd. in Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 41. John Dower has explained that in Japan "it was argued and sincerely believed by many that Japan was forced to go to war to defend its honor and very existence" against the United States. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 29.

²²² Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40–41; Stanley Hornbeck, qtd. in Nelson, 41; Telegram from Joseph Grew to Cordell Hull, November 3, 1941, quoted in Nelson, 133–34.

²²³ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 96–98.

²²⁴ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40.

conceive of Japan successfully attacking the United States” because of their view of the Japanese as “racially inferior” to Americans.²²⁵ Many white Americans applied the same reasoning to their understanding of Japanese-Americans living in the U.S., and actively supported their incarceration — a gross violation of Japanese Americans’ civil rights — during the war.²²⁶

Many Americans’ understanding of Japan hinged on a belief that American and Japanese cultures and ways of thought were completely different; a view that was encouraged by public officials.²²⁷ This belief that the Japanese were inferior to Americans was reflected, for instance, in the articulation of U.S. Ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew’s characterizations, before and during World War II, of the Japanese as people whose thoughts and perceptions were completely different to those of Americans and of America’s allies.²²⁸ For example, in describing Japan’s military might to the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, in 1933, Grew wrote that the Japanese were “intelligent, industrious, energetic, extremely nationalistic, war-loving, aggressive and, it must be admitted, somewhat unscrupulous.”²²⁹ He apparently viewed the Japanese people critically and in contradictory ways; though he considered the Japanese to be “intelligent,” for example, he also considered them “unscrupulous.”²³⁰ Eight years later, in November 1941, Grew explained to Secretary of State Cordell Hull that “Japanese sanity cannot be measured by American standards of logic.”²³¹ In Grew’s view, Japanese and American thought, reasoning, and worldviews were so incompatible that they could not even be compared to one another. As

²²⁵ Nelson, 40–41.

²²⁶ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 4; Richard Reeves, *Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 18–21.

²²⁷ Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor / Hiroshima / 9-11 / Iraq*, 18; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 96.

²²⁸ Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor / Hiroshima / 9-11 / Iraq*, 18.

²²⁹ “Letter from Joseph C. Grew to Cordell Hull,” PBS: American Experience, accessed June 18, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/fdr-japan/>.

²³⁰ “Letter from Joseph C. Grew to Cordell Hull.”

²³¹ Telegram from Joseph Grew to Cordell Hull, November 3, 1941, quoted in Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 133–34.

we have seen, Grew's characterizations of the Japanese, though generally critical, were not always consistent. In one 1943 speech, for example, Grew characterized the Japanese as "somewhat like sheep," in a divergence from his previous characterizations of the Japanese as warlike and irrational.²³² Even State Department officials who had experience in Asia, such as Stanley Hornbeck, believed that Japan was too "timid" to do anything but capitulate to the U.S. government's demands.²³³ Secretary of War Henry Stimson, citing his own knowledge of "the Oriental mind," believed that "[t]o get on with Japan, one [has] to treat her rough, unlike other countries."²³⁴ Stimson's justification for the United States' treatment of Japan singled Japan out as different from, and ostensibly inferior to, all other nations. Many ordinary Americans, too, viewed the Japanese as dishonest and inconsistent, and believed that it was impossible to understand their reasoning.²³⁵

Americans also sometimes viewed the Japanese as childish or effeminate, as well as exotic. Historian Naoko Shibusawa writes in *America's Geisha Ally* that "[p]rior to World War II, American policymakers had emphasized that [...] a nation could potentially grow [from 'immaturity'] into responsibility."²³⁶ Accordingly, most Americans believed that Japan was immature compared to the United States and Germany.²³⁷ They also enjoyed an exoticized image of Japan prior to the war: "Before the crisis in Asia exploded," writes John Dower in *War Without Mercy*, "there had been almost a minor cottage industry in the English-speaking world

²³² "Joseph Grew, Address in Chicago, December 29, 1943," Birth of the Constitution of Japan, accessed June 18, 2021, <https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/003shoshi.html>; O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 56.

²³³ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 41.

²³⁴ Henry Stimson, qtd. in Nelson, 41.

²³⁵ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 96–98.

²³⁶ Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 5.

²³⁷ Shibusawa, 55.

devoted to conveying impressions of an exotic Japan to foreigners.”²³⁸ But a perception of Japanese exoticism does not seem to have improved many Americans’ opinions about Japan even after the war; they continued to view Japan as feminine and childish, and therefore inferior to themselves. In fact, this exoticization is part and parcel of Orientalism and, in keeping with such a perspective, Americans viewed Japan and the Japanese as exceedingly delicate, a perspective that began in the nineteenth century and persisted for much of the twentieth century, including after World War II had ended.²³⁹

The U.S. government was also inconsistent in its dealings with Japan in ways that may have made it more difficult for Americans to gain a clear understanding of their potential opponent. In 1932, for example, the United States’ Hoover-Stimson Doctrine vaguely denounced Japan’s aggression against China, a disavowal supported by many Americans, but was not backed up by force and was therefore ultimately ineffective.²⁴⁰ John Dower notes in *Cultures of War* that “collusion or at least mixed signals between the American side and the enemy” preceded the attack on Pearl Harbor.²⁴¹ For example, the American Ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, sought “constructive conciliation” between the United States and Japan, and American import restrictions against Japan did not become severe until 1940.²⁴² Moreover, any possibility that the U.S. could have provoked an attack by Japan was ultimately sublimated in the American public imagination to a view that the attack was a result of Japan’s supposed psychological and

²³⁸ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 97. See also Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 63, 268, 306.

²³⁹ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 22, 24, 27–28, 51, 56, 63.

²⁴⁰ Gordon H. Chang, *Fateful Ties: A History of America’s Preoccupation with China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 138.

²⁴¹ Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor / Hiroshima / 9-11 / Iraq*, 55.

²⁴² Dower, 55–56.

cultural idiosyncrasies.²⁴³ And the attack on Pearl Harbor, “for the duration of the war,” John Dower writes in *War Without Mercy*, “remained the preeminent symbol of [Japan’s] inherent treachery.”²⁴⁴ Americans’ wartime perspectives on Japan were heavily influenced by their perspectives on and beliefs about the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Indeed, American antipathy toward Japan was not fully attributable to a generalized anti-Asian racism, though such racism towards Asians in general existed in abundance across the United States. Despite rampant anti-Chinese sentiment in the early twentieth century, popular American perception of China began to change during the lead-up to the Pacific War.²⁴⁵ In fact, Americans in the 1930s and 1940s grew more sympathetic toward China, which had been antagonized by Japan throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s.²⁴⁶ Many Americans, including FDR, were sympathetic to the Chinese and saw China as an ally, resenting Japan’s imperial incursions into that nation.²⁴⁷ In fact, because some of FDR’s relatives had lived in China and had been influential in the country, he felt that he was knowledgeable about China and had a personal stake there as well.²⁴⁸ The American relationship with China also serves to highlight Americans’ view of themselves as a generally benevolent people and nation in a global context; the American people were fond of China, though some U.S. government officials believed that

²⁴³ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 29. Some postwar American perspectives would employ a similar tendency to collapse complexity, choosing “to explain Japanese history as a result of its unique culture, frequently depicting Japan as feminine and passive” rather than acknowledge a much more complicated reality. Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 63.

²⁴⁴ Dower, 36.

²⁴⁵ Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 22; Chang, *Fateful Ties*.

²⁴⁶ Racism is particularly evident in American concerns about “yellow peril” and American support for the incarceration of Japanese Americans on U.S. soil. Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 4; For more on the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, see Reeves, *Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II*.

²⁴⁷ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 56; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 39.

²⁴⁸ Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 143.

Americans had little to gain there but “a moral high ground.”²⁴⁹ To be sure, news that arrived to Americans out of China often had an anti-Japanese bent, which served to increase American sympathy for China and dislike for Japan.²⁵⁰ American magazines’ coverage of “Chinese resistance to Japan’s brutal invasion” drew parallels between Chinese resistance against Japan and the American Revolution and in doing so encouraged Americans of the interwar period to see themselves in China’s own fight for freedom.²⁵¹ Contemporary American magazine images of the Japanese, in contrast, reflected Japan’s perceived nature as childish and militant, as well as animalistic, and at least one magazine attempted to illustrate for Americans differences in appearance between Chinese and Japanese people.²⁵²

Many Americans’ sentiments toward China were informed not only by news reports and magazines, however, but by literature. This was also true in Europe; Carles Prado-Fonts argues in “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction” that interwar European knowledge of China was moderated by England, France, and Germany through fictional and nonfictional literature produced by authors in each country or that passed through one of those countries on its way to other places in Europe.²⁵³ Europe, and especially England, were among the moderators of American knowledge of China through literature, as well; certainly some British novels like James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon* were particularly popular in

²⁴⁹ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40. Nelson also quotes William Bullitt, the American Ambassador to France, as having said that “[w]e have large emotional interest in China, small economic interest, and no vital interests,” 40.

²⁵⁰ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 57.

²⁵¹ Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40; Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 145.

²⁵² Somogyi, “Women and Children First: American Magazine Image Depictions of Japan and the Japanese, 1951-1960,” 29–30; Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 26, 123.

²⁵³ Carles Prado-Fonts, “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3020>.

the U.S. and in the 1930s the country saw the publication of many fiction and nonfiction works about China from a variety of authors.²⁵⁴

Lost Horizon was largely well-received by the American public, some of whom even preferred it over the “classics,” while some librarians feared that Hilton’s adventure story would supplant those “classic” titles.²⁵⁵ Bruce Bliven wrote in 1945 that *Lost Horizon* was also extremely popular with soldiers, and that it was one of the “10 most wanted” in the Pocket Books series of paperbacks, marketed to American “service men and women, especially in camps in the United States, where the Armed Services volumes do not circulate.”²⁵⁶ The novel’s popularity with soldiers meant that the story became, very literally, closely associated with the American war effort.

Fictional and nonfictional stories about China had “captured the American imagination,” but did not necessarily give Americans a clear view of reality; among these influential books were novels like American author Pearl Buck’s *The Good Earth*, first published in 1931.²⁵⁷ Readers identified with Buck’s characters and the novel garnered American public support for China and resentment of Japan.²⁵⁸ Japan was a less popular subject for Americans in terms of sheer number of books published, as well: Between 1927 and 1941, reviews of 409 nonfiction books about China appeared in the *Book Review Digest*, compared to only 256 about Japan.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Edge, “A Friendly Little Guide,” 400; Pettingill, “Do They Read the Classics?,” 761; Bliven, “Books for Soldiers,” 480; Braden, “The Novelist Discovers the Orient,” 167–69. Classic literature would play a role in the war effort, too; A U.S. Office of Education pamphlet encouraged teachers to supplement literary classics with present-day political writings and accounts of servicemen’s war experiences. “The Communication Arts and the High-School Victory Corps” (United States Office of Education, 1943), 6–7, Box 40, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

²⁵⁵ Eastman, *Books That Have Shaped the World*, 43–52, 45; Pettingill, “Do They Read the Classics?,” 761; Edge, “A Friendly Little Guide,” 400.

²⁵⁶ Bliven, “Books for Soldiers,” 480.

²⁵⁷ O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 57. See also Nelson, 40.

²⁵⁸ Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 147–49; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 39.

²⁵⁹ Braden, “The Novelist Discovers the Orient.”

This stark difference indicates that China was a subject of greater appreciation and interest for Americans and other Western readers than was Japan. Indeed, historian Gordon Chang explains that “American writing about China had a long and rich tradition, and since the turn of the century American readers had received a steady stream of titles” which were “sometimes sensational and sometimes inspirational, that appealed to everyday American audiences. No other country stimulated the imagination of the American people for as long.”²⁶⁰ Literature illuminated China — and, perhaps, more broadly, an imagined Asia — for Americans. As the next section will explore, such imagined worlds created through literature could have important effects that were felt beyond their pages.

Lost Horizon and World War II

Fiction was especially powerful not only in shaping public opinion but also in influencing FDR and coloring the events of the war, and *Lost Horizon* would prove particularly influential. British author James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*, first published in 1933, is a novel that, though set mainly in Tibet, has two key Chinese characters and a British protagonist with a deep personal connection to China.²⁶¹ *Lost Horizon* and the mythical paradise it popularized, Shangri-La, are not symbols of cultural understanding but rather testaments to exoticized interest and even appropriation of the East by the West.²⁶² Yet, despite the shortcomings it had in common with many literary representations produced during the 1930s and 1940s, *Lost Horizon* was especially

²⁶⁰ Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 144.

²⁶¹ James Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, First Perennial Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).

²⁶² Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares: Lost Horizon’s Shangri-La.”

influential.²⁶³ In 1937 the novel was adapted into a film directed by famed American director Frank Capra.²⁶⁴ The same year, *Lost Horizon* was included in an American Library Association book titled *Books That Have Shaped the World*, appearing in a bibliography of “One Hundred Interesting Books Important to the Understanding and Enjoyment of the World Today,” where it was listed just after Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*.²⁶⁵ Contemporary audiences held the book in high esteem.

Reading *Lost Horizon* can also help us better understand the importance of place for American identity — as well as understand the ultimate instability of that identity — in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁶⁶ *Lost Horizon* is in large part a story about place, even despite the novel’s explanation that the paradise of Shangri-La can be found on no map, not to mention the inability of 1940s Americans to locate Shangri-La on their own maps despite searching for it after hearing the name mentioned by FDR.²⁶⁷ Such reactions to FDR’s references helped to bridge the novel’s status as a place-focused fiction with real-world spatial and identity concerns. *Lost Horizon* relates the story of Hugh Conway, a British veteran of World War I who has lost his very identity to war, becoming a kind of passive, empty being, explaining: “If you’d had all the experiences I’ve had, you’d know that there are times in life when the most comfortable thing to do is nothing at all.”²⁶⁸ Conway reflects further that “[t]hings happen to you and you just let them happen. The War [sic] was rather like that,” and that when the “big moments” of Conway’s life

²⁶³ Prado-Fonts, “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction”; Braden, “The Novelist Discovers the Orient”; Bliven, “Books for Soldiers,” 480.

²⁶⁴ *Lost Horizon*, directed by Frank Capra (Columbia Pictures, 1937). Capra sets the city of Baskul, where the plane ultimately bound for Shangri-La takes off toward the beginning of *Lost Horizon*, in China rather than in Afghanistan.

²⁶⁵ Fred Eastman, *Books That Have Shaped the World* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1937), 43–52, 45.

²⁶⁶ For a full summary of *Lost Horizon*, see Appendix 1.

²⁶⁷ Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 99; Colby, “Better Speech: Where Is Shangri-La?”; “Roosevelt And Shangri-La,” *The Baltimore Sun*, May 27, 1942. These newspaper articles explain that Americans not familiar with *Lost Horizon* when FDR mentioned it assumed that Shangri-La was a real, geographic place, rather than an imaginary one.

²⁶⁸ Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 65.

eventually stand before him, “I don’t know that I shall give them much of a welcome” because of their connections to war and trauma.²⁶⁹ In a discussion that was perhaps applicable as well to post-World War I Americans, Conway’s former schoolmates reflect at the end of *Lost Horizon* on the effect World War I had on Conway: “‘As you know, I never saw him after the War [sic], but people said he was a good deal changed by it.’ [...] ‘People would say, I suppose, that he came through without a scratch. But the scratches were there—on the inside.’”²⁷⁰ According to Bruce Bliven’s 1922 article, “Shell-Shocked America,” Americans — civilians as well as veterans — felt very similarly, as though they were bereft of their capacity to care about world events.²⁷¹ World War I appears indeed to have left the West in a state of shock — and the main character of *Lost Horizon*, Hugh Conway, embodies this feeling.

In the novel, Conway and three others, including his young and impulsive friend Mallinson, are kidnapped and brought to a mysterious lamasery in the Himalayas, a utopian paradise, ostensibly located in Tibet, where moderation and passivity are prized above all else and where the world’s — especially the Western world’s — treasures of art and knowledge are preserved against humankind’s unstoppable destructive tendencies.²⁷² But place, too, is important in the novel and Hilton’s story suggests that a place can become a person’s identity. Shangri-La is described as a real, though hidden and secret, geographical place. The place also *becomes* the protagonist Hugh Conway’s identity.²⁷³ And this makes sense: Conway’s postwar emptiness is both reflected in and made a peaceful whole by the largely passive Shangri-La. However, Conway cannot escape his other identity as a soldier — “he was doomed, like

²⁶⁹ Hilton, 65, 177.

²⁷⁰ Hilton, 238–39; Bliven, “Shell-Shocked America,” 205–7.

²⁷¹ Bliven, “Shell-Shocked America,” 205–7.

²⁷² Hilton, *Lost Horizon*; Thomas Richards, “Archive and Utopia,” *Representations*, no. 37 (1992): 104–5.

²⁷³ Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares: *Lost Horizon*’s Shangri-La,” 24–25.

millions, to flee from wisdom and be a hero” — and he is forced to abandon the paradise he has discovered, venturing back out into a chaotic world.²⁷⁴

Before proceeding further, I must clarify why I will include so much discussion of China below when much of Hilton’s novel is set in Tibet, and when I sometimes discuss the “Orient” or the East in a broad sense, too. Hilton’s novel itself draws a great deal of inspiration from the author’s images and perceptions of China and Chinese culture: Two significant characters in *Lost Horizon* (named Chang and Lo-Tsen, respectively) are Chinese, and protagonist Hugh Conway loves and admires Chinese culture, with which he associates himself and his own tastes, having spent some time in China.²⁷⁵ The novel is orientalist in its treatment of the East and Eastern culture, however, and deploys heavily the orientalist trope of the “silent Asian woman,” for example — the character Lo-Tsen, a Chinese princess, never speaks.²⁷⁶ Orientalism in literature is not limited to portrayals of China or Tibet, hence I have chosen to invoke here the idea of the “East” as a broad comparison to the “West” to reflect a broader viewpoint. Furthermore, Hilton’s faults do not belong to him alone, nor are the perspectives he evokes limited to portrayals of cultures he appropriated and fictionalized for his novel. In fact, Hilton’s Tibet was consciously grounded in the same unreality as the period’s popular European and American conceptions of China.²⁷⁷ *Lost Horizon* serves as an important case example of the use of the East by the West via fiction, however, because of its popularity and its use by FDR. Moreover, in the years that have unfolded since the publication of Hilton’s novel, real cities in China (or, at least, tourism companies operating in those cities) have sought to claim that they are the real Shangri-La that

²⁷⁴ Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 226.

²⁷⁵ Hilton, 72.

²⁷⁶ Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares: *Lost Horizon*’s Shangri-La,” 18–19.

²⁷⁷ Grant Uden, “JAMES HILTON,” *The Bookman*, 1934, 192–93; Prado-Fonts, “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction.”

inspired Hilton, in hope of attracting tourists.²⁷⁸ The novel's effects have perhaps outlasted memory of their origin in the English-speaking world — Shangri-La is better remembered today than its source, *Lost Horizon*.²⁷⁹ Even in these seemingly small ways, fiction has come to supersede reality.

By understanding a little about the power and simultaneous inconsistency of an imagined China in Europe, we can better understand the power that an imagined Asia — including as it was embodied in the fictional Shangri-La and real-world American perceptions about Japan — had in the United States, as well. In Europe, “in the interwar period the circulation of images of China became wider and overlapping, even contradictory.”²⁸⁰ Images of China, literal and literary, found their way into American middlebrow culture through novels and nonfiction books.²⁸¹ According to Prado-Fonts, “[t]he most influential agent in the consolidation of China as an exotic, unreachable place” in European culture “was the genre of adventure fiction,” and as an adventure novel *Lost Horizon* fits that category as well.²⁸² It is important to understand some of the European background in order to understand the context in which *Lost Horizon* was written. And it allows us to make some statements about the novel and the role of the (textual) images of the “Orient” within it.

The meaning of *Lost Horizon*'s Shangri-La would ultimately prove changeable, as I will illustrate later — but what made this changeability possible? Prado-Fonts explains that Europe made China an empty symbol, in other words “a symbol devoid of actual meaning,” as a result of the coexistence of multiple, and contradictory representations of it in popular culture (for

²⁷⁸ Brian Sopp, “Places of Our Dreams,” *U.S. News & World Report*, August 14, 2006; Erlet Cater, “The Space of the Dream: A Case of Mis-Taken Identity?,” *Area* 33, no. 1 (March 2001): 47.

²⁷⁹ Christine Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares in Shangri-La,” Research Poster, University of Maryland, 2018.

²⁸⁰ Prado-Fonts, “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction.”

²⁸¹ Braden, “The Novelist Discovers the Orient.”

²⁸² Prado-Fonts, “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction.”

example, literature).²⁸³ The fictional Shangri-La became an empty symbol too, partly because FDR changed its meaning, introducing a new definition of the utopia that contradicted the one described by Hilton in the novel. Though Prado-Fonts' study focuses specifically on Catalan, a small portion of Europe, his argument is, I argue, more broadly applicable, certainly with regard to Hilton's novel: "What was the result of the coexistence of an accessible [real] and an unreachable [fantasy] China in Catalan society? In my view, this created an ambivalence that turned China into a symbol devoid of actual meaning."²⁸⁴ The existence of China and by extension other parts of the East as "[symbols] devoid of actual meaning" also enabled the creation of tangential, fictional (and equally inconsistent) Eastern places like Hilton's Shangri-La.²⁸⁵ The same "ambivalence," and status as a symbol, in fact, in turn apply reflexively to fictional representations of the East like Shangri-La, and these conditions enabled FDR to use Shangri-La in the ways he did.²⁸⁶ In other words, because of the contradictory, often fantastical images and meanings of China and the "Orient" in Western culture, Western authors like James Hilton felt at liberty to give form to their own interpretations of these images; as Prado-Fonts has pointed out, these symbols held no meaning of their own, created as they were from the coexistence of myriad literal and fantastical images of the East.²⁸⁷ It is clear that Hilton did not base his novel on reality; he was content with secondhand information and recognized that he had fantastical images about Asia that were not connected to reality.²⁸⁸ The "ambivalence" and symbolic status of an imagined Asia is also seen in Hilton's novel, where "ambivalence" is

²⁸³ Prado-Fonts.

²⁸⁴ Prado-Fonts.

²⁸⁵ Prado-Fonts.

²⁸⁶ I quote the term "ambivalence" from Prado-Fonts.

²⁸⁷ Prado-Fonts; Uden, "JAMES HILTON."

²⁸⁸ Uden, "JAMES HILTON."

reflected in Shangri La's moderation and passivity.²⁸⁹ Perhaps Western authors like James Hilton found such inspiration and even solace in the East because they could relate to the empty symbol that it had become in Europe, particularly in regard to their feelings of vulnerability after World War I, the 1918 flu pandemic, and the global Great Depression.²⁹⁰ This ambiguity is answered by a culture of "moderation," meaning "avoiding excess of all kinds," manifesting in a degree of passivity and detachment among all the inhabitants of Shangri-La.²⁹¹ Although Shangri-La validates and grounds *Lost Horizon*'s war-weary protagonist, giving him a place where he belongs because he ultimately *is* that place, he also finds it to be unstable footing:

It came to [Conway] that a dream had dissolved, like all too lovely things, at the first touch of reality; that the whole world's future, weighed in the balance against youth and love, would be light as air. And he knew, too, that his mind dwelt in a world of its own, Shangri-La in microcosm, and that this world also was in peril. For even as he nerved himself, he saw the corridors of his imagination twist and strain under impact; the pavilions were toppling; all was about to be in ruins.²⁹²

In losing his access to the geographic Shangri-La by leaving it, Conway sacrifices, too, his own mind, his identity. The novel leaves him desperate to regain it.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ I quote the term "ambivalence" from Prado-Fonts, "China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction"; Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 76.

²⁹⁰ Brian Sableford, "James Hilton: Overview," in *Reference Guide to Short Fiction*, ed. Noelle Watson (Detroit: St. James Press, 1994); Kirchner, "Dreams and Nightmares: *Lost Horizon*'s Shangri-La," 1.

²⁹¹ "[...] I should say that our prevalent belief is in moderation. We inculcate the virtue of avoiding excesses of all kinds—even including, if you will pardon the paradox, excess of virtue itself. In the valley which you have seen, and in which there are several thousand inhabitants [...] We rule with moderate strictness, and in return we are satisfied with moderate obedience. And I think I can claim that our people are moderately sober, moderately chaste, and moderately honest." Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 76. See also Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 175, 186, 201.

²⁹² Hilton, 224–25. Part of the reason that Conway *becomes* Shangri-La is because he inherits it directly from Shangri-La's original high lama. Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 204–206.

²⁹³ Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 17–18, 241.

The concerns of those librarians who had once worried over *Lost Horizon*'s popularity, though perhaps amusing to audiences today considering that *Lost Horizon* is not as well-known now as are many more traditional classics, was not unfounded. Hilton's novel, and others, were well-known cultural references that helped shape Americans' — even FDR's — understanding of the world and contributed to a romanticized and exoticized view of China. FDR was indeed aware of, and loved, *Lost Horizon*, seeing in it a reflection of reality. FDR even paraphrased the novel in his "Quarantine" speech in October 1937, appealing for the "quarantine" of nations practicing "lawlessness;" the reference to *Lost Horizon* was reported in the press as a notable feature of the speech, and scholar Dorothy Borg has explained that the paraphrase was Roosevelt's personal addition, and not that of one of his speechwriters nor of any other collaborator.²⁹⁴ In his own take on Hilton's words, FDR said:

To paraphrase a recent author, perhaps we foresee a time when men, exultant in the technique of homicide, will rage so hotly over the world that every precious thing will be in danger, every book and picture and harmony, every treasure garnered through two millenniums [sic], the small, the delicate, the defenseless — all will be lost or wrecked or utterly destroyed.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ "October 5, 1937: Quarantine Speech," Miller Center, University of Virginia, October 20, 2016, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/october-5-1937-quarantine-speech>; Franklyn Waltman, "Reich, Japan, Italy Scored By President: Effort to Break Down International Law Condemned.: World's Peace Lovers Exhorted to Isolate Aggressors: President Asks For Isolation of Aggressors: Condemns Effort to Break Own International Law and Order.," *The Washington Post*, October 6, 1937; Borg, "Notes on Roosevelt's 'Quarantine' Speech," 415.

²⁹⁵ "October 5, 1937: Quarantine Speech"; It is a close paraphrase. The quotation from the novel is as follows: "He [Perrault — effectively the founder of Shangri-La] foresaw a time when men, exultant in the technique of homicide, would rage so hotly over the world that every precious thing would be in danger, every book and picture and harmony, every treasure garnered through two millenniums [sic], the small, the delicate, the defenseless—all would be lost like the lost books of Livy, or wrecked as the English wrecked the Summer Palace in Peking." Hilton, *Lost Horizon*, 164–65.

A couple months after giving the speech, FDR wrote to author James Hilton praising the book and expressing his desire that “even more people could read it throughout the world.”²⁹⁶ Shangri-La resonated so much with FDR that he chose to use it during a press conference as the codename for the aircraft carrier *Hornet* from which the Doolittle raiders launched their namesake raid on Tokyo.²⁹⁷ FDR’s praise of Hilton’s work was made manifest not only through his reference to “Shangri-La” nor simply the later decision to name a new aircraft carrier *Shangri-La* in 1944 to honor the Doolittle raid and evoke the *Lost Horizon* reference in the subsequent press conference, but his decision to nickname the newly created presidential retreat in Maryland — the retreat known today as Camp David — Shangri-La in 1942.²⁹⁸ Shangri-La had been made a real place, and it had been created in America, rather even than in a real or imagined Asia; even the two *Shangri-La* aircraft carriers — the one that held the name formally and the one that held it as a nickname — were exclusively American property, though under

²⁹⁶ “Letter from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to James Hilton,” December 20, 1937, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President: The President’s Personal File, Part 11, PPF 5001-5500, 1933-1945, 5066, James Hilton Folder, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.

²⁹⁷ “The name Shangri-la was given to the secret rendezvous by President Roosevelt, who, beseeched by reporters at a press conference after the raid to drop a hint as to ‘how Doolittle did it,’ said with the famous Rooseveltian twinkle that the Yankee planes must have come from ‘Shangri-la,’ the mythical Himalayan kingdom of James Hilton’s novel, ‘Lost Horizon.’” Shalett, “The Hornet Was ‘Shangri-La’ for Doolittle’s Tokyo Raid”; Special Dispatch to the Globe, “Psst! Keep This Under Your Hat: Secret Base for Tokio Raid at Shangri-La, F. D. Reveals,” *Daily Boston Globe*, April 22, 1942; Colby, “Better Speech: Where Is Shangri-La?”; “Tokyo Bombing Partly Confirmed by President: Roosevelt Admits Receiving Official Red Report on American Plane Landing in Russia,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1942; The United Press, “Tokyo Raid Made From Carriers: U.S. Fliers Reveal on Anniversary: TOKYO RAID MADE FROM U.S. CARRIERS,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1943; “Where’s Shangri-La? Nazis Puzzled, Too,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1942; “Roosevelt And Shangri-La.”

²⁹⁸ Shalett, “The Hornet Was ‘Shangri-La’ for Doolittle’s Tokyo Raid”; The United Press, “Tokyo Raid Made From Carriers: U.S. Fliers Reveal on Anniversary: TOKYO RAID MADE FROM U.S. CARRIERS”; “Shangri-La Open for Inspection,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 2, 1945; “Presidential Shangri-La,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 27, 1945; “SHANGRI-LA LAUNCHING SET: Mrs. Doolittle Will Be Sponsor of Carrier on Thursday,” *New York Times*, February 20, 1944; Special to The New York Times, “Talks on Berlin Crisis Are Held In Scene of Well-Guarded Peace: Ordered Tranquility Prevails at Camp David, Which Was Roosevelt’s Shangri-La”; Winzola McLendon, “Will Camp David Become A ‘Shangri-La’ for JFK?,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 9, 1961; “FDR Found ‘Shangri-La’ in Ship, Retreat”; Sopp, “Places of Our Dreams.”

interwar standards neither carrier may have been considered to embody American space by Americans themselves.²⁹⁹

By exploring a small piece of the history of the *Hornet*, the aircraft carrier that FDR nicknamed Shangri-La, we can better understand what was at stake in FDR's reference to *Lost Horizon*. The "Shangri-La" which FDR referred to as the origin point for the Doolittle raid was indeed the aircraft carrier the *U. S. S. Hornet*.³⁰⁰ In a speech given at the *Hornet*'s commissioning in October 1941, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox referenced the German attack on the *U. S. S. Kearny* that occurred days before, on October 17, saying that the men killed in the attack died to ensure that all the people of the world could "keep the hope of human freedom."³⁰¹ Tying this message about the *Kearny* to the new aircraft carrier *Hornet*, Knox said of the *Hornet*: "This ship is a part of our guarantee that wherever we go on the seven seas our nation's power will always be exercised in behalf of human liberty and free men."³⁰² Keeping in mind Knox's stated purpose for the *Hornet* — as well as for the *Kearny* and by implication all American ships and aircraft carriers — FDR's choice to label the *Hornet* as Shangri-La appears even more significant. FDR grafted the literary utopia onto a real U.S. warship, transforming Shangri-La from its initial identity as an inward-reaching place of moderation and preservation to an outward-reaching, even highly mobile, place explicitly associated with the aim of fighting for liberty against various foes.

²⁹⁹ For example, speaking about an attack on the *U.S.S. Kearney* by a German U-boat in 1941, FDR said, "The *U.S.S. Kearny* is not just a Navy ship. She belongs to every man, woman, and child in this nation." Roosevelt, "President Roosevelt 'Navy Day Address' on the Attack on the Destroyer Kearney (October 1941)." As I explained in the previous chapter of this thesis, Americans did not necessarily find FDR's claim persuasive. They were more responsive to the attack on Pearl Harbor, which FDR figured as a violation of American space.

³⁰⁰ Shalett, "The Hornet Was 'Shangri-La' for Doolittle's Tokyo Raid"; Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II*, 148–52.

³⁰¹ By the Associated Press, "Knox Declares Kearny Victims Gave Lives For Human Liberty: Pays Tribute At Commissioning Ceremonies for Aircraft Carrier Hornet," *The Baltimore Sun*, October 21, 1941.

³⁰² By the Associated Press.

By April 1942, FDR had essentially changed the meaning of Shangri-La, mobilizing it for war; despite his 1937 implications that it would be warlike men who would threaten the destruction of art and culture, including the bastion of Shangri-La, FDR intentionally invoked the mythical paradise as an origin point for the violence and destruction brought by war. And this change in symbolism was noted by contemporaries: A 1942 news article in the *Daily Boston Globe*, for example, reported that even though “[t]he truth is, Shangri-La exists only in the ingenious mind of James Hilton,” in fact, “Mr. Hilton, seconded by Mr. Roosevelt, has added a shining new word of hope to the American language: Shangri-La: [Definition:] Any air base from which American bombers take off on bombing missions over the islands of Japan” — and Americans were willing to believe it.³⁰³ Because of FDR’s use of *Lost Horizon*, Shangri-La — as a word and as a concept connoting Orientalized tranquility as well as a triumphant paradise — became part of the American public imagination and continues to manifest in various ways in popular culture and media to the present day.³⁰⁴ Shangri-La’s association with the war likely helped it to endure in culture, too: “Language is always in a state of flux during a war,” a 1943 U.S. Office of Education pamphlet reminded educators, “[v]ocabularies change, syntax too, at times; and the powerful emotions of war stimulate people to creativeness in diction.”³⁰⁵ War may aid changes in language and the adoption of new words and phrases, and it helped Shangri-La become a memorable name.

³⁰³ Colby, “Better Speech: Where Is Shangri-La?”; Special Dispatch to the Globe, “Psst! Keep This Under Your Hat: Secret Base for Tokio Raid at Shangri-La, F. D. Reveals.”

³⁰⁴ Representations of Shangri-La have appeared, for example, in film, literature, video games, and animated children’s cartoons, as well as in real-world names of places and buildings around the world. Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares in Shangri-La,”; Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares: Lost Horizon’s Shangri-La”; Sopp, “Places of Our Dreams”; Cherry Wilson, “London Attack: ‘You Have to Carry On,’” *BBC News*, June 4, 2017, accessed August 5, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-40149832>; Cater, “The Space of the Dream.”

³⁰⁵ “The Communication Arts and the High-School Victory Corps,” 8.

Conclusion: Books, Wartime, and Propaganda

FDR's invocations of *Lost Horizon* and of Shangri-La in the context of war were likely not coincidental; FDR believed that books themselves could be powerful ideological weapons, as impactful as their physical counterparts.³⁰⁶ FDR's belief was publicized in propaganda: A 1942 U.S. propaganda poster, for example, features a scene of Nazi book burning surrounding a building-sized white book standing vertically against a blood-red sky, bearing a quotation with FDR's signature beneath it: "Books cannot be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. No man and no force can put thought in a concentration camp forever. No man and no force can take from the world the books that embody man's eternal fight against tyranny. In this war, we know, books are weapons."³⁰⁷ Along the lower edge of the poster is a white banner with red, capitalized letters reading: "BOOKS ARE WEAPONS IN THE WAR OF IDEAS" — FDR had adopted this phrase from the Council on Books in Wartime's slogan.³⁰⁸ This view of books as immortal beacons of freedom undercuts the concern FDR expressed in his 1937 paraphrase of *Lost Horizon* that "men, exultant in the technique of homicide, will rage so hotly over the world that every precious thing will be in danger, every book and picture and harmony, every treasure garnered through two millenniums [sic], the small, the delicate, the defenseless — all will be lost or wrecked or utterly destroyed."³⁰⁹ Shangri-La, apparently, was no longer vulnerable. FDR's confidence that books could endure war and even be useful tools in waging it suggested a

³⁰⁶ Molly Guptill Manning, *When Books Went to War: The Stories That Helped Us Win World War II* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2014), 48; John B. Hench, *Books as Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets in the Era of World War II* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 4–5; Alex H. Poole, "'As Popular as Pin-Up Girls': The Armed Services Editions, Masculinity, and Middlebrow Print Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States," *Information & Culture* 52, no. 4 (2017): 463, <https://doi.org/10.7560/IC52404>.

³⁰⁷ *Books Are Weapons in the War of Ideas*, 1942, Artist Posters, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96502725/>.

³⁰⁸ *Books Are Weapons in the War of Ideas*; Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 4–5, 23.

³⁰⁹ "October 5, 1937: Quarantine Speech."

guarantee not only of the safety of the fictional Shangri-La, but also of Shangri-La's usefulness as an American space and a weapon of war. Because of FDR, Shangri-La was no longer exclusively an imagined idyllic paradise nor a place of peace.

Books were, indeed, powerful. In accordance with the attitude of FDR and the Council on Books in Wartime, American publishers and the U.S. government alike sought to contribute to the war effort by using books as a form of propaganda to raise morale and spread ideas, ultimately partnering with one another to use such propaganda defensively as a morale-booster for American civilians and troops abroad, as well as offensively by spreading American influence throughout the world.³¹⁰ These efforts were successful — books were extremely popular with American servicemen, who saw in them a source of discussion, of relevant knowledge, and of entertainment as well as distraction from the strain of wartime military service that many were eager to hold onto — in a literal sense, the books were specially designed to be easily carried by soldiers who could (and did) keep them close.³¹¹ And on the civilian side, a new availability of cheap mass-market paperbacks created a robust middlebrow reading culture that cut across class and gender lines and continued to prosper even after the end of the war among long-time civilians and newer ones — returning servicepeople — alike.³¹²

³¹⁰ Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 4–6, 45, 48, 50; Poole, “‘As Popular as Pin-Up Girls’: The Armed Services Editions, Masculinity, and Middlebrow Print Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States,” 468.

³¹¹ Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 46, 53; Manning, *When Books Went to War: The Stories That Helped US Win World War II*, 103, 110–11, 97–98, 76; Bliven, “Books for Soldiers,” 480; Poole, “‘As Popular as Pin-Up Girls’: The Armed Services Editions, Masculinity, and Middlebrow Print Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States,” 463. John MacVane, “What Our Fighting Men Think of Your Advertising,” 1943, Box 16, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

³¹² Manning, *When Books Went to War: The Stories That Helped Us Win World War II*, xv; Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 49–50; Bliven, “Books for Soldiers,” 481; Poole, “‘As Popular as Pin-Up Girls’: The Armed Services Editions, Masculinity, and Middlebrow Print Culture in the Mid-Twentieth-Century United States,” 463, 467–68, 475; Teachout, “How the Second World War Made America Literate: The Story of the Armed Services Editions,” *Commentary*, June 2015, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.commentary.org/articles/terry-teachout/how-the-second-world-war-made-america-literate/>.

Books were so powerful, in fact, and their association with FDR during the war was so strong, that in 1943 Senator Robert Taft feared that government-provided books with political content would persuade American servicemen to vote for FDR and unfairly guarantee the president a fourth term.³¹³ Accordingly, Taft successfully sought to have such books censored, banning them from publication and provision to soldiers as Armed Services editions.³¹⁴ By August 1944, however, complaints from the Army had prompted Congress to loosen the ban.³¹⁵ These results suggest that the armed forces truly did value servicepeople's access to books that interested them, regardless of the potential political consequences.

The works of James Hilton had a notable role in some wartime American propaganda projects, including those aimed at international audiences, and are an example of how interwar culture — once bound up with isolationism and fear of war — could be repurposed to serve the aims of war. Hilton's *The Story of Dr. Wassell*, set in the Pacific, was translated into Dutch and used by the Office of War Information (OWI) to persuade "Europeans that they needed to take an interest in the Pacific war."³¹⁶ *The Story of Dr. Wassell* was also selected for publication in Chinese for propaganda purposes.³¹⁷ Another James Hilton novel, *Random Harvest*, along with Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, the latter of which had been very influential in the U.S. before the war, were two of the books that would be selected for publication in American occupied Japan.³¹⁸ In selecting books for use in such far-ranging propaganda campaigns, organizers consciously sought to use "books that would provide useful propaganda to readers without

³¹³ Manning, *When Books Went to War: The Stories That Helped Us Win World War II*, 134–36.

³¹⁴ Manning, 134–36, 142–43.

³¹⁵ Manning, 147–49.

³¹⁶ Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 103–4.

³¹⁷ Hench, 106.

³¹⁸ Hench, 246; O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home & Abroad in World War II*, 57; Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40.

having been written as propaganda and would appeal to the target audience of educated, though not necessarily intellectual, adult opinion makers.”³¹⁹ Even interwar cultural products like the novels of James Hilton could be repurposed for war and used not only as international propaganda but as domestic propaganda, too; Hilton’s stories, like many others, did not have a fixed meaning, and war provided opportunities for their redefinition. In these cases, propagandists used old texts to provide new information to old audiences; the novel, as entertainment and as propagandic object, is vulnerable to re-reading. In fact, all propaganda is vulnerable to re-reading. My next chapter will offer re-readings of several examples of propagandic media, exploring a few key themes present in much World War II propaganda, and will also continue to explore American perspectives on Japan.

³¹⁹ Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 107.

Chapter 3: Contextual Change and the Transformation of Culture: Propaganda and Postwar Perspectives

Introduction

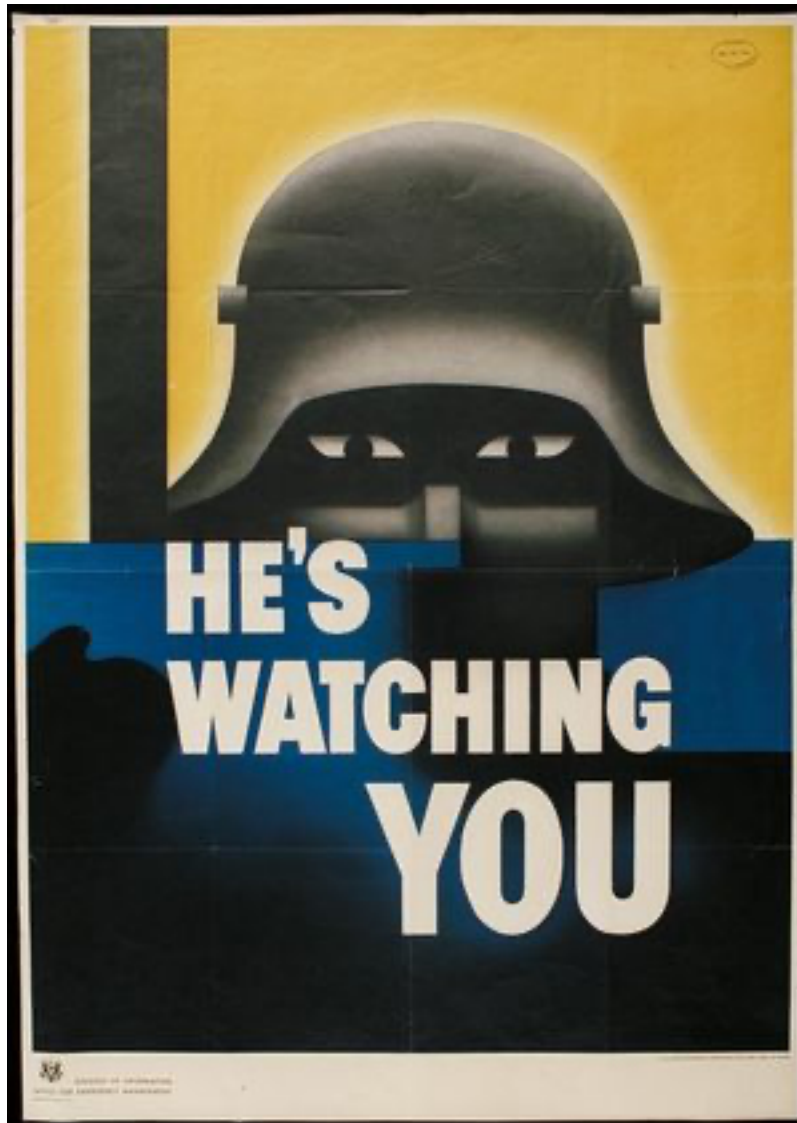


Figure 1 — “He’s watching you”, World War II Poster Collection, Northwestern University Libraries, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://dc.library.northwestern.edu/items/b1f17878-0a3b-491f-b742-1bdedd770492>

Americans of the 1930s and 1940s did not always trust the information they encountered, and many were suspicious of information they perceived as being propaganda. The Office of

War Information (OWI) also attempted to convince American soldiers that they were not being shown propaganda (including in training films) and that Americans were resistant to such targeted attempts at persuasion.³²⁰ Even before the U.S. entered World War II, a Foreign Policy Association pamphlet warned Americans in 1941 that “[r]adio is now used by all belligerents as an instrument of war [...] to persuade neutral nations [like the U.S. at the time] that their country should help the broadcasting nation — or, at least, not do anything which will conflict with its interests.”³²¹ Americans were aware that media sources they were exposed to — like film, radio, and newspapers — were used in attempts to persuade or influence them, not only for the purposes of influencing their buying habits through subtle advertising, but also to shape their perceptions of and beliefs about world events.³²² And during the war, American civilians, too, were suspicious of their government’s attempts to persuade them — the OWI’s name, the Office of War *Information* (emphasis mine), was intended to encourage citizens to believe that there was more to war information than just propaganda.³²³ The government provided messages for use in media broadcasts, and it was up to producers of news and entertainment media to determine how best to convey the intended messages.³²⁴ The intention seems to have been to ensure that Americans were given trustworthy information that they could access on their own terms instead of having it force-fed to them.³²⁵ This arrangement may not have been completely new for the war: Self-imposed regulation was already the norm for some broadcasting

³²⁰ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 211.

³²¹ Graves, “War on the Short Wave,” 16.

³²² Graves, “War on the Short Wave,” 7, 16–19, 61–62; McQuiston, “Radio: A Social Force” (Reprint), Box 17, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

³²³ Kelly A Spring, “Propaganda During World War II,” National Women’s History Museum, 2017, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://www.womenshistory.org/resources/general/propaganda>.

³²⁴ Archibald MacLeisch, “Radio and War,” May 11, 1942, 6, Box 16, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland; Charles Siepmann, “Radio in Wartime,” 1942, 29, Box 36, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

³²⁵ MacLeisch, “Radio and War,” 7.

companies, such as NBC, which had employed such regulations as early as 1939, well before the U.S. entered World War II.³²⁶ So, by the time the U.S. entered the war, Americans may have been used to the idea that the interests of media broadcasters may not always have aligned with their own. Yet, they were exposed to a lot of information through media and remained wary of propaganda during the war: For example, NBC sought to remind radio listeners in 1943 that as Americans they were not forced to listen to any specific radio program if they disliked it or believed it suspect; they could always choose to listen to a different one.³²⁷ Notably, though, elaboration on what NBC termed “Freedom to Listen” and “Freedom Not to Listen” did not include a mention of the freedom to turn off the radio.³²⁸ Nor did these explanations detail how, in selecting what information to include and broadcast and what to leave out, broadcasters acted subjectively regarding the kinds and types of information they passed on to listeners. Still, frequent exposure to media of various kinds appears to have been the norm for Americans both before and during World War II. During the war, for example, “RCA [operated] 24-hour direct communication service to 43 countries. This service [avoided] censorship, errors, and delays which might occur at relay points.”³²⁹ At least for some media producers and the companies that supported media infrastructures, maintaining an unbroken stream of information in support of the war effort was a high priority. What meanings Americans may have gleaned from all of the information — including news and entrainment — available to them during the war are more difficult to capture and understand.

³²⁶ National Broadcasting Company, “Interpretation of NBC Policies as Applied to Broadcasts During the Current European War,” 1939, Box 23, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

³²⁷ National Broadcasting Company, “What Goes on Behind Your Radio Dial,” 1943, 17–19, Box 28, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

³²⁸ National Broadcasting Company, 17–19.

³²⁹ “Radio Answers the Call” (Radio Corporation of America, 1941), Box 30, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

Not only did the interests of propagandists and Americans not necessarily align, as Kenneth Rose has pointed out in *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, but Americans' interpretations of propaganda and even of the roles of specific messages, images, or characters used within it could differ greatly from propagandists' intentions.³³⁰ If soldiers as well as civilians were somewhat free from the notion that the government always wanted them to believe a specific message conveyed in informational or even entertainment media, however, then they were equally free to construct their own meanings of propagandic imagery. This does not mean that Americans never 'fell for' the government's intended messages, but instead that Americans' freedom of interpretation likely increased propaganda's power over them in exactly the same fashion that FDR's abstraction in his "Infamy" speech — Americans could fill in gaps left by ambiguity or abstraction in media with their own imaginations, which appear to have led them to interpret propaganda in highly personal ways. By the same token, Americans' mis-readings of propaganda could also be significant. In *Warfare State*, James T. Sparrow provides an example of a poster for war workers (Figure 1) featuring a relatively abstract depiction of a helmeted German soldier looming above the caption "He's Watching You," but with no swastika on the helmet nor any other obvious symbol to represent his affiliation with the Nazi regime.³³¹ "Many workers took the wrong message from it," Sparrow writes, "thinking it represented their boss, or the glowering scrutiny of [American] soldiers checking to make sure they weren't 'slacking off.'"³³² Sparrow explains that this misinterpretation demonstrates "the difficulty of conveying precise messages, ideological or otherwise, to mass audiences," but Sparrow is not entirely correct.³³³ Simply because members of an audience did not always receive the 'correct' message

³³⁰ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 4, 163; Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 191.

³³¹ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 191.

³³² Sparrow, 191.

³³³ Sparrow, 191.

from a given piece of propaganda does not mean that they did not still interpret a “precise message.”³³⁴

For these reasons, I claim that it remains compelling to examine and interpret propaganda using an approach that one might use today to interpret literature, close reading and analyzing propagandic messages with a present-day lens. In doing so, I express attention to what linguist Robin Lakoff has called “contextual change” — referring to “changes that occur in the minds of the users of language, which shape the final form of their utterances, and govern their interpretation of the utterances they encounter.”³³⁵ Lakoff writes of translation, but rather than attempt to translate propaganda from English into another language, I instead attempt to translate it and interpret it across time.³³⁶ I also argue here that similar translations of context occurred in much smaller spans of time too, including during World War II — some effective World War II propaganda pieces, such as James Hilton’s 1933 *Lost Horizon*, were not originally created as propaganda, and in fact could not have been originally intended as World War II propaganda because they were created so long before the war.³³⁷ Even cartoon characters such as those popularized by Warner Brothers and Walt Disney were consciously chosen for use in war propaganda because propaganda makers understood that audiences related to these characters and would respond to their use.³³⁸ By employing familiar characters, propagandists could make their work especially emotionally impactful for audiences.

In this chapter, I examine some examples of American visual propaganda — particularly the short-form narratives established in animated cartoons — to explore how propagandists

³³⁴ I quote the phrase “precise message” from Sparrow, 191.

³³⁵ Robin Lakoff, “Contextual Change and Historical Change: The Translator as Time Machine,” in *Diachronic Studies in Romance Linguistics*, ed. Mario Saltarelli and Dieter Wanner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 120.

³³⁶ Lakoff, 120–21.

³³⁷ Hench, *Books as Weapons*, 107.

³³⁸ Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 156; Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 33, 182.

attempted to use narrative to motivate Americans and sustain the illusion of American unity. I have chosen six cartoons which I have divided into three pairs centered around key themes: national myth and symbol, race and racism, and music. I also use analyses of propaganda posters to introduce each theme and to demonstrate that similar themes could be found across different types of propagandic media. The methodology I use to analyze propaganda in this chapter can help us understand how propaganda could come to have multiple, even contradictory meanings, as did for example the “He’s Watching You” poster that James T. Sparrow examines in *Warfare State*.³³⁹ By approaching propaganda in this playful way, inviting what could be construed as creative misreading while simultaneously acknowledging historical context, we can gain a better understanding of how symbolic meanings can change over time or be different for different people. The same mechanisms, I claim, were the same that permitted FDR to contribute to changing the cultural meaning of the fictional paradise of the novel *Lost Horizon* — Shangri-La, transforming it from a peaceful retreat to an effective base of operations for military activity, and even simultaneously back again into a presidential paradise. We can learn from these examples how propaganda’s meanings could be as unfixed as the spatial aspects of American identity — war could bring dramatic changes in these meanings, and subtle ones as well. But sometimes the most remarkable instances are those in which apparent changes in meaning are overshadowed by points of continuity. This chapter will explore this idea, as well, particularly through an examination of American perspectives on Japan.

³³⁹ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 191.

American Identity, Propaganda, and Perceptions of Japan

Before proceeding, it is important to situate the upcoming discussion of American wartime propaganda within — and as a continuation of — my ongoing explorations of American identity. At once, the novel *Lost Horizon* suggests both that a place can be part (or even the whole) of a person's identity, particularly when the original identity has been stripped away by traumatic experiences and warns that a return to war or a war mindset can lead to the abandonment of that place, thus destabilizing or risking entirely that new, grounded, identity. Or, perhaps, as in the case of Shangri-La, war can change a place's identity as well. In Chapter 1, I explored how 1940s Americans associated their national identity within the geographic space of their nation, particularly after their traumatic experiences in fighting World War I, and how the boundaries of what they considered to be American space began to shift in response to FDR's rhetoric in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. As I have also explained, FDR's achievement of American unity was an illusion: FDR did not literally redraw maps. Instead, he simply prompted Americans to act on their own existing ideas about what a response to an attack on America would warrant from them — a commitment to total war. This initiated a process for Americans of redefining American space that, though not in a directly causal way, would lead to Hawaiian statehood in 1959.³⁴⁰ That was not a guaranteed outcome, however, and FDR's rhetorical choices were fraught with risk; consciously or not, his speech played with the boundaries of American identity as much as the boundaries of American geographic space.

Propaganda, particularly visual propaganda, would help to support this identity shift even as it sought to promote a unified and motivating narrative of the American war effort. Emily

³⁴⁰ Lineberry, *The New States: Alaska and Hawaii*; Sarah Miller-Davenport, *Gateway State: Hawai'i and the Cultural Transformation of American Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2021).

Rosenberg writes that “[t]o motivate Americans and keep up morale during the war, the Roosevelt administration carefully directed wartime culture.”³⁴¹ Government-led propagandic orchestration of popular culture took multiple forms. Just as FDR mobilized the peaceful Shangri-La for war, in an inverse parallel to the way that Hilton’s Shangri-La preserved the world’s art treasures *against* war, American propaganda would deploy familiar characters, national myths, racial tropes and stereotypes, and music. An analysis of some of this visual propaganda can help us to see the ways in which the U.S. government sought to control the meaning of World War II for Americans of the period and invite explorations of how the meaning of propaganda could also be unstable and highly individual. The rest of this chapter will explore propaganda’s relationship to wartime American perceptions of Japan and the Japanese.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Japan seems to have been negatively defined for Americans — for example Japan was *not* China, and therefore Japan was also *unlike* the United States.³⁴² During this period, Asia more broadly appears to have been for many Americans a blank symbol of the kind which Prado-Fonts identifies.³⁴³ Conflicting images circulated in American society not only through textual representations, but also through public figures such as FDR’s engagement with and weaponization of these representations, which also became further bound up in the war through the reading habits of American soldiers. Propagandists added still more images to this milieu, for example deploying stereotypes of the Japanese in propaganda to motivate Americans for war and visualize for them an enemy at whom to direct vengeance. John Dower writes in *War Without Mercy* that “the [perception of the Japanese in the American] professional and popular mind was shaped then as now by quick, disjointed images and

³⁴¹ Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 18.

³⁴² Nelson, *Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness*, 40; Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 145.

³⁴³ Prado-Fonts, “China and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Representation in Interwar European Fiction.”

impressions” informed, he explains, “by headlines, photographs, newsclips, and cartoons; by ‘symbolic’ items and events such as [...] Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March; by catch-phrases [...]; by sweeping racial clichés [...].”³⁴⁴ For some Americans, depictions of Japanese people in propagandic images may have been the only exposure that they had to Japan and the Japanese. The internment of Japanese Americans on the west coast of the U.S. on the grounds that they were a threat to the nation’s security likely reinforced stereotypes about the Japanese that circulated in American propaganda.³⁴⁵

American propaganda showed what propagandists, and especially the U.S. government, thought was inspiring and motivating for Americans, and propaganda often reflected government perspectives and interests more so than civilian ones.³⁴⁶ That said, the American public generally *did* have an especially negative view of Japan and of the Japanese people; while Americans were willing to believe that not all Germans were Nazis, they lumped all Japanese into the same category as evil and untrustworthy, and American antipathy toward the Japanese was consistent across social classes.³⁴⁷ Caricatures of Japanese people in American media were especially intense and had a notable effect on their viewers: In 1945, Kenneth Rose reports in *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 82 percent of American poll respondents believed that the Japanese were “more cruel at heart” than the Germans, and the memory of the attack on Pearl Harbor as a betrayal influenced Americans’ perceptions of their enemy throughout the war.³⁴⁸ Anti-Asian racism played a role in these perceptions throughout the war, too: “When the fighting started,” Kenneth Rose writes, “these assumptions [of white racial superiority] were applied to the

³⁴⁴ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 28.

³⁴⁵ For detailed information about Japanese American internment in the United States, see Reeves, *Infamy: The Shocking Story of the Japanese American Internment in World War II*.

³⁴⁶ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 1; Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 53.

³⁴⁷ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 12–13, 24.

³⁴⁸ Rose, 13; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 34, 78.

Japanese, whom in the popular imagery of the war were portrayed as rats, monkeys, cockroaches, snakes, dogs and bats.”³⁴⁹ Americans viewed the Japanese as nonhuman pests to be exterminated, particularly on the basis of race, and propaganda stocked American imaginations with images that reflected and reinforced this perspective.

In the next sections, I focus primarily on one type of visual propaganda — animated cartoons — and also analyze propaganda posters that share similar themes. I arrange three pairs of cartoons around three overlapping themes: national myth and symbol, race and racism, and music, and introduce each theme by analyzing a poster that shares that theme. These themes overlap with one another, and multiple themes can be seen reflected in each specific example of American propaganda, but each section will emphasize a single theme. The category of race and racism overlaps the most with the other two primary categories I use in the below sections; all the cartoons I analyze below employed racist caricatures of the Japanese.

Before proceeding further, it is important to discuss my citation practices for propaganda cartoons in this chapter. I chose to view the cartoons I cite on YouTube, in versions of the originals posted online by members of the public, because it was my aim to use versions that are easily accessible to the public in the present day, and this decision also allows me to draw attention here to the contextual change that has occurred over time with respect to World War II propaganda. Each cartoon’s context has changed greatly — World War II is long over, and these cartoons are no longer viewable in movie theaters as they were originally, for example.³⁵⁰ The way that most people encounter these cartoons today is fundamentally different from how original audiences encountered them, and my citation practices reflect that. To draw still greater

³⁴⁹ Rose, *Myth and the Greatest Generation*, 13; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 71, 81–87, 88–89, 91.

³⁵⁰ Michael S. Shull and David E. Wilt, *Doing Their Bit: Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*, Second Edition (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014), 9.

attention to these contextual changes, my citations also preserve the user-generated video titles and usernames associated with the uploaded versions of the cartoons on YouTube. My decision to cite the cartoons I analyze using YouTube user-generated titles and usernames or YouTube channel names in this chapter is intended to draw attention to just how much the context of these propaganda cartoons has changed, and with those changes in context have come changes in meaning, as well; the way I interpret these cartoons is necessarily informed by my present-day context, which includes the cartoons' presence on YouTube, where I first encountered them myself. To ensure that my citations for my discussion of these cartoons are as robust as possible and to point readers to additional perspectives, I have also cited summaries of the cartoons as listed in Michael Shull and David Wilt's *Doing Their Bit: Wartime American Animated Short Films, 1939-1945*, which contains brief but detailed descriptions of each cartoon I analyze here, and many others.³⁵¹ I employ very similar citation practices for the two songs I discuss in my section on cartoons and music, citing YouTube versions of the songs as well as websites that list the songs' lyrics as appropriate.

My methodology has some limitations, but these limitations also allow for deeper understanding of changes in propaganda cartoons' context across time, as well as a deeper appreciation for the variety of viewing contexts that have existed for these cartoons in the past. One cartoon I analyze in this chapter, Warner Brothers' *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*, is not viewable online in its entirety; as a result, I have chosen to cite two different partial versions of the cartoon currently available on YouTube; their content overlaps to cover most of the beginning and end of the cartoon, but portions of the middle of the cartoon are missing. While I cannot compensate fully for this limitation and unfortunately would be unable to do so even if I

³⁵¹ Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*.

expanded my video source base because the cartoon is simply not available for public viewing in full at present, I have focused my analysis on the parts of the cartoon that are currently readily accessible to the public. I have chosen to keep this cartoon in my analyses because the caveat to its availability adds an additional dimension to its present-day context. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that even contemporary audiences of the cartoons may not have seen portions of them. Perhaps some people arrived late to the theater or left the theater before the end of the cartoon, for example — but those people would have still seen the cartoon in part, and likely also formed some opinion or interpretation of it. My inclusion of the partial versions of *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* is also intended to draw awareness to such possibilities.

Next, because only a third of my cartoon analyses in the following sections will focus predominantly on race, it is essential to acknowledge here that the theme of race and racial caricature of the Japanese was indeed extremely common across propaganda cartoons of the period, including those that focused primarily on criticizing or whipping up American fervor against the Germans. Take for example a 1943 Warner Brothers cartoon, *Daffy — The Commando*, which featured the character Daffy Duck fighting against the Germans.³⁵² The reference to Japan in this cartoon is subtle, but significant. Toward the beginning of the cartoon, viewers are shown a telegram received by the German officer that Daffy will fight later. The telegram is signed by the so-called “Apes of Wrath,” three monkeys drawn as caricatures (employing racial and cultural stereotypes) of Hirohito, Hitler, and Mussolini in the lower right corner of the telegram.³⁵³ Not only is Hirohito among the “apes” represented, but the three

³⁵² CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - Daffy The Commando 1943 High Quality HD*, 2018, YouTube, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX7BBc36e9U>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 138.

³⁵³ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - Daffy The Commando 1943 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 138.

appear to be in the familiar poses of the “Three Wise Monkeys” (one sees no evil, another hears no evil, and the third speaks no evil) from the Japanese proverb.³⁵⁴ Japanese emperor Hirohito is depicted as the monkey who speaks no evil; his hands cover his mouth, a particularly significant detail given the portrayal in many propagandic images of the Japanese as liars or as falsely polite and of having prominent buck teeth — these typical characteristics are missing in this case. The “Three Wise Monkeys” depiction suggests that each of the Axis leaders turned a blind eye to the evil of their actions but also implies that taking such an attitude toward the world is a distinctly Japanese thing because of the proverb’s origin in Japan.³⁵⁵ It is also important to mention that depictions or descriptions of the Japanese as monkeys or apes were not uncommon during the 1940s; John Dower explains that this metaphor was “integral to Western thinking,” and American military leaders and servicemen used it frequently.³⁵⁶ Having acknowledged here the widespread racism present in much American wartime propaganda that depicted the Japanese, the first and third of the sections of cartoon analysis will not focus primarily on race, while the second section will be devoted to that subject. The analyses that follow focus on the theme of each respective section.

Before beginning my analyses, it is important to clarify how I chose the cartoons selected for analysis in this chapter. Firstly, they display thought-provoking associations with the themes I outlined above and, as I discussed earlier, they were publicly available online on YouTube at the time of writing. Some of the cartoons I have selected were made by Warner Brothers, and some by Disney — why focus on these two studios, and who would have seen the cartoons? I

³⁵⁴ “Three Wise Monkeys,” Oxford Reference, accessed October 8, 2021, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803104448685>; CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - Daffy The Commando 1943 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 138.

³⁵⁵ “Three Wise Monkeys.”

³⁵⁶ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in The Pacific War*, 84–86.

have chosen to focus on these studios because of the significant contribution they made to the American war effort. Warner Brothers was already heavily involved in the production of war propaganda (and especially anti-Nazi propaganda) before the U.S. entered World War II, producing a number of film and cartoon shorts from the 1930s to 1941, and continuing into the period of the war.³⁵⁷ Walt Disney, too, produced a number of animated cartoons and government films during the war, and in fact by 1943, at least 90 percent of Disney's production consisted of work for the government.³⁵⁸ In fact, the military occupied Disney Studios for a time after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Disney continued to produce work for the government afterward, having been "formally declared to be a war plant."³⁵⁹ The studio's wartime experience closely tied it to the government throughout the war. At the time, Disney received little monetary compensation for some of the company's animations, but the studio's propaganda was highly successful in raising money for the war effort (such as through war bond advertisements) and raising the morale of civilians and military personnel alike.³⁶⁰ Disney's *The New Spirit*, for example, created for the U.S. Department of the Treasury, used the character Donald Duck to encourage Americans to pay taxes and, though it was a financial loss for Disney, "thirty-seven percent of the people who saw the cartoon said that it had directly [affected] their willingness to pay their taxes."³⁶¹ Apparently, the familiar character of Donald Duck had been used to great persuasive effect.

³⁵⁷ Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 19–25.

³⁵⁸ Neal Gabler, "Disney Joins Up: To Claw Its Way Back from Catastrophe, the Studio Dove into Defense Work," *World War II*, April 2016; Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 208.

³⁵⁹ Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 3–6, 7.

³⁶⁰ Gabler, Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 60.

³⁶¹ Jim Korkis, "DUCKS AND TAXES: The Story of 'The New Spirit,'" Cartoon Research, March 26, 2014, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/ducks-and-taxes-the-story-of-the-new-spirit/>; Dave Bossert, "Paying Income Taxes: The Disney Way," Cartoon Research, January 13, 2018, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/paying-income-taxes-the-disney-way/>; "Evolution of a Duck: The 1940s 'Donald Duck Decade,'" *The Walt Disney Family Museum Blog* (blog), The Walt Disney Family Museum,

Americans saw themselves in cartoon characters such as those created and used by studios including Warner Brothers and Disney, and, accordingly, these cartoons could influence their beliefs and behavior.³⁶² Michael E. Birdwell explains that cartoons had a large audience even in 1941, before the U.S. entrance into the war: “At least forty million people went to the movies each week. In addition to the advertised first-run feature they paid to see, audiences watched short features, trailers, cartoons, and newsreels.”³⁶³ Not all of these people were children. Cartoons about ‘grown-up’ subjects, like taxpaying in *The New Spirit*, were almost certainly aimed primarily at adults rather than children. Authors Michael Shull and David Wilt remind us, though, that “[i]t is important to remember that theatrical cartoons of the 1930s and 1940s were made for the entertainment of general audiences in *movie theaters* for viewers of *all ages*, from youth to mature adult” (emphasis in original), partly because studios would have been less financially successful had they limited their audience.³⁶⁴ Most of the cartoons I examine in the following sections were intended for adults and children alike.

January 21, 2011, accessed September 21, 2021, <https://www.waltdisney.org/blog/evolution-duck-1940s-donald-duck-decade>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 125–26.

³⁶² Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 25; Gabler, “Disney Joins Up”; Korkis, “DUCKS AND TAXES: The Story of ‘The New Spirit’”; Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 33, 182.

³⁶³ Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 156.

³⁶⁴ Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 9.

Propaganda, National Myths, and Symbols



Figure 2 — “Remember Dec. 7th! : ... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ...”, World War II Poster Collection, Northwestern University Libraries, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://dc.library.northwestern.edu/items/c6dcd5cc-adb2-4a3e-9f15-cb229bef577a>

The use of American national myth and symbols in propaganda began early in the United States’ involvement in the war. A 1942 propaganda poster (Figure 2) published by the Office of War Information (OWI) depicts a tattered and torn American flag flying at half-mast, likely intended to evoke patriotic feelings in American viewers.³⁶⁵ The poster bears the words “...we

³⁶⁵ “Remember Dec. 7th! : ... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ...”, World War II Poster Collection, Northwestern University Libraries, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://dc.library.northwestern.edu/items/c6dcd5cc-adb2-4a3e-9f15-cb229bef577a>.

here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain...” (excerpted from the last line of Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address) and the clear instruction to “REMEMBER DEC. 7th!”³⁶⁶ There are two holes in the flag in the image that seem to me to be shaped like eagles in flight — the large hole at the top center of the flag and a smaller hole directly below it.³⁶⁷ I do not know if the artist intended to evoke that image, but it is in keeping with the poster’s theme and deepens the national symbolism — showing an eagle, symbolic of the United States, as well as an American flag — evoked by the poster.

The poster’s particular usage of national myth and symbol is somewhat surprising. The reference to Lincoln’s Gettysburg address may have invoked memories of the history of the American Civil War in people who viewed the poster. The nineteenth century reference could have also had some significance with respect to American-Japanese relations; many American perceptions and stereotypes about Japan could be traced back to the late nineteenth century, too.³⁶⁸ But there are certainly many differences between the American Civil War and the attack on Pearl Harbor that launched the United States into World War II that make the comparison surprising. The unlikelihood of the comparison draws attention to the Gettysburg Address as possibly another site of American patriotic cultural memory, invoking American national myths and symbols. More simply, it also implores Americans to ensure that their countrymen killed in

³⁶⁶ “Transcript of Gettysburg Address,” Our Documents, accessed October 13, 2021, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=36&page=transcript>; “Remember Dec. 7th! : ... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ...”, World War II Poster Collection, Northwestern University Libraries, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://dc.library.northwestern.edu/items/c6dcd5cc-adb2-4a3e-9f15-cb229bef577a>.

³⁶⁷ “Remember Dec. 7th! : ... we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain ...”, World War II Poster Collection, Northwestern University Libraries, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://dc.library.northwestern.edu/items/c6dcd5cc-adb2-4a3e-9f15-cb229bef577a>.

³⁶⁸ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 21–24.

the attack on Pearl Harbor did not die in vain, suffusing the present war with emotions from — and about — the past.

The first pair of cartoons I will examine touch on themes of national myth and symbol. I use these terms loosely to mean references to characters, stories, or monuments important to American cultural memory or national mythology, such as the American flag, the image of the colonial soldier, and the statue of liberty, all of which appear in various forms in the propaganda I discuss in this section. These and other symbols and national myths are significant with respect to American national cultural memory and might loosely be considered sites of memory of the kind discussed by French historian Pierre Nora, defined broadly as “anything having to do with the cult of the dead, the national heritage, or the presence of the past.”³⁶⁹ Sites of memory, in Nora’s formulation, are abstract and conceptionally elastic. In my interpretation, symbols like the American flag are connected to American national heritage and characters like the generic colonial soldier are parts of American national mythology associated with the presence of the past and the cult of the dead; they fit within Nora’s definition and have been lasting symbols. In this section I will examine Warner Brothers’ *The Ducktators*, and Walt Disney’s *Der Fuehrer’s Face*.

The 1942 Warner Brothers cartoon, *The Ducktators*, is a war bond advertisement that presents the famous Axis dictators — Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, as birds.³⁷⁰ The cartoon opens with the hatching of “the bad egg,” Adolf Hitler, represented as a duck (in keeping with the cartoon’s name), and then presents an abbreviated, and somewhat exaggerated, biography of

³⁶⁹ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 16.

³⁷⁰ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*, 2018, YouTube, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVtB6afVg9A>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

Hitler who, the cartoon claims, was eventually joined by the “gullible ones” including the “goose,” Benito Mussolini.³⁷¹ Hitler, however, is the clear head of the Axis hierarchy; even inanimate objects are personified simply to salute him.³⁷² A “Dove of Peace,” who has a British accent and may be a reference to British appeasement, begs for peace (likely surprising no one, given his name), and Hitler signs and then immediately shreds a peace treaty. After this, Hitler and Mussolini are eventually joined by another duck: “another partner came to make a silly Axis of himself” — Hirohito. Hirohito, portrayed as a duck, sings in a comically-styled over-the-top Japanese accent, calling himself “a little crazy,” and has the stereotypical round glasses and buck teeth of human caricatures of the Japanese in American propaganda.³⁷³ Hirohito carries a wooden sign — one side bearing a Japanese flag and the other displaying the inscription “Japanese mandate island” — and attempts to plant it along a shoreline, but he has actually struck a turtle’s back rather than a rock or piece of earth.³⁷⁴ The turtle is outraged and picks up the sign, chasing Hirohito and beating him with it, prompting Hirohito to apologize excessively and attempt to falsify his identity through an “I am Chinese” button he wears on his chest.³⁷⁵ The scene suggests that the Japanese are so slow, they cannot even outrun a turtle. There is more symbolism here, however: The turtle has an American accent and can be read as a stand-in for the United States.

³⁷¹ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷² CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷³ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷⁴ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷⁵ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120. Some Chinese Americans in California wore such buttons during the war to distinguish themselves from Japanese and Japanese Americans in the eyes of white Americans. Yifan Huang, “Chinese Americans in San Francisco during World War II,” *Foundsf: San Francisco’s Digital Archive* (blog), 2015, accessed September 28, 2021, https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Chinese_Americans_in_San_Francisco_during_World_War_II.

It remains hidden beneath water until ‘invaded’ by Japan — an evocation of American pre-Pearl Harbor refusal to enter the war as well as American rage that followed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The choice to portray the United States as a turtle is one also implicitly critical of the United States and of Americans, implying that they are known for slowness (though perhaps also deliberation), and that prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor — when Axis aggression directly impacted the American or, initially, almost-American space of Hawaii — Americans chose to stay out of sight for a relatively long time despite the growing threat of Hitler’s dominance in Europe.

The cartoon characterizes the Japanese, however, as duplicitous — for example Hirohito wears an “I am Chinese” button that features the fine print “Made in Japan” — and as excessive and fake apologizers.³⁷⁶ Hirohito is the third of the “ducktators” introduced (the others being Hitler and Mussolini), reflecting that Japan was the last nation to join the Axis alliance. Japan is also portrayed as being completely in line with the United States’ other enemies; Hitler appears as a kind of ringleader and the other two “ducktators” wear swastikas to demonstrate their allegiance with him.³⁷⁷ The cartoon evokes a sense of continuity between World War II and past American conflicts: In one scene in the cartoon, a soldier with an American colonial style uniform and rifle literally steps out of a propaganda poster, figuratively stepping out of the past, and joins in fighting against the caricatured villains.³⁷⁸ By this time, the “Dove of Peace” has joined the fight after being trampled by the “ducktators.”³⁷⁹ At the end of the cartoon, the “Dove

³⁷⁶ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷⁷ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷⁸ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁷⁹ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

of Peace” shows a new generation of doves, these named “Peace” and “Quiet,” respectively, the mounted heads of the “ducktators” on his wall.³⁸⁰ The memory of violence is preserved, literally, as a representation of peace. The closing scene of the cartoon invites viewers “to make this true” by buying war bonds, and also shows an image of a war bond advertisement poster, bearing the image of the same soldier who jumped off the page to fight in the cartoon.³⁸¹ This closing scene draws a firm connecting line between the visual propaganda witnessed by Americans in their daily lives, and the success of the Allied fight against the Axis powers.

In 1943, Walt Disney Studios released *Der Fuehrer’s Face*, which highlights the extremely popular propaganda song of the same name.³⁸² The cartoon stars Donald Duck, who experiences a terrifying nightmare of life under Nazi Rule before awakening and exclaiming his gratitude that he is really an American citizen.³⁸³ The cartoon deploys the symbols of stars (on Donald’s bedroom walls), the American flag, and a golden model of the Statue of Liberty, the centerpiece of Donald’s bedroom. Donald’s patriotism is evident — he even wears American flag pajamas. All this American symbolism, however, is only shown at the end of the cartoon, once Donald wakes up from his nightmare.

The cartoon deals not only with the theme of national symbols, but with linguistic and numerical symbols as well. Not only do those living under Nazi rule lack the basic necessities of life, the cartoon shows, they also lack access to any vocabulary — linguistic or symbolic — that does not explicitly reinforce the power of Adolf Hitler in particular and the Axis powers in

³⁸⁰ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁸¹ CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120.

³⁸² Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer’s Face* | *Eng Sub*, 2011, YouTube, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn20oXFrxxg>; Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 184–86; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139.

³⁸³ Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer’s Face* | *Eng Sub*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139.

general. In contrast, the ‘American’ scene shows Donald exercising freedom — no longer compelled by force — to show his love for his country. Upon first waking from his nightmare, Donald mistakes the shadow of the Statue of Liberty’s arm on his wall for an arm raised to salute Hitler and starts, before realizing he had only been dreaming, to mimic it lest he be punished by the Nazi regime.³⁸⁴ This scene, so close to the end of the cartoon, suggests that the preceding scenes — representative of life under Nazi rule — shows that Nazism represents an inversion of American life and culture. Donald adores the American flag and Statue of Liberty, but he wears the former and embraces the latter of his own free will. In those earlier scenes national symbolism — in this Nazi-themed dream predominantly the swastika is utterly dominant. The symbol is found not only on Nazi uniforms but on almost everything in the world of Donald Duck’s nightmare — it is even found in the shape of the trees outside; Hitler has even cruelly subjugated the natural landscape. The swastika is the most prevalent symbol in the cartoon, supplemented by images of Hitler, and briefly by a portrait of Mussolini and another of Hirohito, a very small Japanese flag, and the book title *Mein Kampf* — tying the Axis powers together under an umbrella of Naziism.³⁸⁵ Depictions of Japan in *Der Fuehrer’s Face*, similar to those in *The Ducktators* and *Daffy — The Commando*, are notable for their racism as well as their nature as passing references compared to the prevalent Nazi symbolism in each cartoon.³⁸⁶ Though likely coincidental, the mostly minimized references to Japan in these cartoons also suggest that Americans were meant to view Japan as insignificant, despite its simultaneous status as an object of hatred. The swastika is a ubiquitous symbol in *Der Fuehrer’s Face*, and it seems even to

³⁸⁴ Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer’s Face* | *Eng Sub*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139.

³⁸⁵ Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer’s Face* | *Eng Sub*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139.

³⁸⁶ Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer’s Face* | *Eng Sub*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139; CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - The Ducktators 1942 High Quality HD*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 120; CLASSIC COMEDY CHANNEL, *Looney Tunes - Daffy The Commando 1943 High Quality HD*, 138.

replace almost all other possible symbols, including the numbers on Donald Duck's alarm clock, and another clock shown in the cartoon.³⁸⁷ Short of a flashing of the book title *Mein Kampf*, the only other alphabetic letters in the Nazi world of Donald's nightmare — including the only English words — are locked up in Donald's hidden safe; he keeps there a perfume bottle labeled “Aroma de Bacon & Eggs” and a tin labeled “COFFEE,” the latter containing a single coffee bean on a string.³⁸⁸ This dominance of the swastika contrasts starkly with the final scene, which appears especially bright with its incorporation of an American red, white, and blue color scheme.

Harsh Racial Caricatures

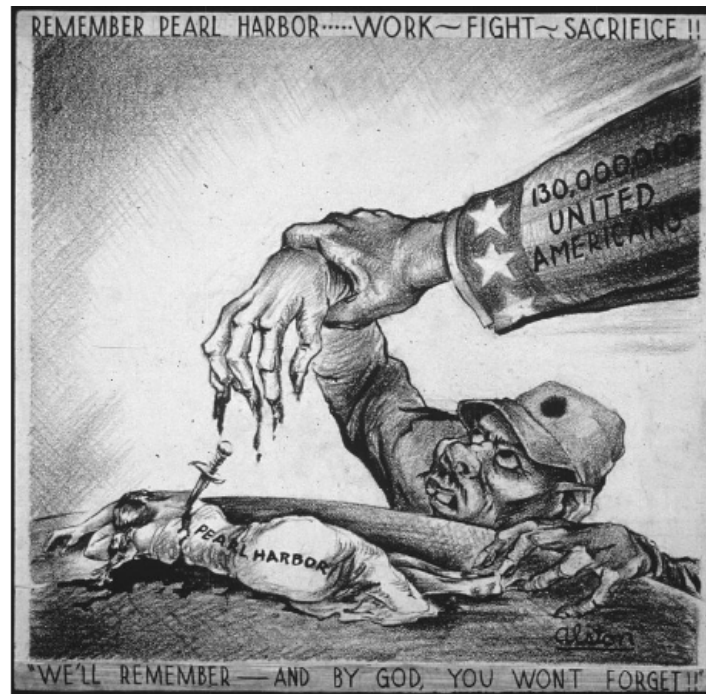


Figure 3 — Charles H. Alston, “REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR - WORK - FIGHT- SACRIFICE!!” / “WE’LL REMEMBER - AND BY GOD, YOU WONT FORGET!!”, Records of the Office of War Information, 1926 - 1951,

³⁸⁷ Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer's Face* | Eng Sub; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139.

³⁸⁸ Solarer111, *Donald Duck - Der Fuehrer's Face* | Eng Sub; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 139.

Racist imagery was present in much wartime propaganda and was used to dehumanize Americas' Japanese foes and sometimes emphasize for Americans the risk of their nation's vulnerability to 'monstrous' enemies. A propaganda poster from 1943 (Figure 3), framed on top by the words "Remember Pearl Harbor.....Work ~ Fight ~ Sacrifice !!" and on the bottom by the words "We'll Remember - And by God, You Wont [sic] Forget !!", depicts harsh racial stereotypes, featuring a Japanese soldier.³⁸⁹ Pearl Harbor is depicted as a woman, crumpled to the ground after having been stabbed in the back by a gigantic Japanese soldier.³⁹⁰ His bloody fingers dangle over her as his wrist is lifted by an even more gigantic arm, this one decked out in a sleeve bearing American stars and stripes, marked as "130,000,000 United Americans."³⁹¹ The poster suggests that the combined strength of Americans can effortlessly punish the Japanese for their betrayal of the vulnerable and feminine Pearl Harbor. It also heavily embraces racialized stereotypes in its depictions of the Japanese soldier; the poster is in black and white, but despite the somewhat understated design of the poster the Japanese soldier appears with buck teeth and claw-like hands with pointed nails that contrast with the appearance of the more realistic 'American' hand.³⁹² An association with Nazi Germany is not present in this poster — the soldier's cap depicts only the rising sun, the symbol drawn from the Japanese flag. The poster

³⁸⁹ Charles H. Alston, "REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR - WORK - FIGHT- SACRIFICE!!" / "WE'LL REMEMBER - AND BY GOD, YOU WONT FORGET!!", Records of the Office of War Information, 1926 - 1951, Record Group 208; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/535645>

³⁹⁰ "REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR - WORK - FIGHT- SACRIFICE!!" / "WE'LL REMEMBER - AND BY GOD, YOU WONT FORGET!!", National Archives.

³⁹¹ "REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR - WORK - FIGHT- SACRIFICE!!" / "WE'LL REMEMBER - AND BY GOD, YOU WONT FORGET!!", National Archives.

³⁹² "REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR - WORK - FIGHT- SACRIFICE!!" / "WE'LL REMEMBER - AND BY GOD, YOU WONT FORGET!!", National Archives.

shows America on the cusp of revenge, inviting viewers to imagine the form and devastation of the wrath that they will unleash together. The poster associates womanhood with America; the message conveyed is that American men should rise to defend American femininity against a foe that would betray and violate it. Specifically, Pearl Harbor — which had been designated as American space, as discussed earlier in this thesis — is gendered as female and characterized as vulnerable to a highly racialized and violent foe.

As I have already noted, much American wartime propaganda employed racist imagery; the presence of such imagery is apparent in many of the cartoons and posters I analyze in this chapter. Some caricatures, however, appear harsher than others, and many cartoons deployed such depictions with the intention of producing a comedic effect, placing them, at least for some present-day viewers, into greater relief. The next pair of cartoons I will analyze share the theme of harsh racial depictions of the Japanese, placing these depictions against an otherwise relatively comedic backdrop. In this section I will examine Warner Brothers' *Tokio Jokio* and Walt Disney's *Commando Duck*.

A 1943 Warner Brothers cartoon, *Tokio Jokio*, parodies an imagined Japanese propaganda reel.³⁹³ Not unlike some of the other examples of propaganda explored in this thesis, *Tokio Jokio* closely associates the Japanese with Nazi Germany, calling the parody an example of “Japanazi propaganda.” In keeping with many other wartime propaganda cartoons that depict Japanese people, *Tokio Jokio* mocks a perceived excessive politeness among the Japanese and the cartoon's characters are drawn in an exaggerated and racist style. The cartoon itself opens with a scene of a rooster about to crow, but this is a disguise; the rooster is in fact a Japanese

³⁹³ The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio* | 1943 | *World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*, 2016, YouTube, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sy9rGAO-qfc>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 158–59.

vulture, depicted with a grinning mouth of human (buck) teeth and dramatically slanted eyes with round glasses (common in propagandic depictions of the Japanese) perched before a backdrop of the rising sun and who, after slipping his costume off, says “Cock-a-doodle-doo please!,” (displaying excessive but false politeness) and rubs his hands, an extension of his wings, together like a supervillain making a plot.³⁹⁴ The reel features sections such as “Civil Defense,” which mocks the Japanese as incompetent and stupid, for example showing a Japanese plane-spotter who paints spots on airplanes rather than keeping an eye out for enemy aircraft.³⁹⁵ The cartoon also features caricatures of specific Japanese military leaders, such as Hama, Yamamoto, and Tojo Hideki.³⁹⁶ Tojo Hideki, labeled as “Prof. Tojo” presents a cooking class in which he teaches his imagined Japanese audience how to make a club sandwich out of ration coupons — perhaps suggesting that the Japanese were extremely low on resources.³⁹⁷ This cartoon, filled with racial stereotypes and images of the Japanese as failures who have as good as lost the war, was likely intended to boost American morale, not only by offering encouragement and reassurance to American servicemen and civilians that they themselves were much more competent and much more civilized than their enemy, but also by insisting that they were doing better economically; Americans could trade ration coupons for food, but the Japanese, the cartoon suggests, were so much worse off, or perhaps so much less intelligent, that they had to settle for eating the ration coupons themselves rather than exchanging them for actual food.

³⁹⁴“No devotee of Western cartoons can have failed to notice the ubiquitous caricature of the Japanese squinting through owlish horn-rimmed glasses—in nearsightedness, as in everything, homogeneous.” Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 105; The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio | 1943 | World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 158–59.

³⁹⁵ The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio | 1943 | World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 158–59.

³⁹⁶ The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio | 1943 | World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 158–59.

³⁹⁷ The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio | 1943 | World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 158–59.

Tokio Jokio's depiction of Japan jokingly implied that Japan was on the verge of collapse due to a combination of supposed economic and intellectual shortcomings, but in reality the war would continue for more than a full year after the cartoon was released.

Another cartoon, Walt Disney Studios' "Commando Duck," released in June 1944, depicts the character Donald Duck singlehandedly wiping out a Japanese airfield despite a series of comic mishaps.³⁹⁸ It presents racist caricatures of Japanese soldiers, not only mocking perceived excessive politeness but underscoring alleged universal Japanese traits and actions of dishonor, duplicitousness, and betrayal. Toward the beginning of the cartoon, Donald Duck is ambushed by two Japanese snipers, one disguised as a tree and another disguised as a rock.³⁹⁹ The tree that conceals one of the snipers has a face on it, featuring gaps for slanting eyes and a large grinning mouth as well as a long hollow nose (formerly a branch). That the stylized face is part of the tree signals not only that the man hiding inside is Japanese but also that his racial difference from (mostly white) Americans is literally "natural" in the sense that it is part of nature. This symbol likely served, if only on a subconscious level, to reflect and justify racial aspects of American animosity toward the Japanese and reinforce the idea that the Japanese were fundamentally different from Americans. The face is more than simply carved into the tree; the tree branch nose in particular gives the impression that the face is really a 'natural' part of the tree, an outgrowth of the tree itself. And, further, in a way evocative of the way that Pinocchio's (the title character of Walt Disney's animated film *Pinocchio*, released in February of 1940) nose grew whenever he told a lie, the Japanese sniper's rifle extending out of the 'nose' of his tree

³⁹⁸ The Best Film Archives, *Commando Duck | Donald Duck vs. the Japanese | 1944 | WW2 Era Cartoon*, 2013, YouTube, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWaf3dQxAfQ>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 166.

³⁹⁹ The Best Film Archives, *Commando Duck | Donald Duck vs. the Japanese | 1944 | WW2 Era Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 166.

makes it appear as though the nose has grown longer. Juxtaposed with the elongating nose of the tree, the other sniper whose rifle extends from an opening in the rock reinforces and replicates the image of an extending nose. The message of the cartoon's evocation of *Pinocchio* seems to be that when Americans are present, the Japanese are likely telling lies. At a later point in the cartoon, more snipers take aim at Donald Duck, and one says that he hopes it is time to fire. Another, probably the sniper's commanding officer, tells the first to wait because it is "Japanese custom" to only shoot men in the back.⁴⁰⁰ This exchange further reinforces the message that the Japanese were dishonest, dishonorable and unforgivably despicable.

⁴⁰⁰ The Best Film Archives, *Commando Duck | Donald Duck vs. the Japanese | 1944 | WW2 Era Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 166.

Propaganda, Music, and Echoes of Nostalgia



Figure 4 — “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!” ca. 1942-ca. 1943, Records of the War Production Board; Record Group 179; National Archives, via Our Documents, accessed October 5, 2021, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=108#>

A propaganda poster published around 1942 (Figure 4), likely created for the first anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, is much more visually busy and much more dependent on words than the other posters I have discussed in this chapter, though this poster’s visuals are striking, too. The poster depicts three Navy servicemen in portrait with sad expressions on their faces and arrayed by destruction: Japanese planes (some clearly featuring the symbol of the rising sun), streaking through the air amidst explosions that themselves look like sunbursts,

above water splashing up from explosions beside flaming ships and debris.⁴⁰¹ The poster features several different typefaces and nine lines of text.⁴⁰² This gives the impression of the coexistence of a handful of voices in conversation that draw the viewer in as a participant. At the top of the poster, framing the image of the Navy servicemen above and below are the words “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain,” (another reference to Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address) and “1941 Dec. 7th. 1942,” which indicates that the poster was probably intended to commemorate the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor as well as to inspire Americans to make wartime sacrifices.⁴⁰³ Continuing to move down the poster, the words “Work, Fight, Sacrifice” (though without commas) are spread across three lines — they are the most prominent lines of text, with large, blocky font.⁴⁰⁴ Below these lines are the words “Let’s get it over with!” conveying a sense of impatience that, a year into America’s direct involvement in the war, the deaths of those killed at Pearl Harbor in 1941 had still not been avenged.⁴⁰⁵ And, at the bottom of the poster, with a different colored background that actually cuts off part of the “g” in “get” in the line above, is a block of text that states, “Come On, C-H...Do More! / This Isn’t Peace-It’s War!!”⁴⁰⁶ The rhyme of “more” and “war” adds to the poster’s overall impact on the viewer, emphasizing this final pair of lines. These lines’ tacked-on appearance adds significantly to the sense that the poster embodies a conversation as well as strengthens the sense that the anniversary of the attack had

⁴⁰¹ “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!” ca. 1942-ca. 1943, Records of the War Production Board; Record Group 179; National Archives, via Our Documents, accessed October 5, 2021, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=108#>

⁴⁰² “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!”, National Archives, via Our Documents.

⁴⁰³ “Transcript of Gettysburg Address,” Our Documents; “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!”, National Archives, via Our Documents.

⁴⁰⁴ “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!”, National Archives, via Our Documents.

⁴⁰⁵ “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!”, National Archives, via Our Documents.

⁴⁰⁶ “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!”, National Archives, via Our Documents.

not brought the desired outcome of the American war effort quickly enough. It also adopts an accusatory tone — had the individual Americans viewing the poster done more to contribute to the war effort, had they sacrificed more of their peacetime attitudes and comforts, the poster suggests, then those killed at Pearl Harbor could already have been resting in peace with the knowledge that their deaths had not been in vain.

But what is of most interest to me here is the “Remember Pearl Harbor” line in the middle of the poster.⁴⁰⁷ The slogan “Remember Pearl Harbor” was very prominent in American daily life and manifested in material, visual, and audible culture during the war, and was also the title of a song by Sammy Kaye.⁴⁰⁸ Kaye’s song was essentially written as propaganda, and though the general slogan, “Remember Pearl Harbor,” was not inherently meant to evoke the song, it is likely that hearing or seeing the slogan in other propagandic media reminded people of Sammy Kaye’s hit song, reinforcing the persuasive effect of the other (not necessarily musical) propaganda in question.⁴⁰⁹ Certainly, on the home front even familiar tunes, repurposed for propaganda or simply for purposes of raising morale, could inspire and motivate war production workers and other people as well.⁴¹⁰ Though soldiers’ tastes in media sometimes differed from those of civilians, servicemen still enjoyed much of the same music and entertainment that they

⁴⁰⁷ “They Shall Not Have Died in Vain. Remember Pearl Harbor. Work, Fight, Sacrifice. Let’s get it over with!”, National Archives, via Our Documents.

⁴⁰⁸ the78prof, *1942 HITS ARCHIVE: Remember Pearl Harbor - Sammy Kaye (Glee Club, Vocal)*, YouTube, accessed August 26, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHltQKEWkiA&ab_channel=the78prof; Jacobs, “Remember Pearl Harbor!: Striking a Match, Sending a Postcard, or Even Getting Dressed, WWII Americans Heard the Same Rallying Cry over and over: Remember Pearl Harbor!”; By the Associated Press, “Thousands Forward Gifts for Bombers: ‘Remember Pearl Harbor’ They Say as Contributions Come In”; “Police Seek Stolen Bike With American Colors And Patriotic Words”; “REMEMBER Pearl Harbor! OPM Captions Press Releases.”

⁴⁰⁹ Perris, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control*, 5–6.

⁴¹⁰ Elmer C. Morse, “Building Morale for Increased War Production,” 1942, 14–15, Box 17, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

had at home.⁴¹¹ Music could bring with it specific associations, too — for example hearing a beloved tune could perhaps arouse emotions of happiness or nostalgia — and in combination with any other potential messages present in propaganda, questions pertaining to propaganda’s meaning and interpretation become quite complicated.⁴¹²

In fact, toward the end of the war, some propaganda subtly shifted toward humanization of the Japanese, though this humanization often existed alongside the continued prevalence of racist themes and imagery in propagandic media. One way that this humanization occurred, perhaps even in spite of propagandists’ conscious intentions, was through music. I do not mean only music that was created for propaganda purposes, such as “Der Fuehrer’s Face” or “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition,” both big hits during the war, but rather music originally unrelated to war propaganda but that had been repurposed during the war when it was sung by characters in propaganda cartoons.⁴¹³ Warner Brothers cartoons frequently involved music, and often contained “at least one hit song.”⁴¹⁴ Sometimes, as in the cases I explore in this section, the messages in the music’s lyrics could be at odds with and even seem work against the cartoons’ apparent meanings. One of the cartoons I analyze is a cartoon that was aimed directly at American servicemen, starring the popular character Private Snafu.⁴¹⁵ James Sparrow writes that “[t]he most compelling orientation films, in the eyes of the GIs, came from the Private Snafu series, produced by Warner Brothers in the style of their beloved Bugs Bunny and other Looney

⁴¹¹ MacVane, “What Our Fighting Men Think of Your Advertising”; National Broadcasting Company, “A War Record: The Use of Records in the War Effort,” 1945, Box 28, Pamphlet Collection, Mass Media & Culture, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Maryland.

⁴¹² Perris, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control*, 5–6.

⁴¹³ “New U. S. War Songs: One Establishes a Legend, Another Mocks the Nazis,” *Life*, November 2, 1942; Jim Korkis, “In His Own Words: Oliver Wallace on ‘Der Fuehrer’s Face,’” *Cartoon Research*, June 26, 2020, accessed October 8, 2021, <https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/in-his-own-words-oliver-wallace-on-der-fuehrers-face/>.

⁴¹⁴ Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 11.

⁴¹⁵ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 211–13; The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll | 1945 | US Army Animated Training Film*, 2016, YouTube, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3AeAveJf20>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

Tunes cartoons.”⁴¹⁶ Though Private Snafu cartoons may have had a different primary audience than the other cartoons I analyze in this chapter, they were similar in style to those cartoons discussed in this chapter that fit more neatly into the category of popular culture and were certainly popular with American servicemen.⁴¹⁷ The music used in the Private Snafu cartoon I analyze here would also have been known to audiences beyond the military, and in the present day the cartoon is accessible to a public audience online on YouTube, drawing it closer in association with the other cartoons I analyze in this chapter.⁴¹⁸ In this section I analyze two examples of cartoons with music: a Warner Brothers Private Snafu cartoon called *No Buddy Atoll*, and another Warner Brothers cartoon titled *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*.

A 1945 *Private Snafu* cartoon, *No Buddy Atoll*, juxtaposes the music of Al Jolson with a comical fight between Private Snafu and a Japanese sailor. The cartoon opens with Private Snafu, stranded alone on a raft, singing a self-centered adaptation of Al Jolson’s 1925 song “All Alone” — perhaps a point of continuity with the relatively recent past (the mid-1920s) as well as simply a reference a well-known song — about his loneliness and how he wishes someone would feel concerned about him and call him on the phone.⁴¹⁹ He means this literally; Private Snafu has a telephone, but he only gets calls from someone saying “testing... 1, 2, 3, 4” in an impersonal tone, testing the phone line.⁴²⁰ He encounters a Japanese sailor in a similar situation,

⁴¹⁶ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 211–12.

⁴¹⁷ Sparrow, 211–13.

⁴¹⁸ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll | 1945 | US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202; “Al Jolson - All Alone Lyrics,” Lyrics.com, accessed October 11, 2021, <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/1397719/Al+Jolson>; the78prof, *1925 HITS ARCHIVE: All Alone - Al Jolson*, 2020, YouTube, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCRimRHwZfg>.

⁴¹⁹ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll | 1945 | US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

⁴²⁰ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll | 1945 | US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

alone on a raft and singing the same Al Jolson song.⁴²¹ The Japanese sailor is presented as a caricature and his raft is labeled “Hon. Navy,” but this caricature is not nearly as pronounced or dramatic as those presented in the other cartoons examined here, especially Warner Brothers’ 1943 “Tokio Jokio,” for example, which massively exaggerates Japanese characters’ lips and eyes.⁴²² In “No Buddy Atoll,” Private Snafu and the Japanese sailor sing together about their loneliness and desire for someone to talk to on the phone and each comes ashore on a small island when they recognize that their duet partner is actually an enemy. They continue to sing together on land for a short time, apparently attempting to echolocate one another like bats or dolphins. Eventually, a dramatic and comical chase ensues, culminating in Private Snafu blowing the Japanese sailor up with (unseen) dynamite.

This violent scene seems on the surface to be a somewhat predictable ending for an American propaganda cartoon, but there is something a little different about it. Before pushing the lever for the dynamite, Private Snafu hears his phone ring; he answers and then brings the phone over to the Japanese sailor, saying smugly, “It’s for you.”⁴²³ The sailor sits holding the phone to his ear, dazed from Private Snafu’s previous assault, until Snafu triggers the explosion.⁴²⁴ At first glance, this may seem only to send the message — like a figurative phone call — that the Americans are coming to bring their firepower against the Japanese. However, there is another possible reading — one of humanization.

⁴²¹ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll* | 1945 | *US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

⁴²² The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll* | 1945 | *US Army Animated Training Film*; The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio* | 1943 | *World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 158–59.

⁴²³ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll* | 1945 | *US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

⁴²⁴ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll* | 1945 | *US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

Much of “No Buddy Atoll,” contrary to the pun in the title that asserts that Americans and Japanese are not friends, seems to humanize the Japanese and indicate that they have much in common with Americans. This is signaled most obviously in the song that the two characters sing; they know the same music and they share the same emotion of loneliness and the same desire for a simple phone call from a concerned loved one. Of course, this is complicated by the fact that the two are singing a song by the American singer Al Jolson. Jolson traveled overseas during World War II to entertain military servicemen stationed abroad, which seems innocuous enough, but he was also known as “the king of blackface” — a title with present-day implications much closer to racism and racial animosity than to genuine respect across barriers of race and culture.⁴²⁵ And, indeed, the cartoon reflects an image of perceived Japanese inferiority — even aside from his physical portrayal, the Japanese sailor is not quite as skilled a singer as is Private Snafu, and the Japanese sailor loses his fight with the Private in the end. Yet, the two characters share the exact same emotion of loneliness and a similar taste in music. They also share, accordingly, a certain degree of self-centeredness and lack of attention to grammar, for example changing Jolson’s lyric “how you are” to “how I are.”⁴²⁶ Both sing in English, and at one point, the two even yodel together.⁴²⁷ Yodeling is most closely associated with Switzerland rather than with Japan or the United States; both characters share an interest in and familiarity with a very particular style or genre of Western music — and they both appear very comfortable with that style of singing.

⁴²⁵ Michael Rogin, “Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 3 (April 1992): 417–53, <https://doi.org/10.1086/448640>; Robert F. Moss, “Was Al Jolson ‘Bamboozled’?,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 2000, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-oct-20-ca-39153-story.html>.

⁴²⁶ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll | 1945 | US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202; “Al Jolson - All Alone Lyrics”; the78prof, *1925 HITS ARCHIVE*.

⁴²⁷ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll | 1945 | US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

And, considering some of the other cartoons' portrayals of the Japanese as duplicitous betrayers, the scene in "No Buddy Atoll" in which Private Snafu hands the Japanese sailor the phone is extremely interesting. For a moment, Snafu appears to have given his enemy his one desire: a phone call, just for him. But, in the end, that gift is a mocking distraction, keeping the sailor's attention occupied while Snafu runs out of sight to trigger a deadly explosion.⁴²⁸ So, Private Snafu turns out to be just as duplicitous toward his enemy as the Japanese were portrayed in other propaganda cartoons. Here, Americans share not only the same human emotions experienced by their enemies, nor only the same taste in music, but also the same attitude toward surprise attacks and betrayal in the conduct of warfare. This implication, though likely not overtly intended by the cartoon's creators, stands as a stark contradiction to the assertion of the American ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, and the popular American belief that Americans and Japanese were utterly different and thought (as well as fought) in completely different ways.⁴²⁹ In other words, this cartoon demonstrates more similarities than differences between Americans and Japanese. Both could be lonely and alone in the service of their respective countries, both could enjoy music and singing, and both, ultimately, were willing to take advantage of their enemy's perceived weaknesses, despite their shared humanity, without remorse. It is particularly significant that this cartoon, which presents a relatively human picture of America's enemy, was released near the end of the war. The theme of vengeance is perhaps still there, or at least the theme of the aggressive destruction of the enemy, but the Al Jolson song (originally composed in 1924 and performed by Jolson in 1925) is the only obvious link to the

⁴²⁸ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll* | 1945 | *US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202.

⁴²⁹ For more on the perspective that Grew spread, see Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor / Hiroshima / 9-11 / Iraq*, 18–19.

past present in the song and, because of the song's lyrics, that past is ultimately nostalgic rather than combative.⁴³⁰

Another cartoon in which nostalgic music subtly features is *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*, released by Warner Brothers in 1944. At the beginning of the cartoon, Bugs Bunny sings a rendition of "Someone's Rocking My Dream Boat," sung by the Ink Spots in 1941.⁴³¹ Similar to "All Alone" in *No Buddy Atoll*, "Someone's Rocking My Dream Boat" has a racial dimension as well, but this time because it was sung by the Ink Spots, who were black musicians. Again, though, possible readings of a subtext of racial harmony are undercut by the racist term used in the cartoon's title and the racist caricature of a Japanese soldier, complete with the stereotypes of buck teeth and round glasses, as well as barefoot. The final detail of the soldier being barefoot suggests that the soldier is an unshod 'barbarian' or perhaps simply an enemy unprepared and ill-equipped for military life, as well as out of uniform. The interesting thing about the cartoon's depiction of the Japanese soldier, though, is that the caricature of Japanese soldiers in American propaganda, particularly the use of buck teeth, was said to be similar to the appearance of Bugs Bunny, himself.⁴³² Michael E. Birdwell has pointed out that Americans found Warner Brothers characters like Bugs Bunny relatable; here, Bugs' apparent racial ambiguity can be taken as an implicit though unconscious statement that Americans and Japanese were perhaps not so different from one another after all.⁴³³ While on the surface the cartoon seems to reject the

⁴³⁰ "Al Jolson - All Alone Lyrics"; the78prof, *1925 HITS ARCHIVE*.

⁴³¹ "The Ink Spots - Someone's Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics," Lyrics.com, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/10223713/The+Ink+Spots/Someone%27s+Rocking+My+Dreamboat>; Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*, 2020, YouTube, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cP0vAFDJKJc>; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes "Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips" Opening and Closing*, 2020, YouTube, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ukxlzBnWMw>; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

⁴³² Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 84.

⁴³³ Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 156.

similarity between Bugs Bunny and propaganda's stereotypical caricatures of Japanese people, it simultaneously embraces it, in a very Orientalist way, through the portrayal of the female rabbit, who appears almost identical to Bugs Bunny but is marked as 'exotic' because she is dressed in 'Hawaiian' clothing, that Bugs finds attractive and eagerly pursues at the end of the cartoon.⁴³⁴ The female rabbit, ostensibly a Pacific Islander, looks just like Bugs and consciously draws his romantic attention, indicating a social compatibility between the two rather than emphasizing racial difference.⁴³⁵ Interracial relationships between American servicemen and local women, such as in postwar Japan, did exist — in occupied Japan, some U.S. soldiers actually “saw their *personal* relationships with the Japanese as having a larger international, or sometimes even geopolitical significance” (emphasis in original) as a result of the U.S. government’s decision to make Japan its ally in the Cold War.⁴³⁶ Some American servicemen may have considered themselves practitioners of romantic diplomacy. Such relationships could often be far from equal; many American men objectified Japanese women and treated them as disposable.⁴³⁷

Some of the lyrics of “Someone’s Rocking My Dream Boat,” sung in the context of Bugs Bunny paddling in a wooden crate before he comes to shore on an island “somewhere in the Pacific” (as explained by an onscreen caption at the beginning of the cartoon), such as “something went wrong” and “someone’s invading my dream” are evocative of war.⁴³⁸ The second example, “someone’s invading my dream,” used in the context of the cartoon also

⁴³⁴ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

⁴³⁵ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

⁴³⁶ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 28.

⁴³⁷ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 23, 34–41.

⁴³⁸ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; “The Ink Spots - Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics”; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

suggests that the singer (Bugs Bunny) feels he has had *his* space invaded by the Japanese. This has an additional twist in retrospect: In fact, it is Bugs Bunny who lands on the Pacific Island, arguably “invading” it himself.⁴³⁹ Yet, just as in the Private Snafu cartoon, *No Buddy Atoll*, Americans (or stand-ins for them — in this case Bugs Bunny) were portrayed as justifiably pursuing similar courses of action to those for which they condemned the Japanese, including surprise attack and invasion.⁴⁴⁰

Bugs Bunny also defines the “dream” to which he refers; in fact, it is Shangri-La — the very same mythical paradise made so popular by James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon* and which still held cultural currency throughout the war and afterward.⁴⁴¹ Upon arriving on the Pacific Island, Bugs Bunny describes it as “a veritable Shangri-La of flagrant beauty,” a place “so peaceful, so quiet,” but the island’s tranquility is soon disrupted by even more flagrant explosions and gunfire; the Japanese are shooting at Bugs. The cartoon thus implies that it is Shangri-La (metaphorically, if not literally) that has been violated by war, and that Shangri-La, despite being an ‘oriental’ paradise, is United States property and an American space. Toward the end of the cartoon, however, Bugs Bunny implicitly expresses a preference for the warlike and forceful meaning of Shangri-La established during the war.⁴⁴² He reflects, having vanquished his Japanese foes: “Peace and quiet. And if there’s one thing I *can’t* stand, it’s peace and quiet!” thus

⁴³⁹ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

⁴⁴⁰ The Best Film Archives, *Private Snafu - No Buddy Atoll* | 1945 | *US Army Animated Training Film*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 202; Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

⁴⁴¹ Bliven, “Shell-Shocked America”; Eastman, *Books That Have Shaped the World*; Shalett, “The Hornet Was ‘Shangri-La’ for Doolittle’s Tokyo Raid”; Colby, “Better Speech: Where Is Shangri-La?”; Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares: Lost Horizon’s Shangri-La”; Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares in Shangri-La.”

⁴⁴² Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66; Colby, “Better Speech: Where Is Shangri-La?”

implicitly rejecting the original definition of the fictional paradise in *Lost Horizon* as a tranquil respite from war.⁴⁴³

Almost certainly unconsciously, the choice to feature “Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat” in the cartoon implies that this adversarial relationship was not always and would not always be extant. Bugs sings only one full stanza from the song and begins a second stanza (though that second stanza occurs later in the Ink Spots’ lyrics; it is not literally the song’s second stanza).⁴⁴⁴ The first stanza, for Bugs Bunny and the Ink Spots alike, is: “Someone’s rocking my dreamboat, / Someone’s invading my dream; / We were sailing along, / So peaceful and calm, / Suddenly, something went wrong.”⁴⁴⁵ Bugs begins the other stanza, “Someone’s rocking my dreamboat, / I’m captain—”.⁴⁴⁶ That stanza in full in the Ink Spots’ lyrics is as follows: “Someone’s rocking my dreamboat, / I’m captain without any crew; / But with love as my guide, / I’ll follow the tide, / I’ll keep sailing till I find you.”⁴⁴⁷ The song is a love song, expressing a longing and simultaneous determination to find “you,” the song’s lost subject. The “you” can in this context be read, albeit perhaps subversively, as rereferring to the Japanese. The song and cartoon, analyzed together, ultimately imply that America and Japan are the two that had once sailed together and become separated when “suddenly, something went wrong,” disrupting America’s ‘captaincy’ by “mutiny” (referenced another stanza though not one sung in

⁴⁴³ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66; Hilton, *Lost Horizon*; Kirchner, “Dreams and Nightmares: Lost Horizon’s Shangri-La.”

⁴⁴⁴ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66; “The Ink Spots - Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics.”

⁴⁴⁵ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66; “The Ink Spots - Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics.”

⁴⁴⁶ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66; “The Ink Spots - Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics.”

⁴⁴⁷ “The Ink Spots - Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics.”

the cartoon).⁴⁴⁸ And Bugs keeps “sailing” in the cartoon until he lands on the Japanese-held island; when he reaches the Japanese, he stops sailing, perhaps finally having found who he looked for.⁴⁴⁹ My point here is not that this is the cartoon’s literal meaning or the message that propagandists sought to convey — after all, at the end of the cartoon, Bugs Bunny runs off chasing another rabbit who looks like a femininely dressed version of Bugs himself — but rather to illustrate how visuals, words, and music combined in this cartoon in a way that can be read as implicitly and very subtly suggesting that the United States and Japan had a significant relationship to one another. This relationship is implied to exist alongside additional implications of American paternalism and even imperialism in the reading that the U.S. saw itself as the captain of the Pacific. The cartoon implies that this relationship had been suddenly disrupted and that the attack on Pearl Harbor for example was like a “mutiny,” but one that might be moved past in a reconciliation of the relationship between the U.S. and Japan.

The American Occupation of Japan and the Transformation of the Emperor

After the war, the depiction of the Japanese in American propaganda would change further. The American occupation of Japan, led by General Douglas MacArthur, would reinforce an association between the Japanese and a childlike nature rather than a wholly barbaric one.⁴⁵⁰ The occupation appears to have been evocative of an imperial or colonial project, and MacArthur even, John Dower writes in *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, behaved as a

⁴⁴⁸ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66; “The Ink Spots - Someone’s Rocking My Dreamboat Lyrics.”

⁴⁴⁹ Adam Mapes, *Bugs Bunny - Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*; Looney & Cartoon fan 004, *Looney Tunes “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips” Opening and Closing*; Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 165–66.

⁴⁵⁰ Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 301–4; Somogyi, “Women and Children First: American Magazine Image Depictions of Japan and the Japanese, 1951-1960,” 31.

“stock figure” Japanese emperor, and “never had the slightest meaningful contact” with the Japanese people.⁴⁵¹ In the immediate aftermath of the war, however, Americans did not see the Japanese as innocent children. “After the war’s end many American public figures and private citizens still saw the Japanese as the enemy. In fact, a Gallup poll showed that a majority of Americans regretted that there were not more atomic bombs to drop on Japan.”⁴⁵² Postwar Americans were initially untrusting of Japan and many remained vengeful.⁴⁵³

Americans would eventually develop quite a different perspective on Japan and its emperor, without full guidance from the American government. “The government, by and large, did not orchestrate the postwar shift in popular perceptions about the Japanese,” Naoko Shibusawa writes.⁴⁵⁴ In fact, “Independently and sometimes unknowingly, Americans tended to spread views that supported government objectives.”⁴⁵⁵ This process was sometimes slow and inconsistent.⁴⁵⁶ Just as with the interpretation of wartime propaganda, Americans were not forced to hold a specific perspective on Japan and the Japanese after the war. During the occupation, however, Americans were exposed to media that painted the Japanese as children or students, “almost humans like themselves,” John Dower writes, and American postwar visual media echoed the same themes.⁴⁵⁷ Visual, print, and other American cultural media including photographs, film, newspapers, and magazines focused in the postwar period on “highlighting Japanese females and children,” providing a contrast to the depiction of aggressive Japanese men in American wartime propaganda and assigning Japan an image of vulnerability — in the

⁴⁵¹ Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 203–5, 72, 122.

⁴⁵² Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 3.

⁴⁵³ Shibusawa, 3.

⁴⁵⁴ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 9–10, 53.

⁴⁵⁵ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 10, 53.

⁴⁵⁶ Shibusawa, 9–12.

⁴⁵⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 214–16; Somogyi, “Women and Children First: American Magazine Image Depictions of Japan and the Japanese, 1951–1960,” 30–32.

postwar period, many Americans viewed Japan as small and weak.⁴⁵⁸ Shibusawa explains that American government and media during the occupation presented Japan as feminine and childish, and that these portrayals represented a return to or extension of prewar American perspectives about Japan.⁴⁵⁹ For example, tourism and economic patronage of Japan by Americans was common both before and after the war — Americans were will willing to consume an exoticized Japan.⁴⁶⁰ During the occupation, “journalists and others fell back on easily understood metaphors and relationships to explain to the American public” why Japan was now their ally rather than their enemy.⁴⁶¹ Postwar propaganda did not break entirely new ground in attempting to persuade Americans to change their minds about Japan. “By casting the Occupation’s objective as teaching problem students,” Shibusawa explains, propaganda “made it seem commonsensical that the United States needed to be patient and firm toward Japan, not merely punitive and vengeful.”⁴⁶² The narrative of helping another nation in need would supplant narratives of vengeance against Japan. Americans justified their self-assigned role as teacher by calling the Japanese “feudal,” claiming that the Japanese were stuck in the past, in need of assistance to overcome their “backwardness” and helplessness.⁴⁶³ Americans seemed to believe that it was only right, “commonsensical” even, that they should help to address Japan’s stunted growth.⁴⁶⁴ The occupation proceeded with this goal in mind.

Postwar American attitudes about Japan indeed became marked by a belief that Japan was vulnerable and in need of protection and teaching, its people no longer the cartoonish

⁴⁵⁸ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 26, 27, 50–51, 259, 24.

⁴⁵⁹ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 4–5, 57.

⁴⁶⁰ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 28, 20. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 97.

⁴⁶¹ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 25.

⁴⁶² Shibusawa, 25.

⁴⁶³ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 59, 73, 64–65, 72–73.

⁴⁶⁴ Shibusawa, 25.

monsters of propaganda, but harmless and weak. Naoko Shibusawa writes that “[b]y seeing themselves as mentors and protectors of a Japan that was as vulnerable and helpless as a woman or a child, liberal Americans softened their perceptions about Japan.”⁴⁶⁵ Evidently, Americans could not hate what (or whom) they perceived as pitiable and in need of aid. This change was not entirely new: Americans had long viewed Japanese women, for example, as “naive and childlike,” and, more broadly, Americans also “stretched the pre-existing frame of reference about Japanese immaturity to accommodate a picture of a nation needing a political education and the Americans as teachers of democracy to young Japanese students” to avoid having to reckon as directly with Japan’s demonstrated previous military strength.⁴⁶⁶ In other words, Americans simply extended their prewar views of Japan to suit postwar needs, creating a useful cultural, political, and economic ally for the Cold War.⁴⁶⁷ Japanese views of Americans and of themselves changed, too. Further reinforcing the role of the Japanese in occupied Japan as that of a child or student of the Americans, some Japanese looked up to MacArthur, leader of the American occupation, as a parental figure, for example.⁴⁶⁸

During the war, much animosity was directed at Japan’s emperor, Hirohito, whom a majority of Americans wanted to see imprisoned or executed.⁴⁶⁹ “Although the Office of War Information (OWI) began taking care, as early as November 1942, not to use the emperor to symbolize the Japanese enemy in its propaganda,” Shibusawa writes, “a Gallup poll taken on May 29, 1945, revealed that 70 percent of Americans believed Hirohito should be executed,

⁴⁶⁵ Shibusawa, 19.

⁴⁶⁶ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 23, 25, 24–27. The American view of the women of Japan as “naive and childlike” also “extended to the Japanese people as a whole,” 23.

⁴⁶⁷ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 3, 58.

⁴⁶⁸ Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 233.

⁴⁶⁹ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 99–100.

imprisoned, exiled, or put on trial.”⁴⁷⁰ The emperor was a hated figure for Americans. However, Occupation-era attempts to refigure the emperor would prove successful over time.⁴⁷¹

During the Occupation, the hatred Americans had earlier felt for Hirohito was transferred instead to Tojo, Japan’s former Prime Minister and military leader.⁴⁷² In the American imagination, Tojo was characterized by “a kind of racialized, deviant masculinity” and “[criminalized] [...] as an ‘Oriental’ villain.”⁴⁷³ In contrast to the new, more positive (and more patronizing) view that Americans came to hold regarding Hirohito and the Japanese people, their view of Tojo remained negative. In fact, Tojo became for Americans a pop culture villain. “Tojo served as a good foil for the emperor because he happened to fit the part of an inscrutable, ‘Oriental’ criminal mastermind, a latter-day Fu Manchu,” a character associated specifically with “yellow peril” — fears of Asian people’s presence and influence in the Western world — and Tojo’s “looks and actions reminded them of the stereotypical, evil Asian villain. Like Fu Manchu, Tojo seemed to have delusions of grandeur, seeking to wreak nationalist and racial vengeance and to conquer the world.”⁴⁷⁴ Americans saw Tojo as though he were a propagandic caricature come to life.

It is notable that Tojo was believed, despite Americans’ hatred, to still be a masculine figure like Fu Manchu, and was also compared to Hitler and the ‘mature’ Germans (as contrasted with the ‘immature’ Japanese).⁴⁷⁵ Like Hitler, so often depicted in propaganda as the ringleader of all the Axis powers, Americans assigned Tojo a degree of masculinity and culpability that far overshadowed those assigned to Japanese emperor Hirohito after the war — Tojo really did

⁴⁷⁰ Shibusawa, 100.

⁴⁷¹ Shibusawa, 100–101.

⁴⁷² Shibusawa, 101–3.

⁴⁷³ Shibusawa, 103.

⁴⁷⁴ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 123–24, 124–26.

⁴⁷⁵ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 123–27, 56, 92–95.

become a stand-in for the formerly ‘evil’ emperor.⁴⁷⁶ On the surface, this would appear to reinforce perceived connections between Nazi Germany and militarist Japan (with Tojo singled out) — and, presumably, both were therefore to be held accountable for their actions, including legally.⁴⁷⁷ This portrayal might appear to have aligned Tojo with the United States, presumably also a mature nation, though of course Americans did not pursue this particular perspective; MacArthur did not treat Tojo — nor Hirohito nor any of the Japanese people — as an equal.⁴⁷⁸

However, it is worth considering for a moment the juxtaposition of Hirohito, Tojo, and the United States as teachers of Japan. Coincidentally, in the Warner Brothers cartoon *Tokio Jokio*, Tojo is portrayed as a teacher, “Prof. Tojo,” who instructs Japanese people in how to live their everyday, domestic lives.⁴⁷⁹ How intriguing, then, that the U.S. figured itself also a masculine teacher for Japan after the war.⁴⁸⁰ But Uncle Sam was not the only occupation-era figure to have swapped roles to become one of Japan’s teachers. Seemingly, Hirohito was also made to replace Tojo as Japan’s teacher during the occupation. In keeping with the theme of educators, an interesting aspect of the emperor’s transformed role is that he was assigned an identity of “absent-minded professor, complete with round glasses.”⁴⁸¹ This professorial role may have placed the emperor figuratively squarely on the side of American ‘teachers’ in the minds of the Americans and the Japanese. However, occupation-era Americans did not necessarily stop considering the Japanese to be completely different from themselves — published texts that emphasized perceived differences between Americans and Japanese were

⁴⁷⁶ Shibusawa, 98–99.

⁴⁷⁷ Shibusawa, 123–24.

⁴⁷⁸ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 59, 97–99, 103–106, 55–56.

⁴⁷⁹ The Best Film Archives, *Tokio Jokio | 1943 | World War 2 Era Propaganda Cartoon*.

⁴⁸⁰ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 57, 24–25.

⁴⁸¹ Shibusawa, 101.

more popular than those that emphasized perceived similarities.⁴⁸² And, just as before the war, Americans considered such perceived differences to be a mark of Japanese inferiority. At best, the Americans considered the Japanese people to be “over-eager students who [...] could only imitate and misinterpret primary concepts.”⁴⁸³ The ‘teacher-student’ relationship between Americans and Japanese was far from equal. Now that they were both free from the menace of Japanese militarism, however, Americans and the Japanese emperor alike could instruct the Japanese people, having excluded Tojo from the teachers' lounge despite his intact masculinity.

Conclusion: Making Japan — and Cartoons — Cute

The occupation brought about changes in the American and Japanese perceptions of the Japanese emperor that still have ramifications today. Kumiko Sato suggests in “From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan” that Japan’s defeat in World War II and subsequent “subservient relationship” to the United States after the war may have contributed the prevalence of “cute” or “*kawaii*” — a term which also implies a childlike vulnerability — in Japanese popular culture to the present day.⁴⁸⁴ Specifically, Sato explains, “*kawaii* suggests a pity for things loved and protected.”⁴⁸⁵ Even the Japanese emperor, Sato writes, had by 1989 become “cute.”⁴⁸⁶ I suspect that some of this apparent shift in the emperor’s identity can indeed be traced back to the postwar American occupation of Japan, which sought to “[reimagine] an emperor divorced from the policies imperial Japan had pursued in his name,

⁴⁸² Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 61, 62, 68–69.

⁴⁸³ Shibusawa, 72.

⁴⁸⁴ Sato, “From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan,” 42, 38; White, *A Unified Theory of Cats on the Internet*, 61.

⁴⁸⁵ Sato, “From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan,” 38.

⁴⁸⁶ Sato, 38.

under his authority, and with his active cooperation for almost two decades.”⁴⁸⁷ This reimagining meant that instead of “war criminal,” Hirohito became for the American public as well as for the Japanese public an “absent-minded professor,” “father-figure,” and “upstanding family man,” himself the victim of “militarists” within the Japanese government.⁴⁸⁸ The occupation government was not alone in propagating such messages: Early in the occupation, Naoko Shibusawa explains, “American journalists and writers [...] began refiguring the emperor as a valuable U.S. ally.”⁴⁸⁹ This transformation was highly effective. Moreover, Shibusawa writes, MacArthur attempted to change the perception of the emperor among Americans and Japanese alike.⁴⁹⁰ Given Sato’s example of the “cute” emperor, it seems MacArthur’s attempts to change others’ perspective on the emperor may have met with lasting success.⁴⁹¹

Although the occupation appears to have cemented the idea of a parent-child relationship between Japan and the United States, I also see themes of cuteness and childishness as prominent within American wartime propaganda about Japan and the Japanese, which, even as it employed racist caricatures and depicted significant violence, often simultaneously conveyed a message that the Japanese were weak, incompetent, and vulnerable. The Japanese were portrayed in propaganda as being like children, ultimately in need of paternalistic guidance or punishment from the U.S.; an Uncle Sam to keep unruly ‘children’ in their place. In *America’s Geisha Ally*, Naoko Shibusawa claims that it was because the ‘new’ narratives produced about occupied Japan were continuations and extensions of pre-existing ones permitted them to take hold so

⁴⁸⁷ Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 281.

⁴⁸⁸ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 4, 100, 101, 105, 113, 104–6, 114–17, 127. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, 281.

⁴⁸⁹ Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 100.

⁴⁹⁰ Shibusawa, 104–6.

⁴⁹¹ Sato, “From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan,” 38.

effectively.⁴⁹² “These narratives,” Shibusawa writes, “derived their power from their very familiarity. What seemed familiar was also understood as true and valid at a gut level—more so, linguists say, than reasoned discourse that argues the opposite.”⁴⁹³ In other words, the postwar American narratives about Japan had an impact because they recalled past ones. In my view, these old perspectives were also present to an extent in wartime propaganda, which often portrayed the Japanese as weak and childish, sometimes following and imitating — but never superseding in power or ‘maturity’ — Nazi Germany, rather than as citizens of an independent imperial power.

From a present-day perspective, animated cartoons, with their increasing association with children and children’s entertainment — in fact, many animated cartoons on YouTube, regardless of their original intended audience, have previously been designated as ‘content for kids’ on YouTube despite that, at least in my opinion, the present-day role of World War II propaganda cartoons might be more appropriately described as ‘historical document’ than ‘children’s entertainment’ — are especially useful to examine this relationship.⁴⁹⁴ Despite the existence of many cartoons and animated films still being created today as entertainment for adults rather than for children, many people, especially parents of young children, appear to associate the media exclusively with children’s entertainment and are shocked when adult themes are explored.⁴⁹⁵ Kelly Dickey opened a short article about one such adult animated film with the following statement: “Not everything is always as it seems, and that’s especially true for

⁴⁹² Shibusawa, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*, 138.

⁴⁹³ Shibusawa, 138.

⁴⁹⁴ Sophie Fowler, “Animation Is Not Just for Kids,” *The Seahawk*, February 12, 2020, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://theseahawk.org/25216/multimedia/animation-is-not-just-for-kids/>.

⁴⁹⁵ Moreno, “Animation Is Not Just for Kids”; Fowler, “Animation Is Not Just for Kids”; Dickey, “Kid-Style Films like ‘Sausage Party’ Geared toward Adults: ‘Sausage Party’ Precedents Are Kid-Styled Films Geared toward Adults”; Agostino, “Mums Stunned as Their Children Stumble across Raunchy ‘cartoon’ on Netflix.”

entertainment *these days*” (emphasis added).⁴⁹⁶ Implicit in this statement, especially the words “these days,” is an assumption that entertainment — particularly in the medium of animation — was more straightforward in the past, more transparent about its purpose and intended audience, and therefore ‘safer’ for children to be exposed to. Another writer, Josephine Agostino, takes things even farther with the news article title, “Mums Stunned as Their Children Stumble Across Raunchy ‘Cartoon’ on Netflix,” placing the word ‘Cartoon’ in scare quotes as though to suggest that because the film in question is “[r]aunchy” that it therefore cannot *really* be a cartoon because, in today’s popular understanding, cartoons are assumed to be a medium exclusively or at least primarily devoted to children’s entertainment by default.⁴⁹⁷ If a cartoon is not appropriate for children, this view implies, it is not actually a cartoon or at the least does not constitute an appropriate use of the medium.

But, as we have seen in this chapter, the medium of animation in the past was for adults as well as children and cartoons were *not* straightforward; their meanings were and still are unstable, especially now that time, culture, and attendant contexts surrounding World War II-era media have changed.⁴⁹⁸ Perhaps the change in the cultural meaning and assumed audience of animation as a medium has some roots in American wartime propagandic depictions of the Japanese and the postwar transformation of many propagandic themes and tropes. The medium of the cartoon, having been used in the examples I have analyzed in this chapter to depict the Japanese as childish during World War II, has itself become a medium increasingly associated

⁴⁹⁶ Kelly Dickey, “Kid-Style Films like ‘Sausage Party’ Geared toward Adults: ‘Sausage Party’ Precedents Are Kid-Styled Films Geared toward Adults,” *The Herald Bulletin*, August 11, 2016, accessed September 30, 2021, https://www.heraldbulletin.com/community/kid-style-films-like-sausage-party-geared-toward-adults/article_22c22f48-2bd8-52d6-bdaf-1871e2d89334.html.

⁴⁹⁷ Josephine Agostino, “Mums Stunned as Their Children Stumble across Raunchy ‘cartoon’ on Netflix,” *Kidspot*, March 6, 2019, accessed September 30, 2021, <https://www.kidspot.com.au/lifestyle/entertainment/mums-stunned-as-their-children-stumble-across-raunchy-cartoon-on-netflix/news-story/dbeb1d9d4c33ca8377b9e7ae4c476c03>.

⁴⁹⁸ Shull and Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, 9.

with children. Animation has perhaps become “cute” in the sense encompassed by the word “*kawaii*,” as well.⁴⁹⁹

These apparent changes in the public perception of the medium of animation, like the changes in American perception of Japan after the war, actually may not be as new as they might seem. During World War II, for example, Walt Disney came to believe that his studio had refined its skill with the medium and learned essential lessons that would enable animation to actively benefit society even after the war’s end.⁵⁰⁰ Yet, Walt Disney also believed, the medium was too frequently misunderstood and trivialized.⁵⁰¹ However, animated films — able to condense a great deal of information into a digestible form and reach vast audiences — could reach, influence, and motivate people in ways that other media, such as print, could not.⁵⁰² In other words, and going a step further to apply this perspective on animation’s power to the propaganda examined in this chapter, wartime audiences that did not read novels like *Lost Horizon* may have watched cartoons like *Tokio Jokio* or *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*, or any of the others, and those who did not read books or go to the movies, or listen to Roosevelt’s speeches on the radio, may have been exposed to propaganda posters or other media. And, as I have attempted to demonstrate, audiences may have perceived propaganda in myriad ways, interpreting it to find a variety of possible meanings. Though contexts have changed over time, and in fact *because* contexts continue to change, World War II propaganda, and the media associated with it, continue to accrue new possible meanings. Attending to these meanings can help us to understand and communicate to others not just interpretations of particular media objects, but also deepen our

⁴⁹⁹ Sato, “From Hello Kitty to Cod Roe Kewpie: A Postwar Cultural History of Cuteness in Japan,” 38; White, *A Unified Theory of Cats on the Internet*, 61.

⁵⁰⁰ Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 203–4, 18, 197–198, 203–204.

⁵⁰¹ Lesjak, 197–98.

⁵⁰² Lesjak, 203.

understandings of how media, propaganda, and various cultural forms function and how they may be received by various audiences over time.

Epilogue

As I conducted the research for this thesis, I decided to look for the photo album with the letters from Salvatore Marcellino — discussed in my prologue — that originally sparked my research interest. Since I had last seen the album, my grandmother had moved out of her old house, and many of her possessions had passed to relatives — in fact, the bookshelf that once housed the photo album was now in my home but stocked with stacks of formal history books rather than a family archive. So, the album, its contents, and the shelf that stored them had all been further removed from their original contexts. And no one was sure where the album might be found.

Eventually I located the album — or, I should say, a few of my relatives generously tore apart their own bookshelves searching for it — and it was given to me along with a second, related album that I was not familiar with. This unexpected second volume contained an even rarer scrap of family history: a handmade patriotic war bonds poster made by my grandmother's sister, Josephine, who died only five years after Salvatore and of whom there remains even less 'archival' memory (Figure 5). Josephine's life, too, seems to have been dominated by war.

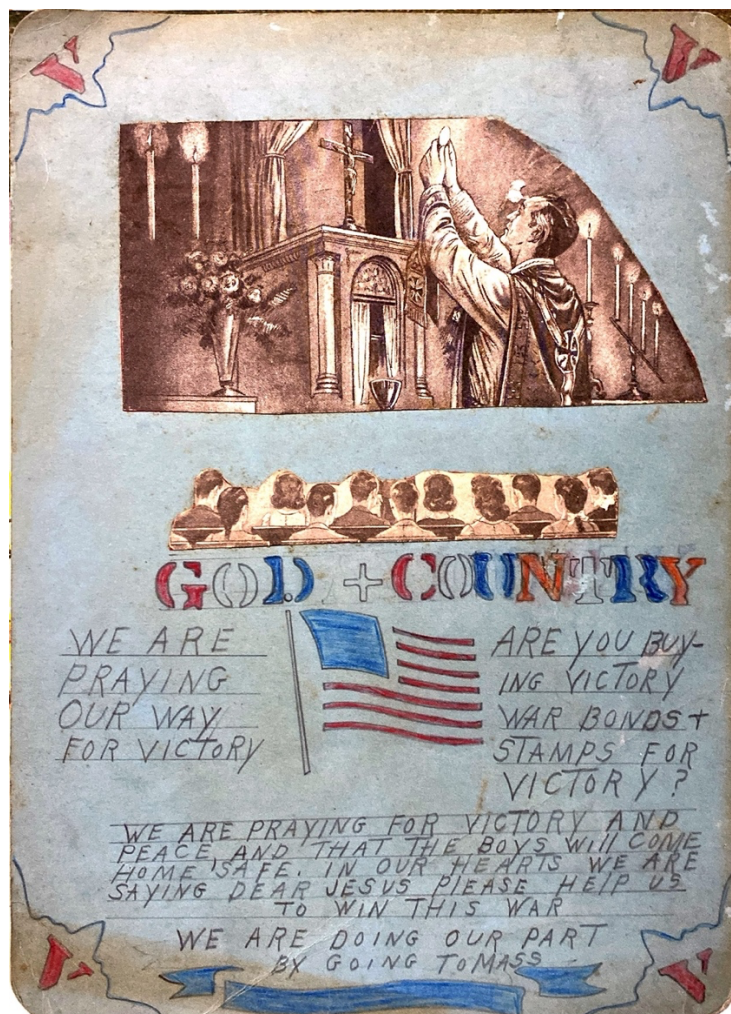


Figure 5 — Josephine Marcellino, “God + Country” c.a. 1942, poster, Author’s personal collection.

Josephine made the poster (Figure 5) for a class assignment while in the fifth grade at Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School in Baltimore, Maryland, probably in or around 1942, incorporating a mixture of political, religious, martial (by which I mean connected in some way to war and combat), and personal messages and symbols. The poster displays patriotic red, white, and blue colors, not only on the American flag decorating it but also in stenciled lettering displaying the words “God + Country” in the center of the poster.⁵⁰³ Each now-yellowing corner

⁵⁰³ Josephine Marcellino, *God + Country*, c.a 1942, Poster, Author’s personal collection.

of the light blue construction paper poster is marked with a stenciled red “V” for victory, and a blue, blank banner at the bottom of the page completes the hand-stenciled illustrations.⁵⁰⁴

Featured prominently on the poster, as well, are cut-out images of a Catholic priest holding a Eucharistic host for communion before a tabernacle and crucifix. Below this is an image of people sitting in a church pew, facing the priest, with their backs to the viewer as they watch the preparation of Holy Communion. These two images, clearly incorporated from outside sources and pasted onto the poster, emphasize the poster’s religious theme and present a sense of connectedness between Josephine’s work and the media — perhaps religious publications — she was exposed to every day. Further, the images are on thick paper that adds texture to the poster. The priest and congregants literally rise up out of the poster, standing out from the rest of the hand-decorated design, as though to emphasize even more strongly the importance of religion for the poster’s creator.

A handful of messages, primarily emphasizing victory and prayer, are printed on the poster in pencil, arrayed in a semicircle around the American flag. “We are praying our way for victory,” one reads, establishing in words the religious and martial themes of the poster.⁵⁰⁵

Another confronts the viewer, asking “Are you buying victory war bonds + stamps for victory?”⁵⁰⁶ The next, and longest, describes heartfelt prayer: “We are praying for victory and peace, and that the boys will come home safe. In our hearts we are saying dear Jesus please help us to win this war.”⁵⁰⁷ And the final message explains Josephine and her immediate community’s personal contribution to the war effort: “We are doing our part by going to Mass,” connecting

⁵⁰⁴ Marcellino.

⁵⁰⁵ Marcellino.

⁵⁰⁶ Marcellino.

⁵⁰⁷ Marcellino.

normal activities with the outcome of the war.⁵⁰⁸ Though the poster emphasizes victory very heavily, perhaps a more striking aspect of it is the way it directly confronts the viewer with a question: “Are you buying victory bonds [and] stamps for victory?”⁵⁰⁹ While religious activities, the poster suggests, were an essential contribution to the war effort, money was needed, too. And children like Josephine, it seems, could be both targets for and sources of war bond propaganda campaigns.

Throughout the war, Americans were exposed to many such messages that tied their beliefs, values, labor, time, and money to the success or failure of the total war effort, attempting to persuade them to embrace the government’s narrative of the meaning of the war. In a way reminiscent of Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, which theorizes the presence and function of discipline and self-policing of behavior in modern society, during World War II Americans of all ages were given messages by the government intended to be internalized and reproduced, resulting in people becoming more or less disciplined by the government propaganda machine, with other institutions (such as churches and schools) acting in supervisory roles.⁵¹⁰ Radio and other propagandic media used to sell war bonds, for example, imparted on Americans a sense of the importance and weight of their actions and decisions on the war effort and its success or failure, especially through outcomes for servicemen in action.⁵¹¹ There was also a significant extent to which war bond campaigns were targeted toward children, whose parents, government officials hoped, would spend more money to secure not only the fate of American soldiers but also their own children’s happiness and economic success.⁵¹² And the war

⁵⁰⁸ Marcellino.

⁵⁰⁹ Marcellino.

⁵¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Second Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

⁵¹¹ Sparrow, *Warfare State*, 119–21, 149–56.

⁵¹² Lesjak, *Service with Character*, 25, 43–49.

bonds poster made by Josephine Marcellino is an example of this: Her class assignment was perhaps a cookie-cutter, fill-in-the-blank assignment where a teacher provided a list of suggested messages or phrases for students to choose from in designing their own war bonds poster, but the end result is ultimately very personal, and perhaps then also more impactful and memorable — at least for the girl who created it, for her classmates, and for her family.

World War II, as a total war, involved not only soldiers but also societal institutions like churches and schools. Much American media of the period was to some degree propagandic — created to inform or entertain, yes, but also to persuade Americans to embrace official narratives about the war and its broader meaning in American society. And this propaganda influenced people in sometimes unpredictable ways that are often now sublimated to popular narratives of the war. Some understandings of World War II propaganda's effects on people have inevitably been lost to time, but thanks not only to formal archives but also to the near-ubiquity of the internet as a source of information and culture, some of this wartime propaganda can still operate today, albeit in very different contexts, and can be easily seen and reinterpreted by new audiences. This presence of wartime propaganda in present-day American life cannot restore original historical contexts, any more than returning my grandmother's old photo album to its original shelf, either in 2008 or 2021, could restore the many letters Salvadore Marcellino wrote to his family that were reduced to ash so many years ago. Yet, the presence of new contexts for old materials provides grounds for new interpretations and for new applications of the past to the present, so much so that there hardly seems time now to mourn for what was lost.

Moreover, a reflection on the loss of context and detail imposed by time, by fire, by gaps in the archive, or simply by loss of access to archives, enables us to see the value of and creative potential in some instances of silence or absence both in and beyond the archive. For example,

FDR changed American geography — and American identity — not by using colorful metaphors nor by employing direct statements about the stakes of the war, but by being deliberately vague. And, through his use of a popular interwar adventure novel, *Lost Horizon*, FDR demonstrated that changes in context provide opportunities for changes in meaning, for re-readings of familiar texts. Yet, meaning, interpretation, and contexts are slippery, and are constantly in flux. This is especially true for wartime propaganda, like cartoons and posters, many examples of which are easily accessible today, presented in contexts very different from their original ones.

Though it is likely impossible to recapture the fullness of the effect that propaganda had on people during World War II, we can still learn from that propaganda by consciously reinterpreting it for ourselves, allowing ourselves to recognize and understand more deeply some of the themes it contained. Through this process we can also come to appreciate that propagandic media — and really that most, if not all narratives found in media, despite their possible ties to memory and identity — do not necessarily have stable meanings, partly because contexts change so rapidly; no narrator can control how audiences will interpret the stories they tell. The difficulty of predicting audience perception of media is made even more significant today because technology — especially the internet — has facilitated the sharing of old and new cultural objects to fresh and incredibly diverse audiences. Creators of media today cannot know exactly how their audiences will react to their work nor can they always predict who or where (or even *when*) their audience will be, nor the context (at home, in public, at the beginning or end of the day, just to give a few examples) in which audiences will encounter their work. This is especially true for online media that goes viral — a story or image originally intended for a small audience may become a notable piece of popular culture overnight. Old media may come to light and circulate on the internet in equally powerful and unpredictable ways.

However, it is through abstraction, through leaving some blanks unfilled, just as FDR did in his memorable “Infamy” speech, that creators of narratives can use the uncontrollability of their audiences to their advantage — allowing audiences to fill in those blanks to craft their own, powerful — because it is inherently personal — interpretation or sense of meaning of a work, event, or time period. This may come at the cost of having more influence on the exact *content* of those meanings, however. In other words, by foregoing tight narrative control, a narrator can leave a stronger impression on an audience by effectively allowing the audience to craft the story. It is my hope that, in attempting to do exactly this, I have made the story of Salvadore and Josephine Marcellino, if only in a small way, *your* story. As I return both albums to the shelf, I let go of context and of archive, both literally and figuratively, and introduce two people I have never met to a new world. I hope that you, now having met them, might likewise introduce them back to me.

Appendix 1: Summary of *Lost Horizon*

This summary of Lost Horizon is revised from the summary I wrote in my undergraduate honors thesis for the University of Maryland, College Park, English Department's English Honors Program. That thesis was titled "Dreams and Nightmares: Lost Horizon's Shangri-La" and was defended before a faculty committee in May 2018.

Lost Horizon, published in 1933 by British author James Hilton, was a popular adventure novel that added the word and concept of Shangri-La — denoting an “oriental” utopia, to the English language. Shangri-La has lived on in popular memory and culture despite the novel it originated in, *Lost Horizon*, having been largely forgotten. The story of *Lost Horizon* is framed by a prologue and epilogue featuring a small group of British former schoolmates who, having moved in different directions in their adult lives, discuss a former mutual acquaintance — Hugh Conway — renowned for his charismatic personality but profoundly changed by his experiences in the Great War. One of the schoolmates, a writer, happened to meet with Conway under very strange circumstances not long ago. Conway told him a fascinating story which he recorded in a manuscript — this forms the bulk of *Lost Horizon*.

Conway's story details a series of compelling and extraordinary events and unusual circumstances surrounding a utopia found and lost. In 1931 amidst an evacuation of whites from Baskul, Afghanistan during a local revolution, four people step onto a plane. Little do they know, however, that the plane has been hijacked by a Tibetan pilot and rather than being flown to safety in Peshawar, the four are in fact being kidnapped and taken away to the mountains of Tibet. The situation worsens: The plane crashes and the pilot is killed. Before his death, the pilot is only able to tell Conway in a strange Chinese dialect that they are in Tibet and must go to Shangri-La.

The four travelers are protagonist Hugh Conway, a British consul and former soldier; Charles Mallinson, a British vice-consul, assistant to Conway, and stereotypical Englishman; Miss Roberta Brinklow, an uptight English missionary; and Henry Barnard, a greedy American capitalist hiding a secret criminal identity.

Not long after the plane crash, the group of unlucky travelers is met by Chang, a mysterious Chinese man who observes perfect English formality and speaks flawless English, as well, despite living in the remote Himalayas. The group makes an arduous trek into the valley of the Blue Moon, witnessing the beauty of Karakal, the strikingly beautiful and perfectly cone-shaped mountain which looms over the valley. The mountainous geography of the area, including the harsh cold and thinness of the air, contribute to the isolation and remoteness of the valley, which appears incredibly lush and green in spite of its unlivable surroundings. The travelers are brought to a lamasery where they are bathed and provided with food. The lamasery has an eerie feel, especially for Mallinson, who is eager to return to the outside world. Mallinson's nervousness is prompted in part by Chang's refusal to provide or, more accurately, Chang's avoidance of providing information regarding the particulars of Shangri-La and especially about when the group will be able to leave the valley and return home.

Shangri-La appears to be a place of balance and peace; the most important virtue practiced there is moderation, allowing for the satisfaction of most any desire without threatening the place's overall balance and status as a utopia. The lamasery holds a large collection of books and music. Diversity is appreciated, but Western works and pieces appear to be privileged. Chang shows the travelers the valley outside the lamasery where moderation is also practiced. The valley is inhabited by native Tibetans who appear perfectly content with their

lives. The area is rich in untapped gold deposits, and the locals follow several faiths including Taoism and Buddhism.

The lamas of Shangri-La also appear to be content with their lives. There is not much social interaction between monks, but one attraction of the lamasery is the benefit of nearly endless time in which to read, learn, and contemplate; the lamas also benefit from exceedingly long life and delayed aging. One lama, a Chinese princess named Lo-Tsen, does not speak in the novel; she is first introduced playing the harpsichord, her musical talent a metaphor for her attractiveness. Her youthful appearance — a consequence of living in Shangri-La — belies her great age. Despite her silence, Lo-Tsen draws the romantic gaze of many, including Mallinson and Conway. While Conway is content to admire Lo-Tsen from a distance, Mallinson's more carnal interest in her will eventually set something else in motion — an escape plan to leave the valley.

In the meantime, however, Conway is called to a private audience with the mysterious and enigmatic high lama, who explains to him the history of Shangri-La. Shangri-La was founded when in 1734 a Capuchin monk, Father Perrault, arrived in the valley of the Blue Moon to try to win converts. He discovered a ruined lamasery and rebuilt it. His Christian faith became blended with Buddhism, and a cult of mystery grew up around him as he went on to live an extraordinarily long life, thanks in part to his use of largely nondescript Eastern spiritual practices as well as his consumption of the tangatse berry, which grows in the area. Perrault served as the benevolent and strange ruler of Shangri-La, worshipped and revered. At a later time, the high lama explains, an Austrian man named Henschell arrived and became Perrault's student and chief admirer. The two worked to craft and build Shangri-La into the paradise that

Conway has encountered in the valley. Henschell, though, was killed by an irate Englishman who wanted to leave the valley but discovered that he was not permitted to do so.

The Englishman who killed Henschell is not the only person who was forbidden to leave the valley, however. In fact, no one who enters can leave; even Chang's brief journey outside to collect Conway and the other arrivals was dangerous and unusual. Newcomers to the valley are expected to eventually abandon any worldly attachments — including to spouses and parents — they may have, and acclimate to life as a monk in Shangri-La. Conway, wise beyond his years and searching for healing from his war experiences, does not have any such attachments and is quickly able to find peace in Shangri-La.

Conway is also called upon to accept responsibility for the paradise of Shangri-La and its future. It is revealed to Conway that the high lama is the very same man who arrived in the valley in 1734: Father Perrault is the high lama, still alive almost 200 years later in 1931. He is not immortal, however, and just before he dies he bequeaths leadership of Shangri-La to Conway, who is to be the next high lama.

Conway is surprised and moved by this turn of events but is perhaps more surprised to find that Mallinson has planned an escape mission with Lo-Tsen — they have bribed some porters to escort them out of the valley — and desires for Conway, his fellow Englishman and knowledgeable friend, to accompany them. The other members of the group, Barnard and Miss Brinklow, are content to remain in the valley to attempt to pursue their desires of gold mining and missionary work, respectively, although the lamas of Shangri-La expect these desires to fade and be forgotten over time in favor of Shangri-La's particular brand of moderation. Conway, hesitant to leave the paradise that has such a hold on his mind and to which he now has a formal

obligation but unwilling to let his friend Mallinson risk his life alone, reluctantly agrees to go with Mallinson and the team sets out from the valley.

The manuscript of Conway's story ends here, but the writer of the manuscript reveals that Conway was found in a Chinese hospital suffering from amnesia. He was brought there by an ancient woman, presumably Lo-Tsen, who died shortly afterward, having progressed to her actual (extremely old) age upon leaving Shangri-La. There is no word regarding Mallinson's fate, the implication being that he died on the journey. After eventually regaining his memory and telling his story, Conway disappears, embarking on a desperate search for a way to return to Shangri-La — likely an impossible feat because of the valley's remoteness and the great secrecy surrounding its location. The manuscript writer himself, after sharing his manuscript, also makes a search for Shangri-La and any possible information about Conway or the mysterious utopia. He is unable to discover anything, and Shangri-La remains an appealing mystery.

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