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Made for Export: Hollywood and the Creation of Cold War Americanism, 1940-1958

Lary May

> The principal battleground of this war is not the South Pacific. It is not the Middle East. It is not England or Norway, or the Russian Steppes. It is American opinion.
> Archibald MacLeish, future director of the Office of War Information, 1941.[1]

Shortly before assuming his office as the President of the Motion Picture Producers Association, Erik Johnston wrote a best selling book, *America Unlimited.* A major business reformer who led the national Chamber of Commerce, and then served as President Roosevelt's business advisor in the Soviet Union, Johnston saw World War II as a great watershed in American history. Looking backward he saw that after World War I, the citizens retreated from wide involvement in world affairs, and cynicism combined with an aimless revolution in morals permeated the twenties. The Great Depression saw the old order of laissez-faire capitalism collapse, followed by the rise of New Dealers' "un-American" class rhetoric. A nation weakened by division that pitted classes and ethnic groups against each other, Johnston argued, was attacked by a tyrannical enemy at Pearl Harbor. But the call for unity in World War II meant that class conflict was adjourned and a new ethos of racial pluralism emerged. With the welfare state and the codes of impartial business efficiency generating success, a new order of "democratic capitalism" promoted prosperity and victory. The task of the postwar era, Johnston then argued, was to carry that patriotic elan into the battle against the Soviet Union and the threat of world-wide communism. By exporting the new American Way abroad, Europe and Japan would be rebuilt and the

[1] Stacey Bredhoff, *Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II* (Washington, DC 1994),1

problems that infected twentieth century life would give way to an era of peace and abundance.[2]

Erik Johnston was part of a generation of United States policy makers who, as recent historians have shown, saw that World War II provided a utopian model for reconstructing the domestic and international economy in the Cold War era.[3] Yet what needs attention is how these policies also converged with an equally important transformation in the "invented traditions" and "imaginary community" that defined American nationality in the popular arts that spread at home and abroad in the postwar era.[4] Johnston, for example, allied with the Truman administration and Henry Luce of *Time Magazine* supporting the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine while working in Hollywood to contain the strike wave and labor unrest that had erupted after the war. At the same time he was also aware that since foreigners knew little about United States' leaders and policies but learned about the nation from film stars and movies, the content of Hollywood production had to be altered. During the thirties, Johnston saw that many films promoted a populist, republican ethos. Historians have identified this ethos with 19th century politics but have rarely understood it as a viable entity in the new era of large cities and corporate capital. As advanced by 19th-century grass roots activists in women's rights, abolition, black reconstruction, farmer and labor movements, this creed validated the right of workers and citizens to control their own fate against the parasitical practices of monopoly capitalists who created class inequality.[5]

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[2] Erik Johnston, *America Unlimited* Garden City, N. J. ,1944). Also "Utopia is Production," *Screen Actor* 14, (April 1946). Karl Schriftgiesser, *Business Comes of Age: The Story of the Committee for Economic Development and Its Impact on the Economic Policies of the United States, 1942-1960* (New York, 1960). His actions in Hollywood can be found in Lary May, "Movie Star Politics: The Screen Actors Guild, Cultural Conversion and the Hollywood Red Scare," in Lary May, ed. *Recasting America: Politics and Culture in the Age of Cold War*, (Chicago, 1990), 25-150.

[3] Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why*, (New York, 1978). Charles Maier, "The Politics of Productivity," *International Organization* 31, no. 4 (1977):607-32. John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory:Politics and American Culture During World War II*, (New York, 1976). Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930's*, (New Haven, 1995). For the family see, Elaine May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York, 1988).

[4] See for example two fine examples of this recent scholarship: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, 1983). Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, (London, 1995).

[5] The scholarly literature on republicanism is vast. A very useful overview of the literature on republicanism can be found in Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte, *Free Spaces: the Sources of Democratic Change in America*, (New York, 1986), 1-25 and Noble, *The End of American History*.

Much to his dismay, Johnston saw that this republican inheritance was alive and well in Hollywood. His response was also clear and to the point. Drawing on the power of the state, and aligning himself with conservative unionists like Ronald Reagan as well as studio leaders, Johnston cooperated with the House Un-American Activities Committee to fire left wing artists. Shortly thereafter he helped to create a new Hollywood censorship code that prohibited films critical of official institutions and class arrangements. He also worked with the State Department to establish attaches in every foreign embassy to insure that only acceptable films received distribution in foreign lands. As a trade reporter commented at the time, the "Pentagon wants to ban this reissue of anti-war propaganda since it is damaging to the current war effort." Johnston and his allies used the trade press to condemn the release in Moscow of Frank Capra's classic thirties film, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,* since it showed the hero battling monopoly capitalists and corrupt politicians. Condemning such themes in the Cold War era, Johnston told a group of screen writers, "We'll have no more *Grapes of Wrath,* we'll have no more *Tobacco Roads,* we'll have no more films that deal with the seamy side of American life. We'll have no more films that treat the banker as a villain."[6]

What this meant for Johnston and many film stars of the day was that a new Americanism now came to prominence. In outlining the nature of that shift, the major box office attraction of the late forties, the comic Bob Hope, put aside humor and reinvented the central symbols of the nation. Where in the past Uncle Sam symbolized a nation rooted in Anglo-Saxon superiority and hard work, Hope saw him reflecting a pluralistic society and a new consumers democracy. Uncle Sugar supported the Marshall Plan because, as Hope told the readers of his syndicated news column, this is "a wonderful Shangri La we are living in over here. And we should share it with the Europeans before other forces move in and make them our enemies."[7] Outlining the nature of Uncle Sugar's gifts, Hope then wrote a key article for *American Magazine* with the auspicious title, "Tomorrow's a New Day." To

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[6] Johnston, *America Unlimited* (Garden City, N. J., 1944) and "Utopia is Production," 7. May, "Movie Star Politics." For the new censorship code, see Jonathan Munby, "Screening Crime in the USA, 1929-1958: From Hays Code to HUAC; *From Little Caesar to Touch of Evil,* (Ph.d. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1996), especially chapter 7. For attempts to ban *All Quiet,* see The Hollywood Reporter, September 22, 1950 and *Variety,* April 9, 1952, unpaginated clippings, *All Quiet On Western Front* production file, AMPAS. Johnston's quote is from Murray Schumach, *The Face on the Cutting Room Floor: The Story of Movie and Television Censorship* (New York, 1964), 129.

[7] Bob Hope column, *Hollywood Citizen News,* December 11, 1947, unpaginated clipping, Hope File, AMPAS.

Hope the United States was a pluralistic society different from Europe not only because it allowed the son of a Welsh immigrant like himself to succeed. But because in "no other land is there such a high value placed on amusement and entertainment. Americans spend more time and money on it than other people, and generally they feel rewarded because it's not a privilege or honor; its part of their national heritage." The people did not dissipate their "lucky fortunes on meaningless trivialities." On the contrary, they presented a universal model because abundance came to focus on "the American tradition of raising a family," symbolized by a photo of Hope, his wife and children in their Los Angeles suburban home, far from the diversity of the city.[8]

Out this development emerged an unprecedented shift in national culture. In contrast to earlier eras, liberal capitalism, a commitment to racial diversity and a consumers democracy became the American Way. Yet in the most racially diverse society in the western world that consumer ethos was at once excluded non whites and was permeated in the fifties with an undertone of anxiety. The purpose of this essay is to show that these political and cultural transformations were two sides of the same coin. In exploring why that occurred in the Second World War and was institutionalized in the Cold War era, this essay utilizes a very different methodology and conceptual frame than that which informs the work of current film and cultural historians. Most scholars assume that in the Depression the mass media promoted backward populist myths and futuristic dreams of consumption that took the audience's attention away from the class conflicts of day.[9] Citing historians such as Richard Hofstadter or Warren Susman, and often drawing on the cultural theories of Frankfurt school sociology, Gramscian concepts of hegemony and French semiology, they discuss "classic American cinema" and claim that "certain tendencies" lay at the heart of movie making.[10] Audiences might

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[8] Bob Hope, "Tomorrow is a New Day," *The American Magazine*, March 4, 1949, 21, 134-136.

[9] The statement that a monolithic Americanism pervaded the arts of the depression, and that it advanced conservative values can be found in Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1984), 150-211. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Matthew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York, 1989), 247. An example of the way historians marshal cultural theories to reinforce this view informs the work of Jackson Lears in "Making Fun of Popular Culture," *American Historical Review* 97 (1992):1418. For a clear statement that this set the stage for Cold War liberalism see Jean Christopher Agnew, "Coming Up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," *Intellectual History Newsletter* 12 (1990):3-21. For another view see Brian Neve, *Film and Politics in America: A Social Tradition* (London, 1992), 1-56.

[10] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical American Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York, 1985); Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Film Making in the Studio Era* (New York, 1988); Dana Polan, *Power and*

resist, but they could not alter a homogeneous Americanism rooted in the values of class harmony racism and liberal capitalism that radiated from studios and radio stations owned and operated by corporate leaders.[11]

The problem with this analysis is not that it is wrong, but it is one sided. By way of contrast, I will show that movie makers were engaged in a competitive civic sphere – that space between private life and the state where public opinion and nationality was contested and reshaped.[12] In that arena no single film style or genre stood alone or dominated over others. Rather, detective films, musicals, comedy, war, female melodramas and westerns engaged in a reciprocal dialogue with each other and with the historical memories and republican creeds at odds with monopoly capital and inequality.[13] To unravel the complexities of that conversation, I do not just examine key films and assume that they represent some monolithic, unified trend, the all too common pattern among students of the popular arts. With the help of able research assistants, I have developed instead a systematic

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Paranoia: History, Narrative and the American Cinema, 1940-1950 (New York, 1986); Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics and Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York, 1987). Michael Rogin, *Blackface White Masks.* (New York, 1996). A brilliant criticism of the theory and method informing this work can be found in Jed Dannenbaum, "Thumbs Down: History and Hollywood in the Forties," *Radical History Review* 44 (1989): 175-184.

[11] The dualism between production and reception analysis can be seen in two excellent, but different works of Lawrence Levine: "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," and "American Culture in the Great Depression," both in Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York 1993). In the first he analyzes the content of popular texts to show that the popular art of the thirties reflected not radicalism, but "passivity" and "traditionalism." In the second he argues that audiences were not passive, but reinterpreted the mass images to fit their own purposes.

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[12] I am using the concept of the civic sphere as developed by Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Civic Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

[13] This view of popular art as engaged in a struggle over power and ideology is close to the views of Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith (London, 1985), 206-211; The view that all art forms are engaged in dialogue with each other can be found in Mikhael Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, Tex., 1981). The use of these theories to explain aspects of the modern mass media can be found in by Horace M. Newcombe, "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communications," *Cultural Studies in Mass Communications* 1 (1984):34-50 and George Lipsitz, *Time Passages* (Minneapolis, 1990).

sampling technique that allows us to measure the way in which the values towards, for example, big business, class, gender and race were altered and contested over time. We have accomplished this task by gathering 240 plots from weekly listings in the industry's major trade journal. By submitting this data to a standard set of narrative conventions, we have discovered that the American Way did not permeate the entire body of movie making during these decades. Rather, it was in fact created in the Second World War and institutionalized in the early Cold War years.[14]

To understand this transformation, it is important for us to explore why Erik Johnston understood that movie making in the 1930s was at odds with his desire to create a new order grounded in class consensus and privatized consumerism. If our study had been launched a decade ago, the well informed historian of the New Left or liberal school would have seen that Johnston had few worries, since the object of New Deal and popular art was to save a polity grounded in liberal capitalism.[15] Yet over the last ten years this view has been dramatically revised. Exploring the grass roots labor and populist crusades that arose in the period, a recent generation of political and labor historians have shown that these movements succeeded by challenging both liberal capitalism and the racial divisions that thwarted class based politics through much of American history.[16] They have shown that by the mid-thirties, mass unions and left-wing populist movements began the difficult task of forging multi-racial coalitions that made a distinction

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[14] The sample was derived from the film industry's major trade journal, the *Motion Picture Herald* (MPH). It offered exhibitors a variety of services, one of which was weekly plot summaries of recent releases. These plot synopses served as the basis for the sample. To insure consistent coverage over time, and that A and B class films were included in the sample, two plot summaries per month were drawn from even numbered years. The first and last films of the initial and concluding week of each month yielded 24 films per year and 120 per decade. I wish to thank my research assistants at the University of Minnesota – Chris Lewis, Jonathan Munby and Scott Zimmerman – They helped devise categories, collate them for the computer and create the graphs found in this essay.I also want to thank Michael Willard who worked the longest and provided the computer skills that enabled me to bring all the materials together for this essay and my forthcoming book, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of American Identity, 1930-1960* to be published by University of Chicago Press.

[15] For the classic liberal view that reform was geared to saving liberal capitalism see Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1957-1960), and Eric Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* (New York, 1952). For the New Left view that these reforms were flawed because they were not radical enough, see Barton Bernstein, "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform," in Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York, 1968), 263-88; and Ronald Radosh, "The Myth of the New Deal," in Radosh and Murray N. Rothbard, eds., *A New History of Leviathan* (New York, 1972), 146-186.

[16] See for example, David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness, Essays on Race, Politics and Working Class History,* (New York, 1994), 1-38.

between producers and the exploitative and imperialist practices of big business. As a result, they interjected voting by class interest for the first time into the two party system, creating support for the welfare state and tax policies to redistribute wealth.[17]

Hollywood was not, as is commonly assumed, removed from these upheavals. In fact the film capital was in many ways central to popularizing the idea that reform would realize the modern dream of abundance. This was no small thing since one factor in causing the Depression was that industry had created more goods than could be bought by the people. Many saw that the answer was to launch policies that stimulated purchasing power of the masses. Yet in America as a nation in which Anglo-Saxon superiority reigned, one's moral worth and success was reflected in the unequal distribution of goods. The film industry was well prepared to alter these values. Unlike the high arts, it emerged from the lower classes and film producers were most often of immigrant, Jewish stock. They also gained profits by appealing to polyglot audiences' desires for abundance and a revolution in manners and morals. Initially this appeal was censored and uplifted in the twenties with "foreign" styles and manners that democratized the pleasures of the rich, signaling that hierarchy was natural and good.[18] Yet in the Depression, official institutions were delegitimized. In response a Hollywood labor movement brought together the middle and working classes, men and women, whites and minorities dedicated to higher wages and the control of work. And in response to audience demand, some of the most important movie makers of the day – Will Rogers, Frank Capra, John Ford and Walt Disney – generated a new category. In twenty five percent of the films in our samples a conversion narrative unfolded in which the characters shed their admiration for the rich and feelings of inadequacy to align with the lower class in a collective effort to reform the community.

At the core of these films lay a "radicalism of tradition" in which the populist ideal of a republican, producer's democracy was modernized. Unlike in the twenties, films that portrayed the businessman as a social danger rose from less than five percent in 1929 to sixty per cent in 1940. At the same time progressive reform rose from ten percent in 1932 to over thirty

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[17] For the upsurge of cross racial and ethnic coalitions to reconstruct power and wealth see Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal, Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, 1990); Gary Gerstle, *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in an Industrial City, 1914-1960* (New York, 1989). On voting by class coming into the two party system for the first time see Richard Ostreicher, "Urban Working Class Political Behavior and Theories of Electoral Politics, 1879-1940," *Journal of American History* 74 (1988): 1257-1286.

[18] See Lary May, *Screening Out the Past,* (Chicago, 1983).

percent by 1938. But the agents of change were not universally at odds with the city or the modern revolution in morals, as a generation of historian have suggested. Instead these populist heroes and heroines were often radio announcers, dancers, jazz singers, singing cowboys, playboy detectives, aviators and empowered women and child performers like Shirley Temple, who played and mingled diversely in city and countryside. Instead of remaining closely tied to the ethos of self denial, or linking the moral revolution with foreign styles that made the unequal distribution of goods and status appear natural, these traditional modernists used comedy and the vernacular arts to uncrown established norms and create new reciprocal bonds of communication across groups. As this ethos infused Will Rogers' films, Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and Frank Capra films, it created a shift in sensibility. At a time when the purchasing power of the masses needed to be stimulated, and abundance validated as a right of the people, these films rooted such desires in the national landscape and the reformist efforts of a diverse people. Little wonder then that one scenarist could see that the films of the day advanced the "New Deal broadly defined," while one fan recalled that the movies taught him that monopoly capitalists' patriotic cant was the "siren call of the devil."[19]

The Second World War II, however, created the conditions in which this oppositional Americanism became identified with official state and industrial policies, and was realized through the apolitical process of economic growth. With defense spending creating employment and purchasing power, and the aggression of the enemy calling for unity at home, President Roosevelt announced that Dr. New Deal was to be replaced by Dr. Win the War. State leaders and politicians of all parties, including the Communists, called for postponement of strikes and adherence to government controls.[20] The film

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[19] As Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black phrase it in "What to Show that World," 90, "from the mid 1930's to the eve of World War II the industry was isolated from national intellectual, artistic and political life" primarily because "conservative bankers and businessmen ran the studios." For the unionization and spread of New Deal politics in Hollywood, see Lary May, "Movie Star Politics: The Screen Actors' Guild, Cultural Conversion and the Hollywood Red Scare," in *Recasting America,* ed. Lary May (Chicago, 1990), 196-224. A revisionist who sees that Hollywood movie making reflected reformist themes is Robert Mc Elvaine, *The Great Depression America, 1929-1941,* (New York, 1984), 1996-224; and Neve, *Politics and Film in America.* The citations on film plots comes from May and research assistant, narrative reconstructions, 1930-1955.The quote comes from John Howard Lawson, *Film in the Battle of Ideas* (New York, 1953), 14. The fan's comment comes from John Clellon Holmes, "15 Cents Before 6 PM: The Wonderful Movies of the Thirties," *Harpers Magazine* (Dec. 1965), 51-55.

[20] For political consensus and prosperity as a goal of the war, see John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York, 1976). On labor's

capital followed these rules in industrial relations. But most importantly the government also encouraged movie makers to create the entertainment that would encourage the population to shed isolationism and insurgent mass movements for the new cause of winning the war. This was doubly important because unlike other nations the war occurred on foreign soil, with the result that its effects were not tangible to the people. The central agency for stimulating the film industry to bring the war home to America was the Office of War Information (OWI). Guided by interventionist New Dealers, the agency's leader clearly saw that movies were central to home front morale. As he saw it, the "easiest way to inject propaganda ideas into most people's minds, is to let it go in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize they are being propagandized."[21]

What made that propaganda attractive, moreover, was that it not only inspired the people to win the war, but to receive as the fruits of victory the popular dreams of abundance and racial pluralism spread by the mass media in the thirties.[22] That merger of state policy with official doctrines of nationalism came to front and center in a Manual for the Motion Picture Industry published by the OWI. Aimed to guide movie makers in the construction of scripts, it proclaimed that the current war was different from World War I. Where the earlier conflict had come in the wake of a Progressive reform movement informed with the ethos of Anglo-Saxon superiority advanced by the middle class, the new war was fought to overcome the "brutality, cruelty, treachery and cynicism of the enemy" who was opposed to racial equality. While Hitler and Mussolini thus embodied the tyranny of "Caesar and Pharaoh" that the immigrants left the Old World to escape, the Second World War was also fought to eliminate all "forms of racial discrimination or religious intolerance, for special privileges for any of our citizens are manifestations of fascism and should be exposed as such."

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cooperation with management and the state, coupled to repeated wild cat strikes, see Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: the C.I.O in World War II* (Cambridge, Engl., 1983) and George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America: A Rainbow at Midnight* (New York, 1981). For the situation in Hollywood, see May, "Movie Star Politics."

[21] See Dorothy Jones, "The Hollywood War Film:1942-1944," *Hollywood Quarterly* 6 (1945-1946):1-19; and Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory Black, "What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945," *Journal of American History* 64 (1977): 88.

[22] On the older national identity of Anglo-Saxon exclusion and how it informed World War I, see Philip Gleason, "American Identity and Americanization," in *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 38-57. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1955) and his *Send These To Me* (Baltimore, 1984), chapters 8, 9 and 10 are critical for cultural pluralism. The fact that the war was fought in the name of realizing the dream of general abundance is the central theme of Blum, *V Was For Victory*.

The country was thus seen as a "melting pot" of "many races and creeds that showed that people can live together in freedom and progress." At the same time it was not "involved in a national, class or race war" but a war to realize a "new world free of fear and want" for the "common man."[23]

Though disagreements would occur between the OWI and movie makers concerning how to dramatize the dream of abundance and pluralism, it was clear that Hollywood movie makers proved willing allies. This war, unlike say Vietnam in later years, was popular with audiences. As prosperity unfolded at home, film profits increased by almost a third over previous years. And since most studio leaders were of Jewish stock, the war against Nazi racism gained their avid support. Well before Pearl Harbor, the Warner Brothers studio made *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) for their emissary in Berlin, Joe Kaufman, who had been killed by the Nazis for his Jewish ancestry.[24] Within the industry itself, stars who had helped advance the labor causes of the New Deal, – James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Edward G. Robinson, Myrna Loy, Carol Lombard, Bette Davis, Paul Robeson, Rex Ingram, Lena Horne and John Garfield – participated in government sponsored "Victory Parades" to spur wartime unity across the races and classes. Writers dedicated to making films to promote the cause moved between Hollywood and Washington D.C. making productions that in the words of one writer fused "characterization and the world struggle against fascism."[25] Movie houses coupled movie viewing with selling over twenty percent of all war bonds. Similarly, the defense department built battle ships named after the Cherokee Indian Will Rogers and the comic heroine Carol Lombard while the black actress Lena Horne christened a naval destroyer named after the African-American scientist, George Washington Carver.[26]

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[23] K. R. M. Short, "Washington's Information Manual for Hollywood, 1942," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 3 (1983): 171-180.

[24] For Hollywood war activities and studio profits made see Editors of Look, *Movie Lot to Beachhead: The Motion Picture Goes to War and Prepares for the Future* (Garden City, N.Y., 1945), 58-69, 82-96, 148-158, 204-215. Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society 1939-1952* (London, 1979). On the film industry and Jews, see Lary May, *Screening Out the Past,* chapter 6. On Hollywood, the labor movement, the New Deal and stars, involvement in the war, see May, "Movie Star Politics." The death of Kauffman is recounted in Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets: a Portrait of Hollywood in the 1940s* (New York, 1976), 49.

[25] *Look* editors, *Movie Lot to Beachhead.* "Hollywood Victory Caravan" file, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library, Beverly Hills, Cal. (hereafter known as AMPAS) has newspaper articles from around the country reporting the stars' parades.

[26] Howard Koch, "The Making of Casablanca," in Howard Koch, *Casablanca: Script and Legend* (New York, 1992), 19. Battle ships named in honor of Will Rogers are on display in the

Many artists saw the war as a great crusade that would complement the democratic reform of the New Deal. John Garfield, Lena Horne, Duke Ellington, the Black boxer and world champion Joe Louis entertained the troops. Bette Davis, known for her portrayal on and off the screen as a rebellious woman, joined with Lena Horne and Duke Ellington to challenge racial segregation in the army and perform before black soldiers. Davis said that during the war stereotyped roles of Aunt Jemima and Rochester had to give way to more dignified portrayals of Negroes.[27] Similarly, the screen writer John Bright, author of *Public Enemy,* and Orson Welles, the director of *Citizen Kane,* supported the Mexican American youths who had been falsely accused in the Los Angeles Sleepy Lagoon murder case, and saw their efforts as furthering the goal of justice and racial pluralism. Welles also complemented film making with writing a political column for *Free World Magazine*. Throughout the war he argued that the battle was not just to defeat the fascists abroad but to advance the cause of social justice at home. In so doing he saw that "Our Republican splendor in this new age will shine by its own virtues, not by contrasting it with tyranny abroad." The task was imperative, for:

> Much is against us on the records: we oppressed the Indian, we stole the Black Man from his home and held him in bondage. And the fragrance of American freedom rose over the stench of butchery. If the conquerors and the slavers left us a mad strain of hate . . . we've told our children this was hate from the old world, that in our climate this finally must perish.[28]

Within this context, writers on the left saw that film content and narratives should be dramatically altered to portray a world divided between "explosively antithetical moralities."[29] As the new Chairman of the Hollywood Writers mobilization and future director Robert Rossen explained, our very approach to society had to be reconstructed. Writers in the thirties, often the sons of immigrants, had created films permeated with cynicism. "All our heroes had feet of clay and if they did not they weren't

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Will Rogers Memorial, Claremore, Okla. For the amount of war bonds sold in movie houses see Editors of *Look, Movie Lot to Beachhead,* 58-69. On Horne, see Horne File, AMPAS.

[27] On Davis, see *Los Angeles Daily News,* November 11, 1941, and *Hollywood Citizen News,* July 27, 1942, unpaginated clippings in the Bette Davis File, AMPAS.

[28] See Sleepy Lagoon file, University of California at Los Angeles Special Collections Library; Orson Welles, "Race Hate Must Be Outlawed," *Free World Magazine* (July, 1944): 9-11.

[29] The assumptions underlying the cubo-realist style of the thirties can be found in Irving Pichel, "Seeing With the Camera," *The Hollywood Quarterly* 1 (1945-1946): 138-145. The quotes come from Irving Pichel, "Areas of Silence," *Film Quarterly* 3 (1947): 51-55.

worth writing about." The disillusionment with World War I and the Depression compelled writers to create drama where "corrupt, evil forces" were "crushing men and women." But the war against the racist foe brought recovery and optimism. The people had responded by wanting more optimistic films to fit the conditions of the day. Writers had to convey that spirit by putting on the screen "people who would win despite any conditions." For as Rossen explained, the "average man sees and feels the difference between this and the last war." The poor and the Okies see that the "dark days are over . . ." In response a new hero was being born "who no longer despairs but has found dignity and a 'cause' worth dying for . . ." The reason was that the people were engaged in a battle against racist foes, but this time they would win.[30]

Such proclamations were not just rhetoric. Genre musicals like *This is the Army* (1943), *Star Spangled Rhythm* (1942) and *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) featured the rise of ethnic showmen and black boxers, like the world champion Joe Louis, into American life. *Stormy Weather* and *Cabin in the Sky* featured black performers such as Bill Robinson, Louis Armstrong and Lena Horne who linked African American jazz music to the rise of blacks into public life. Similarly *A Little Walk in the Sun*, written by Rossen, featured white southerners and the sons of immigrants destroying the racist enemy in Italy, while *The Fighting Sullivans* (1944) dramatized the way in which an Irish working-class family gave their five sons to defeat Japanese tyrants. Eastern European laborers and factory owners in *Pittsburgh* (1942) and *American Romance* (1944) joined hands to put aside ethnic divisions to make the materials that would win the war. Heroes in *Airforce* (1943), *Life Boat* (1944), *Bataan, Back to Bataan* (1945), *The Fighting 69th* (1940) and *Sahara* (1943) showed whites and blacks, Texans, Jews and Italians cooperating to defeat the enemy.[31] *Lifeboat* and *Casablanca's* positive portrayals of African American spurred the black press to note that for black soldiers the disarming of a Nazi agent in *Lifeboat* by the black steward "did wonders for the morale of the Negro GIs who talked about it for days. To them it was the symbol of changing times, of acceptance, of integration into the pattern of American life."

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[30] Robert Rossen, "New Characters for the Screen," *New Masses,*January 18, 1944, in *Hollywood Directors,* ed. Richard Koszarski (New York, 1976):190-194.

[31] All of the cited films can be found on video; see Leonard Maltin, *TV Movies and Video Guide* 1993 Edition (New York, 1993).

Yet at the same time that members of ostracized racial and ethnic groups gained acceptance, it was also clear that whenever historical memories collided with patriotic purposes they had to be shed. Even before the film reached the screen one clear OWI directive noted that since we must "believe in the rightness of our cause" we could no longer focus "attention on the chinks in our allies' armor." Why? It is just "what our enemies might wish. Perhaps it is realistic but it is going to be confusing to American audiences."[32] As a result of such policies, the famed actor Lew Ayres' commitment to pacifism meant that he refused to serve in the army. Soon the press labelled the star of *All Quiet on the Western Front* a "disgrace to the industry," while the president of MGM noted that "As far as I am concerned . . . Lew Ayres is washed up with us since he washed himself up with the public." The trend continued when the FBI investigated the famed director Orson Welles because he had been engaged in radical New Deal causes and made *Citizen Kane* (1941), which had criticized the publisher William Randolph Hearst. The FBI also investigated Philip Dunne because he wrote *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) and promoted Hollywood and national unions. When the FBI thwarted his effort to receive a security clearance to make documentaries with Admiral John Ford, Dunne wrote:

> The hurt and the humiliation were not so easily exorcised. Apparently the only way citizens can be sure of remaining "clean" in the eyes of their own government is to abstain entirely from any political activity: in other words, abdicate their responsibilities as citizens in a democracy, and that is one of the worst crimes committed in the name of "security."

Such crimes did not stop the pre-production process. Frank Capra, for example, sought to re-release *Lost Horizons* (1937) in the war. In the thirties this film was part of Capra's populist criticism of imperialism in the Far East. But OWI officials now cut from the film a speech where the hero asks a British official, "Did you say we saved ninety white people. Good. Hooray for us. Did you say we left ten thousand natives down there to be annihilated. No. No, you wouldn't say that. They don't count." Capra himself dismissed writers from his government-sponsored *Why We Fight* series (1942-45) when the House Un-American Activities Committee investigated them for writing scripts that depicted the actions of the Japanese as a response to unresolved

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[32] This comes from the OWI script review of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as cited in Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World," 92.

class conflicts.[33] Director John Huston found his documentaries, *The Battle of San Pietro* (1944) and *Let There Be Light* (1945) unacceptable to the War Department because he showed men slaughtered by inept officers and shocked veterans who had gone insane in combat. Even commercial films were not immune. OWI officials considered that the Bette Davis film, *Mr. Skeffington* (1944), dealing with anti-Semitism and the evils of finance, was "gravely detrimental to the War Information Program . . . the Jewish question is presented in such away to give credence to the Nazi contention that the discrimination for which Americans condemn the fascists, is an integral part of American democracy."[34]

At the same time, the options for presenting an alternative view also began to narrow in Hollywood. Well into the late thirties, for example, a large number of independent companies made films. Whether producing at home or abroad, these firms created a competitive civic sphere. European language, experimental and black films were made for their select audiences around the country. The independents also pioneered genres such as gangster, fallen woman, social problem and horror films that were then picked up and duplicated by larger studios. Independent firms not only spurred innovation from below, but they composed from a third to half of all films made in the movie capital. Yet in the war the state rationed film stock. Large studios' leaders gained access to these materials by arguing that they were an essential war industry needed to provide morale. But smaller studios failed to get the same access to raw materials, since they did not have the same large networks of distribution. Independent companies dropped from ninety two in 1939 to fewer than fifteen in 1944. Similarly, foreign firms could no longer enter the domestic market from war-torn Europe, with the result that films made by independents declined from almost half of all film production in 1939, to approximately one fourth in 1944, or from 379 to 172.[35]

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[33] Joseph McBride, *Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success* (New York, 1992), 356, 451-501. For the revisions of *Why We Fight,* especially the Japanese sections, see John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986), chap. 1.

[34] For Huston's recounting of army censorship, see "The Courage of the Men: An Interview With John Huston," in *Film:Book 2,* ed. Robert Hughes (New York, 1962), 22-35. K.R.M. Short, "Hollywood Fights Anti-Semitism," in Short, *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II,* 147-151. The *Mr Skeffington* censorship story is recounted on pages 160-162.

[35] These calculations derive from counting the number of films, independent and major companies – known as the "big eight" – listed in *Film Daily Yearbook* in 1916, 1918-1919, 1924, 1934, 1939, 1944 and 1954. I wish to thank my research assistant Michael Willard for tabulating and collating this complicated data.

The decline of independents also coincided with a uniformity of opinion within the remaining studios. During the twenties and thirties the Hollywood industry operated in an autonomous civic sphere. Censorship existed, but the studio leaders forged a self-regulating censorship office.[36] Yet as the OWI entered the film capital, the distance between the state and movie making became much less evident. It was not just that the OWI influenced film content, but artists saw, as one writer noted, that "our primary responsibility was not to the box office, nor to our paychecks. It was a special responsibility . . . to the men who wore the uniform" of the armed forces.[37] Similarly, John Huston acknowledged that the movies now functioned as the "conscience of our people," showing with a "blinding flash of truth" how to overcome "race prejudice" that inhibited cooperation. Robert Andrews, the writer of the popular combat film *Bataan* (1943), noted that screenwriting during the war resembled his work as a journalist covering gang killings in Chicago. The purpose then was to "wake the good citizens to what they were up against. That's all I'm trying to do today . . . And I am determined to write a picture so shocking that people would say to themselves, if this is what our men have to stand up to, we've got a job to do." The effect clearly made the audience "depressed." But soon "you find yourself getting angry – angry that such things are being done to us."[38]

Transferred onto the screen, the concern for focusing that anger and violence in one direction yielded a subtle shift in film and visual perception. In the thirties major directors like Michael Curtiz, Orson Welles, Lewis Milestone, John Ford and William Wyler developed a cinematic style which one might call cubo-realism. Like in a cubist painting directors did not concentrate on one focal point of attention. Rather they created realistic compositions where multiple layers overlap, breaking down the normal divisions between the foreground, background and middle ground. Often emphasizing diagonal compositions that thrust the action into the viewers' laps, characters of different backgrounds spoke in unique dialects and expressed different points of view. In that world view no single character monopolized the truth, but protagonists learned from each other while the audience was asked to choose between alternative perspectives. At the same time the camera often moved inside the frame, penetrating beneath surfaces to reveal the truth lying beneath appearances. Yet in the war all that changed.

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[36] See May, *Screening,* chapters 2 and 5 for censorship and the movies.

[37] Lester Koenig, "Back from the Wars," *The Screenwriter* 1 (1945): 23-25.

[38] John Huston, "World Brotherhood Speech," 1955, as in Huston File, in *AMPAS.* Robert Andrews, "Interview" by Philip Scheuer, *Los Angeles Times,* 5 Dec. 1943.

"No longer is it necessary" to "cloak the more serious thoughts and aspects behind a melodramatic yarn or sugar coat the message with the public. . . . Such terms as 'fascists' and 'appeasers' can be used without offense."[39] To convey that single focal point of authority was the order of the day. The camera became more static, and the director might counterpoint the actions of the hero and heroine with patriotic and religious music and symbols. To make certain that viewers did not miss the central theme, overhead narrators, written epilogues and maps told the fans exactly how to think about the action.[40]

The impact of these converging trends – the call for unity, the consolidation of the industry and censorship – reversed the coordinates of the conversion narrative that pervaded movie making in the thirties. Nowhere was that more evident than in the most enduring and memorable film of the war, *Casablanca.* Created by writers committed to New Deal reform, and winner of the Academy Award for the best film of 1942, the film opens with a montage of voices overhead and maps that evoke the images of democracy under attack. In Europe, refugees from Nazism seek to escape through the port of Casablanca. The camera stops on the frieze of a court house where the slogans and ideals of the French republic, *liberté, égalité and fraternité* grace the exterior.[41] The scene comes to focus on the hero, Rick Blaine, played by Humphrey Bogart, who symbolizes the American variant of that republican ethos. Operating in an autonomous civic sphere, he controls his property, *Rick's Cafe Américain*, a night club where diverse peoples mingle in a vital, pluralistic community and blacks play jazz music. He facilitates the escape of Jews from the Nazis, pays his employees high wages and embodies the democratic ideal of moral reciprocity between the classes and races.

In a scene that demonstrates Rick's merging of that modernized republican ideal with the ethos of racial pluralism, he responds to a fellow nightclub owner's offer to "buy Sam," Rick's African-American piano player, with a remark that harks back to the memory of abolitionism and the ideal of freedom: "I don't buy or sell human beings." The audience also learns that Sam and Rick are close friends, forging ties across the races. Not only do they confide in each other, but Sam owns 25 percent of the *Cafe Améicain* and has helped Rick escape from the Nazis who "blacklisted" him and put a "price on his head." Rick also ran guns to Ethiopia and Spain,

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[39] *New York Times,* 13 Jan. 1944 as in Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War,* 76. See also footnote 29.

[40] Examples of this tendency occur in *Back to Bataan, Bataan, Casablanca, The House on 92nd Street, Americans All, December 7* and many others.

[41] These quotes come from the original script as reproduced in Howard Koch, *Casablanca,* 29.

supporting the African and Spanish citizens in their battles against Fascism and imperialism. He also couples republican politics with the desire to create a more vital and egalitarian modern culture, symbolized in his love affair with Ilsa, played by Ingrid Bergman.[42] When she appears on the scene and asks Sam to play "As Time Goes By," we learn that she and Rick were lovers in Paris, symbol of modern culture for a generation of Americans. Yet Rick now lives in isolation and despair since he suspects that the European woman deserted him and their mutual political and personal ideals in the late thirties when the Nazis invaded Paris and she disappeared.

Amid his despair, Ilsa explains that their love affair unfolded only when she thought her resistance-fighter husband, Victor Lazlo, was dead in a Nazi concentration camp. But when she found out that he was sill alive, she had to help him fight the Nazis (100-127). With his faith restored in their love and their mutual ideals, Rick can now act to fight tyranny again. Yet that choice is also a tragic one, evoking a sense of the blues that is associated with black more than white Americans, signaled by the haunting theme song "As Time Goes By," played and also sung by the black musician Sam. With the blues in the background, Rick prepares for war by selling the *Café Américain* and telling Ilsa they must shed their dream of merging politics with personal fulfillment. Explaining why this means he must join the military and she return to the traditional family, Rick says, "Inside of us we both know you belong to Victor, you're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going . . . I have a job to do, too. Where I'm going you can't follow . . . I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that." When Ilsa asks, what about "us," he tells her that she must help her husband. In other words she must become the supportive wife, while Lazlo reinforces that patriotic choice by saying, "Welcome back to the fight. This time I know our side will win." But as the lovers acknowledge that goal, the optimistic dialogue is undercut by somber visuals. The camera penetrates through the night and fog to show a sad Ilsa and Rick alone. Rick and the Vichy police chief (played by Claude Raines) march to the music of the Marseillaise, but the mood is that wartime commitment carries with it a deep undertone of personal tragic loss (218-228).

Embedded in this film is a dramatic shift in national identity. Yet that shift was not simply a matter of personal choice; nor was *Casablanca* the only film that carried this theme. To take another example, *The Fighting 69th* featured the Irish Catholic actor, James Cagney, playing a role that evoked

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[42] Koch, *Casablanca,* 51, 65, 76, 108, 185, 204-205, 163-170.

the key memory of his famous gangster character in *Public Enemy*. Initially he is drafted into the army where he hates officers. Yet when his rebellion leads to the death of his fellow soldiers he then identifies with the patriotic cause. Similarly, *Airforce* features a group of airman who fly a bomber towards the Hawaiian islands. On board are a crew made up of a New England Yankee officer, a working-class mechanic and a Brooklyn Jew. John Garfield portrays John Winocki, a Polish-American tail gunner who hates all authority. He is convinced the Yankee commander stymied his efforts to become an officer and a pilot. Carrying the anger of oppressed ethnics against the Anglo- Saxon middle class, he hates the "system." Yet when the Japanese sneak attack Pearl Harbor, he sees his old beliefs as un-American. As the writer noted, "Winocki has found something real to direct his embittered feeling against and his eyes grow hard."[43]

Other films identified the conversion of former outsiders with shedding political and class interests that threatened institutions and businesses identified with saving the nation. Consider *Americans All* (1941), a government documentary, which begins as a narrator explains that the country is proud of its many racial and ethnic groups. Yet it also shows Japanese, Italian and German Americans who use their foreign language press and their radio stations to support Mussolini and Hitler, while Black workers participate in communist-led parades. Only when loyal minorities convert and turn these traitors over to the FBI and military is the nation unified.[44] A film like *Across the Wide Pacific* (1942) also showed Japanese plantation laborers in revolt. The strikers then cooperate with the Japanese army to create an air field to attack American bases in the Canal Zone. *Keeper of the Flame* (1942) also evoked fears of the enemy within by charting the adventures of a young reporter played by Spencer Tracy. He admires a populist patriot who is half Huey Long and half Charles Lindbergh. Yet the reporter discovers that his hero is really a Nazi agent who has duped the people and must be killed by his wife. Similarly the villain in *Mission to Moscow* (1943) appeals to populist instincts by telling Congress, "And I say, gentlemen, not only can we do business with Hitler but we can make a nice profit doing so . . . It's going to be Hitler's Europe and I say,

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[43] All the films cited in this paragraph are on video. See Maltin, TV Movies and Video Guide. The quote comes from Dudley Nichols, *Airforce*, ed. Lawrence Suid (Madison, Wisc., 1983), 73.

[44] A copy of *Americans All* can be found in the Immigration History Research Archive, University of Minnesota.

what of it." Sexual deviance was also linked in *The House on 92nd Street* (1945) to Nazi spies and transvestites.[45]

The call for unity also demanded that the characters realize that isolationist and anti-imperialist attitudes that often had accompanied left wing and populist causes were now aids to the enemy. That was not an easy task since criticism of United States colonies in the Pacific and Caribbean and pacifist beliefs informed labor and populist movements, while radio shows and news columns of Will Rogers satirized the use of the Marines in Third World nations. In addition, films such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*(1930), *The Informer* (1935), *Juarez, Ambassador Bill* and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) criticized Europeans' colonization of foreign lands. To counter these values, *Sergeant York*, a film that won the academy award in 1941 for best picture, charts the story of Alvin C. York, a Tennessee farmer who "set aside his religious scruples against killing for what he felt was the better good of his country and the lasting benefit of mankind . . ." to become the most decorated soldier in World War I.[46] Similarly, *Back To Bataan* unfolds in the American colony of the Philippines. As the Japanese invade, an American officer, played by John Wayne, mobilizes the natives' resistance. Overhead the audience hears an enemy radio station, asking the Filipinos why they are not joining with their fellow Asians to expel the western imperialists. That question haunts the mind of the grandson of a Philippine patriot who had fought against the American invaders in the l890s. Ever since the grandson has resisted and his lover became the radio announcer who supports the Japanese. Yet once they both see the Japanese atrocities, they join the American military to expel the common enemy.[47]

In all these films, the turn away from ethnic traditions, populist values, anti-imperialism and isolationism has realigned the basis for authority from the lower to upper classes. In so doing the commitment to internationalism became linked to saving and renewing what many had seen as anathema to the nation: the aristocratic values and social hierarchy of Europe. In *The White Cliffs of Dover* (1944), for example, the story begins as an American woman and her father travel by ship in 1914 to England. On the way they express the isolationist view that America was a New World because it was democracy separate from the aristocrats of the Old World. Yet when England

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[45] All of these films are on video. See Matlin, *TV Movies and Video Guide.*

[46] The quote is from "'Sergeant York,' a Sincere Biography of the World War Hero Makes Its Appearance at the Astor," *New York Times,* 3 July 1941. The account of York's visit to the White House is from "President Praises 'Sergeant York' to the Living Hero of the Picture," *News and Feature Service of Warner Brothers Studio,* as in Sergeant York File, AMPAS.

[47] All of the films cited in this and the preceding paragraph can be found on video; see Matlin,.

goes to war, they too realize that the United States must rescue Europe. The consequences of that choice unfold as the American heroine marries an English aristocrat. Her husband dies in the war, but she gives birth to a son and lives on the family's lavish estate. Fifteen years later mother and son join with the English and Americans in the Second World War to defeat the Fascist powers. Similarly, *Mrs. Miniver* focuses on a youth who sees that the British aristocrats are decadent and lazy non producers. Yet as war comes he marries an upper class girl and in the final scene they sit in a church listening to a pastor who proclaims that the war is to save Christianity and Western civilization itself.

This transformation in cultural authority was not confined to the most critically acclaimed or commercially successful films of the war years. It was part of a general trend which legitimized for the first time liberal capitalism as the one and only American Way. In our plot calculations, the bottom up conversion narrative that had informed movie making in the 1930s disappeared from 1940 to 1945. It was replaced by a top down conversion narrative in over 30 percent of all films. Here the protagonists shed their earlier loyalty to the lower orders and oppositional groups, and align with official institutions linked to saving the nation, such as the FBI, military and defense industry. Characters identified with savior institutions and patriot heroes rose from five percent in 1932 to over fifty per cent in the war years. At the same time, the incidence of dangerous characters identified with subversion rose from none in 1940 to almost twenty percent by 1944. Given that the subversive activity was often identified with popularly based social movements, it was not accidental that criticism of big business declined from over fifty percent of film plots to less than ten percent by 1945. Fears of big business remained, but reform was linked to protagonists who operated as experts in official organizations, not in an autonomous civic sphere, which had been eliminated.

At the same time that the older democratic tradition eroded in public life and work, the quest for freedom increasingly came to center on the realms of leisure and the home. In the process there emerged a dramatic shift in conceptions of the place of the new culture and affluence. Through the thirties the most well-known stars and film formulas of the era – *Will Rogers, The Thin Man, The Hardy Family* – merged together modernity and tradition, the popular arts rooted in the lower classes, and a revolution in morals with social reform. But as criticism of domestic institutions was discredited in the war, popular formulas shed political criticism. Mass culture and modernity were no longer linked to alterations in family or public life. In

the film plots, the linkage of popular art with social renewal declined from twenty percent to less than five percent in the war years. Similarly, the most popular comic director of the war was Preston Sturgis. In films such as *The Great McGinty*, *Hail the Conquering Hero,Christmas in July* and *The Palm Beach* he kept alive the merger of comedy and social criticism, but his characters found that in society where big business and politics was bathed in patriotism, resistance no longer could change society or traditional family values.

Within that context, the most popular film stars of the day, the comic Bob Hope and the singer Bing Crosby, began to show how the instinctual pleasures associated with mass art found outside work and power might also serve to renew one's faith in the new state and corporate order. Ironically that quest first appeared in eight "road films" that graced the screen from 1940 to 1948. In each of these films, plots and settings changed, but they expressed the desire to use play and comedy to solve a crisis of national identity and manhood. With the new order lessening one's control over the society, films such as *The Road to Bali, The Road to Singapore,* and *The Road to Utopia* started with the "boys" immersed in "civilization" on the home front. With the new order emerging they find that their quest for freedom is limited and their instincts repressed. The answer is not to reform the society, but to hit the road, going to foreign lands for escape. These exotic places resemble not so much real locales and places as future Disneyland and Las Vegas hotels. Here Hope is the man who expresses the desires of youth for pleasure and rebellion from restraint. While Crosby shares these wishes, his task is to find some way to realize these desires within the context of success and social order (all on video).

One might easily dismiss these escapist fantasies if the two stars had not shown how these wishes might also be realized on the home front. Hope's part in the process was to use humor to articulate the unspeakable, namely that the world emerging in the war gave men success and glory, but it also created a sense of entrapment and frustration. Whether it was on his radio show, in his news columns or as government entertainer for the troops in the several theatres of war, audiences saw him as the "perpetual juvenile" who fate decreed remained a "jerk." On tour before American soldiers Hope recognized one clear fact: the enemy of the soldiers was "never just the Germans or Japanese." It was boredom, mud, officers and abstinence, for the men had "been tossed into a threshing machine of chaos" where the dreams of youth were "aging fast."

The function of Hope's partner, Bing Crosby, was to show how official institutions could realize positive desires on the home front. Running parallel with the road films, Crosby made *Going My Way* and its sequel, *The Bells of St. Mary's*, two of the biggest grossing films of the war. In the first he plays a former Broadway jazz singer, man about town and a ladies' man who expresses the fear of moralists in the twenties and thirties that the new culture would disrupt social order. Now he has committed himself to the calling of a Catholic priest. Yet he is also, as Crosby explained, a "hip priest." Assigned to an urban parish by his superiors, the Bishop, Father O'Mally finds that the inefficiency and Victorian mores of the current leader have turned youth to juvenile delinquency and the new woman to the street. Father O'Mally's responds not by trying to restore the Puritanical repressions linked Protestant and Catholics in the recent past. Rather, he shows how it is the new function of official hierarchical leaders and institutions to realize and contain these desires. He shows the boys how to play sports and choir singing for the church, and the new woman how to "sing with her voice rather than her hips." He also writes a popular new song that allows the church to pay its mortgage and the girl to have money to marry a soldier leaving for war.[48]

At the core of Crosby's appeal lay a major reshaping of the desire associated with the new mass culture. Crosby draws on the popular arts to preserve traditions that subordinate youthful play and pleasure to official goals, while validating the corporations that offer to fulfil these desires. Even more important, Crosby gained great fame by showing on and off the screen how to adapt rather than rebel from the modern world. For example, Catholic priests who were aligned to the old nemesis of the film industry, the Catholic Legion of Decency, praised Crosby in fan magazines because the star did not rebel from studio leaders, as had stars in the past. Crosby's rendition of "White Christmas," "God Bless America" and "Silent Night" brought "happiness when the world needs it most, for he relaxes . . . eases tension, mends bruised hearts and promises peace, restored homes and better and happier life soon to come."[49]

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[48] "The Singing Padre," *New York Times*, October 9, 1943. "We Can't Go Wrong With Mc Carey, Bing, Fitzgerald," *Hollywood Reporter*, February 28, 1944. Ray Le Strange, "Dr Bing Crosby, Wartime Therapist,"*Motion Picture Magazine*, October, 1944, 44-45. Father Victor Follen, "With a Song in His Heart,"*Photoplay*, May , 1945. Victor Boesen, "There's Only One Bing," *Liberty*, July 21, 1945, 49-50. All in Bing Crosby File, AMPAS.

[49] For the pervasiveness of these themes in other forms of popular art, see Robert Westbrook, "'I Want a Girl, Just Lie the Girl That Married Harry James': American Woman and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," *American Quarterly* 42 (1990): 587-614. Also see Lewis Erenberg, "Swing Goes to War: Glen Miller and the Popular Music of World

At the same time, the character Crosby played on the screen in films like *Holiday Inn* or *Going My Way* identified that home with converting the wartime "pin up girl" – the erotic woman who graced magazine covers and calendars in the war – to the ideal wife and mother.[50] In films such as *Going My Way, Holiday Inn, Hollywood Canteen, Casablanca, Lifeboat, Saboteur, Foreign Correspondent, Back to Bataan, Notorious* (1946), *The White Cliffs of Dover, Gilda,* and *Across the Wide Pacific* the wartime heroine evoked the historical memory of the empowered woman. In over thirty percent of the films of the thirties she moved into the economy, challenged Victorian mores and helped men reform the world. During the war the same empowered woman appeared in forty percent of Hollywood films in our samples, reflecting the move of woman into the economy as men went to war. Yet in these same works the heroines' goals and motivations altered, for over and over women's freedom was seen as potentially subversive. Wartime heroines began to subordinate the youthful elan of the newly empowered woman to the patriotic ideal of consumer oriented home and motherhood. As this process unfolded it gave birth to a new category in our plot calculations. In films such as *Hollywood Canteen* the soldier coming home from the front now found a working woman who embodied all the joys of youth and consumer pleasures. But she wished to channel that desire into a new ideal of "patriotic domesticity" where freedom could still be found.[51]

Why women were expected to perform this task emerged in the most popular female melodrama of the war, *Since You Went Away*.[52] Winner of the Academy Award for best picture in 1944, the film opens with a prologue stating that it is about that "unconquerable fortress, the American Home." The guardian of that fortress is a young wife and mother, played by Claudette Colbert, a female star who in the thirties gained fame as the heroine who lived by her wits on the road in *It Happened One Night* or as the empowered woman who went into business with a black in *Imitation of Life.* Yet in war the she is the heroine who encounters another reality. Unlike in other nations engaged in the struggle, men have gone to fight, but women live in prosperity

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War II, " *The War in American Culture, Society and Consciousness in World War II*, ed. Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (1996, Chicago), 144-165.

[50] See Bette Davis "Code for American Girls in Wartime," *Photoplay* 54, (September , 1940):17; Ann Southern "What Kind of Woman Will Your Man Come Home To?" *Photoplay* 25 (November 1944): 85-86. Also see Elaine May, *Homeward Bound,* pp. 58-91. All the cited works are on video.

[51] See John Rossie, "Hitchcock's Foreign Correspondent (1940)," *Film and History* XII (1982): 25-35.

[52] A similar argument concerning women's role in war films is in Joyce Baker, *Images of Women in Film: The War Years, 1941-1945* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980)

and safety. Under these abnormal gender divisions, women's guilt spurs the heroine to do her part for the war.

The pervasive aura of whiteness surrounding the ideal woman was not accidental. Over and over films focusing on public life showed men of different races working together. But the pin-up who embodied the consumer dreams of the home front was above all a young, often blonde or auburn-haired caucasian woman. There can be no doubt this reflected longstanding racist beliefs, embodied in laws and popular prohibitions against miscegenation. Yet the advancement in race relations that began in the thirties was reversed and reshaped in the war. In the public domain men were expected to shed race, class and ethnic identities in favor of loyalty to large organizations. Yet when they turned to the home to preserve the one realm of freedom that remained, women were expected to shed their connection to ethnic markers and the aura of the empowered working woman. As heroines shed the irreverent humor and associations with hot jazz and lower-class dress styles of the thirties, and rid their speech and bodily expressions of low-brow desires, they were expected to walk a thin line. On the one hand sexual appeal and youthfulness promised pleasure and erotic fulfilment for men. On the other hand, they were to preserve in the home and motherhood the patriotic ideal of a traditional America free of the disorder of the past.[53]

So pervasive was the identification of these virtues with the white ideal of beauty in mainstream culture that even the one exception proved the rule. Lena Horne gained success as a light-skinned Negro singer in Duke Ellington's swing band and was active in left-wing politics that brought whites and blacks together. As the war came, the head of Metro Goldwyn Mayer told her that the studio was "interested in doing something with a black person different than Tarzan pictures, for good social reasons." Soon she appeared in all black films such as *Stormy Weather*, and *Cabin in the Sky* celebrating the inclusion of blacks in national life and the war effort. Writers saw that Horne broke new ground because she "ain't no . . . Aunt Jemima or Uncle Tom," while Walter White advised her to become a model for her race. During the war she became the "girl back home . . . to 800,000 Negro soldiers . . . who have named their planes, their jeeps and their daughters after her." Yet when she asked to play parts in films that featured whites, producers turned her down. The reason was that she might touch white males and arouse fears of miscegenation. Later she recalled,

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[53] See Preston Sturgis , Hardy Family, Frank Capra and Thin Man files and plot summaries their wartime films in their respective files in AMPAS. The cited films are all on video

> They said at the time I got the job at MGM in 1943 that they were going to prove through me that we're all alike. They made me up and down, they decided the way they thought I should look. They decided how a Negro should look . . . they tried to make me look as close to white as possible. And they still proceeded to allow white women to play parts that black women looking like me might have played. And this went on and on, it never stopped . . . what they did was name me in all releases as the sepia Hedy Lamaar . . . Why wasn't she advertised as the white Lena Horne?[54]

At this point it becomes clear why Erik Johnston saw that the consensus forged in World War II offered a model for economic and cultural reconstruction at home and abroad. Yet the advent of the Cold War made it possible for him and his allies to purge left wing artists from Hollywood studios, pass new censorship codes and ban unacceptable films for distribution. Though the fighting had ended, the movie-making codes established in the war continued into the peace. For one thing, the fear of subversion rose even higher than in the war, but now the suspected subversives were not foreign agents but people living in the United States. While fears of subversion expressed the anti-Communist concern that danger came from within the nation, films dealing with reform rose slightly but took a new form. The postwar agents of reform in these films were usually experts aligned to official organizations. And their actions were no longer directed against business. After the war, negative representations of businessmen and the rich declined even more than they had in the war years. Most striking of all, the use of violence to solve problems did not recede, as it did after World War I. Rather, violence rose from ten to thirty percent from 1945 to 1958, suggesting that compromise and the art of negotiation had given way to a manichean struggle that infected all parts of life in the Cold War era.

Within this context, movie makers also sought to deal with the one major social problem of the day: the gap between the rhetoric of racial pluralism and the reality. Liberals, black writers and civil rights leaders clearly looked with favor on the Hollywood productions of *Pinky, Home of the Brave, Intruder in the Dust,* and *Lost Boundries*, for each portrayed black heroes with dignity and dramatized their resourceful struggle against prejudice. More than at time in the past, the incidence of minorities playing in featured roles increased from ten percent in 1936 to over thirty percent in 1958. Yet the contours of reform worked within the liberal consensus. This meant that the black characters in these productions rejected alliances with the lower classes, who were portrayed as evil and irrational. Instead the black

[54] "Lena Horne Interview," *Ebony,* July 1968, pp. 130-134.

protagonists turned to white leaders who were presumably untainted by the racial inheritance of the past. These white professionals and scientific experts used the law and psychology for the redress of grievances.[55] Another finding in the plot samples suggests that fear of outsiders increased. In contrast to other decades, the casting of racial minorities as villains rose from ten to over twenty five percent, probably reflecting the fact that fighting against communists occurred against non-whites in countries like Korea and Vietnam.

Throughout the period, the defense of the nation was ultimately justified in realizing prosperity and a home life centered on classlessness and caucasian ideals of love and beauty. Several continuous themes emanating from World War II suggest how that operated. Between the thirties and the late forties, films that focused on the popular arts as a force that challenged contemporary social arrangements dropped from more than thirty to less than five percent from 1936 to 1948. Running parallel with that shift, female heroines continued to work in the wider world, but they focused their motivation on the ideal of the private home, indicated by the rise of patriotic domesticity from fifteen to thirty percent of all films from 1944 to 1948 in our samples. Most striking of all, the image of the new home was deeply wedded to an unprecedented ideal of classlessness. During the twenties and thirties, films that focused on romance across class lines was a clear staple of movie making. Yet now that category steadily declined from twenty five per cent in the two pre-war decades to less than five percent in the post war era. Along with that change, whenever love occurred across racial boundaries, as in *Pinky* or *Showboat,* the black heroine was played by a white actress. Apparently this suggested to the audiences that miscegenation rules had not been violated and that the home still centered on concepts of white beauty and love.

There is also tangible evidence to suggest that this shift in popular values corresponded to a major shift in audience belief and action. One way of seeing that relationship is by looking carefully at changes in attitudes recorded in public opinion polls from the thirties to the fifties. Pollsters found in the thirties that only 26 percent of their respondents approved of involvement in foreign affairs. But by 1947, 81 percent supported the United

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[55] For a brilliant contemporary assessment of these films by a major black writer of the forties, see Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York, 1953), pp. 273-281.

Nations and increased defense commitments against the Soviet Union.[56] Attitudes towards the corporations altered as well. A poll conducted by *Fortune Magazine* in 1942 found that only 40 percent of the public opposed socialism, well over 25 percent supported it, and 35 percent said they had an open mind. In other words, sixty percent of the American people were open to the possibility of socialism. Other polls showed that a large majority supported the labor union movement, one of the most radical in the country. By 1949, however, criticism of business waned and less than 15 percent of the public wanted to "move in the direction of socialism," while more than 61 percent wanted to move in the very opposite direction. Support for unions receded. Even if these many respondents had only the vaguest notion of what socialism meant, it was a remarkable change.[57]

Yet equally remarkable changes were unfolding in family life. As recent historians have shown, the commitment to domestic life and the baby boom centered in the growing suburbs during the fifties.[58] But movies were deeply implicated in that shift during the war years, as interviews compiled by the reporter Studs Terkel suggest. Women continued to work during and after the war. To those participating in that experience, as a school teacher recalled, it was "just marvellous" that women went to work to aid the war effort. But "even here we were sold a bill of goods," for in films and radio shows "they were hammering away that the woman who went to work did it to help her man, and when he came back, she cheerfully leaped into the home." Another woman war worker saw that defense mobilization put "excitement in the air . . . " Freed from dependency in the parental home, she worked for the first time and received high wages, while using the money to engage in public amusements where she met "hundreds of men." Her family insisted that she "get married," while at the movies "the central theme was girl meets soldier and after a weekend of acquaintance they get married and overcome their difficulties." Still another recalled that *The White Cliffs of Dover* convinced her to marry a soldier long before she was ready. As she looked back, she saw that the idea that "women married soldiers and sent them overseas happy

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[56] The changing opinion on the United States' involvement in world organizations can be found in, "World Organization Polls from 1937-1945," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Summer 1945), 253.

[57] These polls are cited in Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why* (New York, 1976), 77.

[58] See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound* (New York, 1988), especially 3-15.

was hammered at us. We had plays on the radio, short stories in magazines, and the movies, which had a tremendous influence in our lives."[59]

As these recollections suggest, the transformation in culture emerging in World War II carried directly into the age of Cold War. Yet beneath the surface of unified Americanism there also emerged a pervasive sense of anxiety. That unease was not simply the natural result of success, or the revival of previously repressed instincts in a time of prosperity. Rather, as the career of the most popular movie maker of the thirties suggests, it emerged as a result of the loss of a republican identity that informed national life for over a hundred years.[60] During the thirties Frank Capra portrayed populist heroes struggling against the moneyed interests. During the war he made government documentaries such as *Why We Fight* and *The Negro Soldier* celebrating the new consensus, and fired writers who the FBI accused of subversion. On returning to Hollywood he cooperated with HUAC and blackballed artists who had worked in his popular films. Even though his security clearance was taken away for his radical activities in the past, he made films like *State of the Union* that made a hero of a corporate leader like Erik Johnston and portrayed women as loyal mothers. Reform against the evil banker in *It's a Wonderful Life* was not attained through working with the common people. Rather, the family was saved only with the aid of an angel sent from God. As these films failed at the box office, a co-worker explained why: once "he got into this government stuff, it gave him a new sense of values, and then he was dead. He was working with the people who were the heavies in his own pictures, and it turned him completely around. From that point on, in trying to develop scripts, he just developed nonsense." Capra himself concurred. Later he told an interviewer that I "lived under the Judas curse . . . that I had ratted and sold out." It was deadly, for:

> Once you get cold feet, once your daring stops, then you worry a little bit. And when you worry about a decision, then you're not going to make the proper films any more. That is I couldn't. And I think that was the start. When I sold out for money, which is something I had always been against anyhow, and security, I think my conscience told me that I had it. Really. There wasn't any more of that paladin out there in front fighting for lost causes.[61]

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[59] Dellie Hahn, "Interview," in Studs Terkel, *"he Good War": An Oral History of World War II* (New York, 1984), 117-118.

[60] The many areas in which that "anxiety" surfaced are explored by Warren Susman, "Did Success Spoil the United States? Dual Representations in Postwar America," as in May, *Recasting America,* 19-38 Susman has a different explanation for what caused that anxiety than will be found in this investigation.

[61] McBride, *Frank Capra,* 504-505, 536-531.

If men no longer engaged in causes, they were expected to turn to the home and consumer realm as symbols of their success and their lost youth.

At the same time that the home and public life created anxiety and unease, the contradictions informing the new ethos of racial pluralism bred discontent as well. One of Studs Terkel's interviewees, Italian-American Paul Pisciano, noted that World War II was this great "transition piece" in race relations. Pisciano grew up in an Italian working-class neighbourhood of Chicago before the war. Like other ethnic outsiders, he "thought Joe Louis was wonderful. He was such a champion. Nobody was gonna ruffle Joe Louis." Since he and his fellow Italians had a "transient sense of our place here," they retained their Italian language, hoping to make money to return "home." Suggesting his working-class identity, he noted that his grandmother served as a union organizer. Recalling those days, he told Terkel, "You go to the movies every week, right? . . . You grow up you're gonna be King Kong. . . ." Yet after Pearl Harbor "you enlisted into the marines, or go into the navy" and afterwards "all the guys" became "right wing." As they moved into the middle class and assimilated into the white American mainstream, they stopped teaching their kids Italian. That transition into middle-class whiteness also removed them from their affinity with blacks and brought racist sentiments to the fore: "guys were talking about niggers, I gotta move out my kids . . ." So they moved to the suburbs and united with others in their "anti black sentiments," a process which "obliterated our culture, and made us American," which "ain't no fun."

For those who were not even allowed to enter the suburbs, the feeling of anxiety ran far deeper. Through the forties and into the fifties, Lena Horne, for example, realized that racism was still a powerful force in American life, but hoped that the spirit of racial pluralism engendered in the New Deal and the war signaled that progress was possible. As she became a major actress in Hollywood, she remained active in popular front causes, union activities and protests against the segregation of black troops. Dedicated to the ideal of cross-cultural alliances, she wore a Star of David and a St. Christopher medal around her neck. Yet as the Cold War cut off left wing activities, reporters in *Esquire* noted that she "provided so far one of the success stories of racial adaptation to a changing world." Unlike radicals like Paul Robeson and Josephine Baker, she was seen as surviving and competing "on an Aryan level." Defying the major racial prohibition of the day, she married a white musician. But because of discrimination in the United States, she kept their marriage a secret for two years and went to Paris to work as a jazz singer and actress in French movies. By the mid-fifties, she returned home, brought her

marriage into the open, and bought a house in Nichols Canyon, a white suburb of Los Angeles. But her white neighbors petitioned to have her removed, and her husband had to buy a shot gun to protect them from racial vandalism. She also found that when she appeared in Las Vegas her black musicians could not enter the hotel's front doors and her children could not swim in the pool. Later she recalled that despite civil rights leaders' demand that she become a model for her race, she socked a white person who shouted racial slurs. In later years she explained why:

> It was a stifling experience. I lived kind of suspended in the atmosphere somewhere. I wasn't grounded in my own patch of dirt and neither on theirs...rebellious against the white mold they tried to put me in made me create a kind of mold that nothing could get to. I was ice, so that nothing could touch me...I didn't want what they had and I was also on account of this image - removed from my own people. I just fell asleep.[62]

In the early years of the Cold War, anxieties like those expressed by Lena Horne remained private, rarely able to alter public life. The reason was what corporate leaders like Erik Johnston saw clearly. With war providing a rationale for unity in public and private life, it was necessary not only to avoid class conflict, but to tame the consumer culture as well. It worked because it appeared to bring to fruition a new Americanism that first emerged in the popular arts of the thirties. And that was no small thing. In the past America was seen as an Anglo-Saxon society in which abundance was reserved for the wealthy. Yet in the Depression and World War II the government and industry received their legitimation by realizing a society rooted in racial pluralism and a popularly based affluence. By the war years, that goal had been achieved not with class conflict, or the redistribution of wealth, but with defense spending and the rise of privatized consumer culture that spurred mass purchasing power. Yet as the Cold War extended that formula into the next two decades it came at great cost. Intellectuals and popular artists soon forgot that they ever had a republican tradition at odds with liberal capitalism. And as the quest for freedom in the home contained women's emancipation and excluded racial minorities, the optimistic veneer of the new consumer democracy generated an anxiety that had no name. Only when popular artists and activists began to erode the New American Way in

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[62] "Lena Horne Interview," *Ebony* (July 1968), pp 130-134. *Hollywood Citizen News,* (June 22, 1950); *New York Times* (October 27, 1957; *Los Angeles Daily News* (June 3, 1948); Lena Horne Interview, *Vogue,* (June 1972) and *Women's Wear Daily,* (October 24, 1974); Robert Rourke, *Esquire* , (1953), unpaginated clippings in Horne File, AMPAS.

family and private life would the consensus begin to unravel in the sixties. But that is another story.