Violence and Masculinity in Hollywood War Films During World War II

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Abstract

During World War II, the Hollywood studios produced an unprecedented number of war-themed films in order to help prepare American audiences for what was to come, as well as to profit from the popularity of anything pertaining to the war. As a result, soldiers were the predominant representation of masculinity from 1942 to 1945. The war's biggest influence on Hollywood, however, was the increasing freedom studios were given to portray violence onscreen in order to reflect the bloodshed of the war itself. Using the existing literature about Hollywood during the war, as well as primary sources from the period, this thesis examines the impact that the war had on violence in film with a focus on how Hollywood influenced the portrayal of masculinity through combat films. In order to illustrate how violence changed during the war years I begin my thesis by establishing the state of film censorship prior to the war. I make use of the gangster films as they were the most violent films produced during the 1930's and led directly to the censorship of film violence. The majority of my thesis focuses on film violence between 1942 and 1945, arguing that the war dramatically influenced censorship in the United States, and also that Hollywood helped to redefine masculinity through the combat films. I finish my thesis with an examination of films released between 1946 and 1950 that prove film violence continued after the war had ended and in genres other than the combat films.

List of Abbreviations

HUAC - House Un-American Activities Committee

MPAA - Motion Picture Association of America

OOC - Office of Censorship

OWI - Office of War Information

RAF - Royal Air Force

PCA - Production Code Administration

WACMPI - War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry

WASP - White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant

Table of Contents

Introduction

When the United States entered World War II, the major Hollywood studios produced an unprecedented number of war-themed films that helped the United States government prepare American audiences for what was to come. There were more than 17,000 theatres across the United States,[1] which attracted millions of viewers a week throughout the 1940's, making cinema one of the most effective and influential forms of mass communication. The sheer number of theatres combined with the prestige of film actors gave Hollywood a strategic role in shaping popular opinion about the war.[2] In turn, the war had a drastic impact on Hollywood films, especially as soldiers were the predominant representation of masculinity from 1942 to 1945. The war's immediate influence on Hollywood can be measured through the large number of war-themed films that were produced following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The war's biggest influence on Hollywood, however, was the increasing freedom studios were given to portray violence onscreen in order to reflect the bloodshed of the war itself.

Due to the popularity of film, it is easy to see why Hollywood had an enormous impact on how Americans perceived the war. For many American civilians, these films provided prototypes of American soldiers and represented how they were expected to perform in combat. The new form of masculinity associated with the soldier can therefore be seen as a "highly self-conscious performance of gender" according to American culture historian Mike Chopra-Gant.[3] Characters in combat films like Humphrey Bogart's Joe Gunn in *Sahara* or Cary Grant's Captain Cassidy in *Destination Tokyo* represented the ideal soldier for many Americans. The heroic

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[1] Clayton R. Hoppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 4.
[2] Bosley Crowther, "War Gives Many Special Jobs," *New York Times*, 3 January 1940.
[3] Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 99.

actions of these characters carried more weight because these films were not just entertainment, they were also important representations of the bravery of soldiers. While the combat films were largely fictional, they recreated real battles that had taken place during the war and therefore relatively recently. For many, Hollywood's representation of the war created a picture of what was really going on overseas. Therefore, films had the power to operate as an agent of both social control and change. The reality of the war's violence permeated the news, and Hollywood responded by making films that were more gritty, realistic, and violent. As increasingly graphic images were shown on the home front through news media, Hollywood matched the images of death and violence in the films it produced. Their films remained entertainment first, however, and factual recreations of the war second.

The war changed the portrayal of violence in Hollywood through combat films, which glorified the violence of war. I argue that through portrayals of soldiers at war, masculinity and violence were intrinsically linked from 1942 to 1945. It is this connection between the war and the increasing violence in Hollywood films that I am interested in exploring. The performance of violence was necessary during the war for soldiers overseas, and as only men could participate in combat, violence became perceived as a uniquely male behavior. Combat films did more in just a few short years to influence Hollywood's presentation of violence than any other genre. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is twofold: to offer a historical analysis of Hollywood's presentation of masculinity from the 1940's through World War II era combat films and to argue that World War II led to a dramatic increase in onscreen depictions of violence that impacted masculinity. The release of *Wake Island* in 1942 was pivotal for the censorship of violence. *Wake Island* is not only significant as the first film to use World War II to justify showing violent combat scenes, but it also strongly influenced a number of subsequent films that used the ongoing war to show

increasingly violent combat scenes. The effect these combat films had on movie-going audiences did not disappear when the war ended, rather they became an integral component of non-war film genres after 1945. The most notably violent films made after 1945 were the Film Noirs, which were from one of the most recognizable postwar genres. [4] Thus, while the combat film ended with the war, its impact on Hollywood did not.

I begin my thesis by examining the gangster films of the early 1930's not only because they are the best example of onscreen violence before World War II, but also because of their representation of masculinity before the war. The gangster films were a reaction to the social problems of the era, especially the economic depression. In an era where masculinity was challenged by many fathers' inability to provide for their families, the lawless lifestyle of the gangster (which was unconnected to family life) was an appealing fantasy for many men. In 1931 and 1932 Hollywood produced several successful gangster films, but censorship boards deemed the films too violent and immoral. Public criticism led to the banning of all gangster films along with the strict censorship of violence until the United States entered World War II. [5]

The first combat film was released in 1942 and the genre quickly took off as the Hollywood studios rushed to put out films that dealt with the war. The popularity of these films was immediate but short-lived. By the end of 1945 they had lost their appeal, as had the war itself. According to film historian Jeanine Basinger, however, these films had already formed their own genre. When comparing the various different combat films it becomes clear that there

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[4]Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Black Out: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 8; Film Noirs are characterized by their stark commentaries about contemporary social problems. Aesthetically the genre is described as 'dark,' 'black,' and 'gloomy'. William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *World War II and the Postwar Years in America: A Historical and Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC., 2010), 387.
[5] Biesen, *Blackout*, 20.

was a shared attitude amongst the writers and producers of these films.[6] I examine this shared attitude in films during the War and what it represented in regards to American society's view of masculinity as intrinsically violent. Themes and motifs repeated in the combat genre reflected the changing societal attitudes towards masculinity and violence, and Chapters 3 and 4 deal mainly with this treatment in film.

After 1945, films dealing with returning veterans began to reevaluate the necessity of the war. The connection between masculinity and violence was treated as a natural requirement for manhood during the war, but this connection was challenged afterward. I argue that films such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) and *The Men* (1950), which deal with heroic disabled veterans, challenged the notion that the brutality of the war years was justified. By showing both the physical and emotional effects of warfare on veterans, these films demonstrated that violence was not natural masculine behavior, and was in fact something that soldiers had to struggle very hard to deal with.

My research privileges the film medium as a lens through which to examine society. However, I acknowledge that films do not perfectly reflect the reality of the era in which they were made, and often contradict popular social attitudes. Generally, Hollywood attempted to produce films that addressed contemporary social issues in order to attract the widest audience possible.[7] As with any art form that attempts to reflect society, Hollywood films were not

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[6] My writing about the importance of recurring themes in genres is informed by Barry Keith Grant's *Film Genre Reader III,* which deals with "the patterns emerging from a culturally shared and habitual structuring of thought, the usually unexamined convictions that bestow value – in other words, the patterns that give an entire genre significance whatever the meaning of any particular film" (United States of America: University of Texas Press, 2003), 219.

[7] Daniel P. Franklin's *Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States* argues that films reflect the political culture in which they are made in their attempt to appeal to audiences. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

always successful.[8] Multiple outside influences such as the Production Code Administration (PCA) and other censorship boards controlled what Hollywood could show. These outside forms of censorship limited how accurately films could reflect social issues, as many social issues were considered unfit to portray on film, and thus went largely unaddressed. This is especially true in regards to violence, which was for the most part banned from film when the PCA was introduced in 1933. This remained the case until World War II forced censorship boards to be more permissive with regards to the portrayal of violence so that film studios could portray the fighting going on overseas. Audiences demanded more realistic and increasingly violent combat films, and the studios produced them. While this was treated as a temporary suspension of censorship in order to support the war effort through film, it turned out that the combat films made between 1942 and 1945 were only the first of a wave of violent films. Beginning in 1944 with the release of the Film Noir *Double Indemnity* (which dealt with a couple planning a murder) Hollywood films would begin to depict violence in non-war settings, and the Film Noir would continue the trend of violence in film past the end of World War II.

My research requires that I examine trends in films from 1930 through 1950 in order to discern a pattern. I draw on the research of other historians to highlight the broader trends in Hollywood and American society from the interwar to the postwar period. The earliest film I look at is *All Quiet on the Western Front* released in 1930, and the last is *The Men* from 1950. I cover twenty years of American film history, and do so to show how film trends in Hollywood started and stopped in response to major societal changes. The most significant societal change in the years I look at was caused by World War II, but the Great Depression of the 1930's also

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[8] Colin Shindler's *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society, 1939-1952* argues that the film industry was influenced by the war but failed to be an accurate representation of the social and political context due to both the misguided zeal and plain incompetence of Hollywood's producers.[8]

strongly influenced American society. The similarly themed films I examine are classified into genres: the gangster films from the early 1930's; World War I films made during the interwar period; the prewar anti-Nazi films from 1939 to 1942; the combat film genre from 1942 to 1945; the disabled veteran films made from 1945 to 1950; and the Film Noir genre of the postwar period.

It is impossible to deal with every film produced during the period I examine. The films I focus on were chosen because they strongly represented both their particular genre and their social and cultural context. There are always films that do not reflect the eras they were made in, which is why I relied on audience appeal (proven through box office numbers) and critical responses to determine the relevance of films for this study. I point out the films that were trendsetters in order to illustrate how Hollywood films changed in a broader context. Singular films that broke out of the mold created and enforced by Hollywood's self-censorship practices may have had short term reactions, but it is the themes that were repeated that had the biggest impact on American audiences.[9]

Film historians Arthur F. McClure and Ken D. Jones' work *Hollywood at War: The American Motion Picture and World War II* informed my argument surrounding the ability of film to portray messages and shape ideas in society. McClure and Jones claim that while "movies do not change fundamental ideas… they do encourage audiences to think".[10] Given Hollywood's popularity, the subject matter of many films shaped a discourse for the average American. The exact role that the big screen played in the promoting of the war and in the reshaping of

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[9] Robert L. McLaughlin and Sally E. Parry's *We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema During World War II* argues that films during the war repeated the same narratives, character types, and rhetoric, in order to make the war more comprehensible for Americans. (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

[10] Ken D. Jones and Arthur F. McClure, *Hollywood at War: The American Motion Picture and World War II* (South Brunswick and New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1973), 5.

American life cannot be easily quantified. There are examples of films that had a demonstrable impact on American society, such as with the riots provoked by the release of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (discussed in Chapter 2). Most films, however, do not leave a tangible record of their influence. Film studies researcher Barry Keith Grant explains that, "[m]ost of the study of film genres is taken up with an examination of formulas, icons, motifs – in short, the elements of repetitive patterning".[11] It is through the recurring themes and motifs that the genres I examine (especially the combat films) came to mythologize the more aggressive and violent characteristics of masculinity.

It is important to understand that masculinity is socially constructed and under constant renegotiation. According to the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* masculinity reflects a culture's "norms or values, acquired through social learning from agents of socialization such as the family, school, and mass media".[12] From 1942 to 1945, one of the primary agents of socialization in American society was the military, from which Hollywood took many of its cues. According to gender sociologist R.W. Connell, it is difficult to define the social power held by men; Connell argues that masculinity in any given time period and place has multiple definitions. These multiple masculinities are defined in terms of their hierarchy, and through the cultural opposition of differing masculinities with one another.[13] In any culture there is typically a dominant or "hegemonic" masculinity that exists alongside "subordinate" ones.[14] Masculinities are shaped by differences in age, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and race. According to gender studies sociologist Michael S. Kimmel, the gendering of men only exists through social

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[11] Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre Reader III* (United States of America: University of Texas Press, 2003), 219.
[12] Michael S. Kimmel and Jeff Hearn, *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2005), 5.
[13] R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (St.Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 10.
[14] Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, 30.

divisions and social differences.[15] During the war, and in the decades prior to it, the hegemonic masculinity in the United States was defined as white, able-bodied, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. Hegemonic masculinity only needs to be enacted by a minority of men in a society, but it embodies the most honored way of being a man in that society and all other men are forced to position themselves in relation to it.[16] Instead of displacing white, middle-class dominance, the World War II upheld this group as the idealized version of masculinity. At the same time, the war enhanced the positions of many subordinate and racialized versions of masculinity (for instance, the masculinities of Hispanics and African Americans who fought in the war), while it simultaneously created new marginalized forms of masculinity (that of Japanese Americans for example). Hollywood's combat films largely glossed over the war's reliance on men of all different races. In film World War II remained very clearly a 'white man's war', even when Hollywood would attempt to show an ethnically diverse combat unit.

Many of the character traits associated with masculinity during World War II were emphasized because they made the war easier to process and cope with. Feminist theorist and philosopher Kimberly Hutchings argues that war anchors masculinity because masculinity reflects traits necessary for war and provides "a framework through which war can be rendered both intelligible and acceptable as a social practice and institution".[17] This does not mean that all masculine traits are based on war but there is a warrior masculinity that is emphasized during wartime. Gender politics researcher Shira Tarrant argues that this warrior masculinity is

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[15] Kimmel, *Handbook of Masculinities*, 3.
[16] R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," in *Gender and Society* 2005 19, no. 6 (Dec., 2005), 832.
[17] Kimberly Hutchings, "Making Sense of Masculinity and War", in *Men and Masculinities* 10, no. 4 (June 2008), 389-404.

"reinscribed and reinforced through military conflicts".[18] I argue that Hollywood also supported this the warrior masculinity through its combat films, and it was seen as necessary for the war effort that they do so. Feminist theorist Nancy Hartsock claims that masculinity is the cause of war,[19] while gender and war researcher Joshua S. Goldstein claims that war forces societies to produce masculine men.[20] My own argument employs a combination of both theories: conventional masculinity enables war and war reinforces conventional masculinity.

The link between masculinity and violence is one that has long existed in American society, but during wartime it is necessary to re-emphasize that link. Feminist theorist and philosopher Kimberly Hutchings claims that war anchors masculinity by "providing a fixed reference point for any negotiation or renegotiation".[21] The masculine traits imitated during wartime have been outlined individually by multiple historians, for example: Carol Cohn's male archetype is that of the unemotional, rational and calculating man;[22] Jean Bethke Elshtain's archetype is that of the chivalrous and protective "just warrior";[23] Shira Tarrant's archetype is that of the stoic, unemotional, aggressive, and interpersonally detached warrior[24]; and Nancy C. Hartsock's archetype is that of the courageous, strong and death defying man.[25] All of these definitions of masculinity were shared by soldiers during the war according to *The American Soldier*, a sociological study of the armed forces begun in 1943 and published in 1949 to 1950. The study claims there was a varied interpretation of masculinity amongst soldiers, but the core

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[18] Shira Tarrant, *Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex, and Power*, edited by Shira Tarrant (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9.

[19] Nancy C. Hartsock, "Masculinity, Heroism and the Making of War", in R*ocking the Ship of State: Towards a Feminist Peace Politics*, eds. A. Harris and Y. King (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989), 133-152.

[20] Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[21] Hutchings, "Making Sense of Masculinity and War", 390.

[22] Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals", in *Signs* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1987), 687-718.

[23] Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), xiii.

[24] Tarrant, *Men Speak Out*, 10.

[25] Nancy C. Hartsock, "Masculinity, Heroism and the Making of War", in R*ocking the Ship of State: Towards a Feminist Peace Politics*, eds. A. Harris and Y. King, 133–52. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989), 133.

concept was shared by all: "courage, endurance, and toughness, lack of squeamishness when confronted with shocking or distasteful stimuli, avoidance of weakness in general, reticence about emotional or idealistic matters, and sexual competency".[26] What is clear from the definition of masculinity reached by these researchers is that there was a shared view that ideal men were 'hard', and any traits that could be viewed as 'soft' were viewed as feminine. Tarrant broadly sums up conventional manhood as "no sissy stuff".[27] The dichotomy between hard and soft masculinity was emphasized during World War II, with soldiers appearing hard and non-soldiers appearing soft; the war transformed masculinity as wartime mobilization and the drafting of American men changed gender and social attitudes.[28]

One area of Hollywood film history that has been largely overlooked by historians is the primary focus of my thesis: the effect the war had on the presentation of masculinity and violence in Hollywood films and vice versa. World War II's effect on film censorship and violence has not been fully explored. Studies have been undertaken on the history of violence in film, and masculinity in film, but none that specifically look at how one influenced the other during the war. Historian J. David Slocum points out that "only sporadic attention has been devoted to the 'violence' represented in Hollywood's war movies".[29] I use a wide variety of secondary sources to develop the context of Hollywood from 1930 to 1950, such as Lary May's *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way*, which focuses on the

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[26] Samuel A. Stouffer and others, *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath, Vol. 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 131.
[27] Tarrant, *Men Speak Out*, 10.
[28] James Penner, *Pinks, Pansies and Punks: The Rhetoric of Masculinity in American Literary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 72.
[29] J. David Slocum, "Cinema and the Civilizing Process: Rethinking Violence in the World War II Combat Film," *Cinema Journal* 4, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 35.

broad changes that took place in Hollywood from the 1930's through to the 1950's.[30] Other

histories of Hollywood I utilized throughout my thesis include: Kristin Thompson and David

Bordwell's *Film History: An Introduction*, which provides a broad history of Hollywood film,

and provides breakdowns of the changing genres throughout the decades, along with the social

context that influenced them.[31] Using the broader context created by film historians I expand on

Hollywood's history by examining World War II, and showing just how the war influenced the

portrayal of violence and masculinity in American film.

In order to set up my argument for how the war changed Hollywood from what came

before, **Chapter 1** examines of how and why film violence was censored in the 1930's. Drawing

on the gangster genre and its role in the creation of the PCA, I argue that film violence was

almost non-existent prior to 1942. For my initial discussion of the state of both violence and

masculinity prior to the war, I examine the gangster films. Jack Shadoian's book *Dreams &*

Dead Ends: The American Gangster Film[32] provides a general intro to the gangster film.

Shadoian breaks the gangster film down into separate eras, including the pre-war films of the

1930's, the descent into *Noir* of the war years, and then the gangster films made immediately

after the war's end. *The Gangster Film Reader*[33] by Alain Silver and James Ursini also provides

an overview of the gangster film from the 1930's through to the 1970's. Violence and

representations of masculinity were not important issues for Shadoian or Silver and Ursini,

however, so I expand on both works. The popularity of gangster films was in part a reaction to

the economic troubles of the 1930's, and the public backlash against the violence of these films

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[30] Lary May, *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[31] Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell's *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009).

[32] Jack Shadoian, *Dreams & Dead Ends*: *The American Gangster Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[33] Alain Silver and James Ursini, *The Gangster Film Reader* (New York, NY: Limelight Editions, 2007).

led to the creation of the Production Code Authority. The PCA and other censor boards had a strong influence over Hollywood films from 1933 until the United States entered World War II, and this chapter explains how that came to be. The prewar films I focus on come primarily from the gangster genre because it contained the most prevalent use of violence in film before 1942–although I also mention examples of violence in non-gangster films, especially when they provoke responses from the PCA or critics. This chapter also describes Hollywood before the war so that the following chapters can show how much Hollywood changed. By the early 1900's masculinity was identified by the patriarchal breadwinner who maintained his authority in the household by providing for his family. According to Kimmell, the Great Depression of the 1930's acted as a "massive and system-wide shock to [American men's] ability to prove manhood by providing for their families".[34] However, this model of manhood had already been challenged at the turn-of-the-century by industrialization and the increase in female labor, as Chapter 1 will discuss.

Chapter 2 looks at films dealing with World War I, as well as the few anti-Nazi films made prior to 1942. This chapter examines the United States' policies on the war prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 8 December 1941. World War I films had a very different tone, style, and message in the 1930's than they did in the 1940's. Comparing the different portrayals allows me to show how society's view of war had changed from the release of *All Quiet On the Western Front* in 1930 to the release of *Sergeant York* in 1941 (and ultimately how this altered society's view of masculinity).

Chapter 3 looks at how the war had an immediate effect on Hollywood. I focus on the seminal combat film *Wake Island* and argue that it started the trend towards progressively more

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[34] Kimmel, *Manhood,* 192.

violent films that weakened the PCA's censorship. *Wake Island* needs to be looked at within the context it was made, however, as the violence of the film would not have been possible without the ongoing war. Its treatment of combat, death, war, and masculinity was mirrored by subsequent films produced during the war, and reflected the drastic societal shift caused by World War II. For my discussion of the combat films, Jeanine Basinger's *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre*[35] is relied on heavily. Her research breaks down the acts of violence portrayed in the most popular combat films of the war years. While Basinger discusses the violence portrayed in this genre, she does not discuss how this violence affected other Hollywood films, or how the physical violence portrayed in these combat films was in stark contrast to what had been show before. I expand on her research by including both the context of Hollywood before the combat film was formed, while also arguing the combat film's relationship with masculinity. For Chapters 3 and 4 I also relied heavily on George H. Roeder Jr.'s *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two*[36], which examines how the American government used visual imagery (including Hollywood films) to manipulate Americans' perception of the war. Roeder looks at the censorship of photographs of the dead and wounded during the war to show that the government used images to manipulate American opinion. He also discusses the attempt to include all races, classes and gender roles in the war effort, even though segregation remained a reality. Roeder's main argument is that the image of the war held by Americans on the homefront was far removed from its reality due to the censorship of images. Any image deemed too gruesome was kept from American audiences, and so recreations such as propaganda shorts and feature films had little competition when they

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[35] Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[36] George H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

claimed to provide the most 'realistic' images of combat. I build on Roeder's research by examining the films that were censored in order to make sure that audiences did not know the true horror of the war. According to the *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry,* the Office of War Information (OWI) wanted American audiences to know that American soldiers were dying to protect their country, but they did not want to lose American support for the war be making it appear too horrific.[37] As Chapter 4 argues, throughout the war Hollywood was constantly increasing the levels of violence they could get away with showing and the OWI had to specifically ban certain depictions of violence when they were deemed too gruesome.

Chapter 4 looks at the remaining years of the war and how and why the portrayal of violence escalated in films from 1943 to 1945. I argue that images of real violence in other forms of media made it easier for Hollywood to show graphic, onscreen violence. The depictions of combat in film reflected the footage of combat being shown in newsreels and photo magazines. Audiences' demand for accuracy about what was going on overseas was reflected by Hollywood. I also look at the role women played in the war, how ideas of femininity changed during the war, and how Hollywood presented women in these major combat films. Thomas Doherty's *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & The Production Code Administration*[38] provided me with a comprehensive history of the PCA, although it mainly serves as a biography of Breen's role as head of the organization. Doherty's arguments are based around the PCA's Catholic-driven crusade to improve American morals through strict censorship. Films that showed violence were feared to encourage violence, and thus had no place in the PCA's vision of a

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[37] Office of War Information. *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301 (Accessed 7 October 2011)
[38] Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

Catholic United States. Gregory D. Black's *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies*[39] discusses the OWI and its censorship of Hollywood during the war. According to Black, the PCA and the OWI wanted "battlefield violence to be carefully contained. The PCA strictly enforced the Code's warnings against gruesomeness. The OWI encouraged a modicum of battlefield realism… but within rather antiseptic limits".[40] My thesis builds on Black's work by examining the combat films, which reflected the OWI's desires over those of the PCA's. Hollywood's initial combat films alluded to violence more often than they showed violence, but the genre increasingly pushed the limits of what the PCA would allow as the war progressed.

Chapter 5 looks at the films produced immediately following the war that dealt with violence and masculinity. While the combat films disappeared, a new genre replaced them that dealt with returning soldiers. The films dealing with disabled veterans are especially relevant examples of the changing treatment of masculinity after 1945. Many soldiers were physically and/or mentally handicapped during the war and films dealing with the social problems experienced by disabled veterans helped to reshape masculinity in the United States. The heroic disabled person challenged the idealization of physically fit and able-bodied soldiers typical of the wartime films. American society needed to find a place for the large number of disabled men within the discourse of masculinity formed in post-war America. Hollywood reproduced these discussions in its films. My final chapter also focuses on postwar films that continued to portray the same level of violence seen during the war years. The ongoing war was no longer an excuse for portraying violence, but producers continued to show violence in non-war scenarios. Although censorship continued to play a role in what films could and could not be produced, the

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[39] Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies. (*Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[40] Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968* (United States of America: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 151.

PCA had been weakened and would eventually be completely reformed. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) replaced the PCA as the dominant censorship board for Hollywood. The HUAC shifted the focus of censorship in films to issues sensitive to the Cold War (especially the fear of Communist subversion) rather than the promotion of Christian morals as the PCA had done.[41] Chapter 5 also focuses on the development of the Film Noir genre, which scholar Sheri Chinen Biesen directly attributes to the war.[42] The Film Noir genre took advantage of the loosening censorship of film violence, and I examine the genre to show how violence in film (and the association between that violence and masculinity) translated from combat films to other genres that did not deal with the war. In order to prove that the combat films were truly responsibly for an increase in film violence, I need to show that the levels of onscreen violence continued after 1945, and were encouraged for male characters while discouraged for female ones.

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[41] Larry Ceplain and Steven Englun, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community,1930-60*, (United States of America: First Illinois, 2003) xv.
[42] Biesen, *Black Out*, 1.

Chapter 1: Hollywood Before the War, 1920-1941

In order to understand how World War II affected violence on the big screen, it is first

necessary to look at how violence was portrayed by Hollywood in the decade leading up to the

war. This chapter examines the nature of violence in films during the interwar period, and

explores why and how violence was censored. The films most germane to onscreen violence and

how Hollywood chose to address the issue are three gangster films made in 1931 and 1932:

Public Enemy, *Little Caesar*, and *Scarface.* These influential gangster films were in many ways a

response to the Great Depression of the 1930's (and also a wave of gangsterism dating back to

the previous decade). Masculinity, which had been strongly associated with the patriarchal,

domesticated male wage earner during the 1920's, was challenged when many American men

found themselves unemployed in the 1930's. The high unemployment rates (25 percent in

1933[43]) of the Depression led film censors to fear that crime would appeal to the impoverished

and unemployed. Gangster films worried censors because they showed brutal acts of violence,

sensationalized crime, challenged authority, and opposed the state. Although gangster films

mainly came under attack from censor boards for their depiction of violence, it was really the

subversive ideas attached to the violence that most worried censors. The subversive ideas

contained in gangster films challenged contemporary cultural norms regarding masculinity and

American identity. Various groups within American society sought to control Hollywood's

presentation and distribution of such ideas. While *Public Enemy*, *Little Caesar*, and *Scarface*

drew large box office numbers, the films were condemned for what was considered to be

excessive onscreen violence. As a result of the violence of gangster movies, the Production Code

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[43] Irvin B. Tucker, *Survey of Economics, Seventh Edition* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2011), 261.

Authority (PCA) first established in 1930 by William H. Hays was recognized by the major

Hollywood studios in 1934. The PCA censored films and managed to keep onscreen violence to

a minimum from 1934 until the appearance of the first combat film in 1942.

A number of historians have examined gangster films. Jack Shadoian's *Dreams & Dead*

Ends: The American Gangster Film provides a general introduction to the gangster film, a useful

breakdown of the history of the gangster genre, and an analysis of each major gangster film

produced. Shadoian argues that gangster films reflected American society in the 1930's by

showing the evils of Western civilization. Moreover, the success of these films showed society's

fascination with criminals. Historians Gregory D. Black, Clayton R. Koppes, Jonathan Munby,

Richard Maltby and Robert L. Griswold examine how the gangster film led to the PCA's control

over Hollywood for nearly a decade.[1]

Censors argued that films based on criminals led to an increase in crime, and blamed the

studios for misguiding young audiences. Black argues that "more than any other genre, the

gangster film created problems for [industry censors] in reconciling the code with drama".[2]

Black and Koppes argue that during the war Roosevelt's administration had a strong hand in the

censorship and manipulation of Hollywood even though the general public were unaware of it.

Black and Koppes also point out the extraordinary amount of freedom Hollywood had with their

films considering the government's desire to stifle any dissenting opinions about the war. Munby

claims that censorship was aimed at maintaining the status quo of America while also avoiding

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[1] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990); John Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); Richard Maltby, "The Spectacle of Criminality", in *Violence and American Cinema*, John David Slocum, ed. (New York: AFI Film Readers, 2001), 117-152.
[2] Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies.* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 108.

degeneracy. This degeneracy was rooted in the Great Depression. There was a fear during the Depression that poverty would lead to a rise in crime, and the PCA was adamant about censoring the gangster films as they could inspire imitation. In "The Spectacle of Criminality," Maltby argues that it was the imitability of the gangster that made the films so 'dangerous' in the collective mind of the PCA.[3] Griswold's *Fatherhood in America* focuses on the breadwinner ideal as the hegemonic masculinity of the 1920 and 1930s. Based on his work, I argue that when the capitalist system failed to ensure these fathers steady employment, extralegal work appealed to them. Censors wanted to make sure that film protagonists were representing an idyllic, moralistic model for Americans and were not encouraging degeneracy.

While crime rates may not have skyrocketed during the Depression, there was more interest in crime as a way to make a profit or to 'buck the system'. I expand on Griswold's discussion of male roles from fathers to another form of masculinity represented by the gangster. Due to its loner status, gangsterism was a clear rejection of the family and fatherhood. I explore this concept through the gangster films. Griswold relies heavily on advertisements and personal letters as primary sources, whereas I use films and the reviews of films by critics. He argues that much of the primary material he looked at focused on the marginality of fathers, and "on the material and psychological setbacks they had experienced as the Depression took its toll".[4] Although the gangsters that this chapter focuses on were not fathers, the expectations of fatherhood reflected on non-fathers as well, and the ideal masculinity remained tied to the male breadwinner.

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[3] Maltby, "The Spectacle of Criminality," 132.
[4] Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History (*New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 183.

Film Violence in the Interwar Period and the Rise of the Production Code Authority

Before World War II made the combat film popular, the most violent genre of Hollywood films were gangster movies. Released in 1931, *Public Enemy* is considered to be the first of its kind. *Little Caesar* was released shortly after, followed by *Scarface* in 1932. While many other gangster films were produced around the same time, these three films are considered the originators of the gangster genre, and had a strong impact on American audiences due to the protagonists' use of brutal violence to accomplish their objectives. While all these films made a profit, negative public attention from local and state censor boards towards these films convinced Hollywood to endorse censorship in 1934 through the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code (PCA).[5]

These three films reflected the troubled masculinity of the 1930's, as the protagonists rebelled against social norms. The gangster's violent and solitary nature challenged the popular post-industrial image of men as domesticated and patriarchal breadwinners.[6] They challenged the concept of "masculine domesticity," which historian Margaret Marsh defines as:

> a model of behavior in which fathers… take on increased responsibility for some of the day-to-day tasks of bringing up children and spending their time away from work in playing with their sons and daughters, teaching them, taking them on trips. A domestic man would also make his wife, rather than his male cronies, his regular companion on evenings out.[7]

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[5] Kendall R. Phillips, *Controversial Cinema: The Films that Outraged Americans*, (Westport, CT: Praegers Publishers, 2008), 58.

[6] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Great Britain: St. Edmunsberry Press Ltd., 2007), 25.

[7] Margaret Marsh,"Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1950," *American Quarterly* 40 (June 1988), 166. For more on masculine domesticity, also see Marsh's "From Separation to Togetherness: The Social Construction of Domestic Space in American Suburbs, 1840-1915," *Journal of American History* 76 (September 1989): 506-527.

Around the end of the nineteenth century, men began to take on more roles in the domestic

sphere, as more women were forced to find work outside the home in order to make ends meet.[8]

Industrialization and the increase in unskilled factory work caused many of the traditional

foundations of gender to be challenged, such as control over labor and domestic control over

women and children.[9] As the foundations of masculine identity changed or disappeared, there

was an increased anxiety about manhood.[10] Many turn-of-the-century men responded to the

disappearance of the separate-spheres doctrine by asserting their masculine attributes, such as

aggression, passion, combativeness, and strength.[11]

Despite the anxieties surrounding masculinity, throughout the 1930's men were much

more likely to receive higher salaries, better promotion opportunities, and more prestigious

positions than women; men also had access to more long-term employment, and continued to be

the main breadwinners in most households.[12] At the same time, the popular press generally

condemned working wives, unless the husband was unemployed at the time.[13] By occupying

mothers elsewhere, the 'feminization' of middle or lower class factory and office work in turn

increased the role many fathers played in the household. As a result many men took a bigger role

in the raising of their children, creating a supposedly more compassionate and cooperative model

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[8] According to Stephen Meyer, "removing the male traits of brawn and brain from workplace skills, Taylorism and Fordism redefined skill as the endurance of repetitive and monotonous tasks and their speedy and dexterous performance. For both craftsmen and laborers, their work became unmanly". "Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960," in *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America*, edited by Roger Horowitz (New York: Routledge, 2001), 17.

[9] Michael S. Kimmel, "Invisible Masculinity" in *The History of Men: Essays in the History of American and British Masculinities* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 10.

[10] K.A. Cuordileone, "'Politics in an Age of Anxiety': Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960," in *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (Sep., 2000), 525.

[11] Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety", 525.

[12] Sharon Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (United States of America: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illiniois, 1992), 175.

[13] Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (United States of America: Julia Kirk Blackwelder, 1997), 103.

for masculinity.[14] This model worked well, until the economic depression threatened many of these men's livelihoods, and in turn their authority in the family because it was linked to their ability to provide for the family. It especially threatened fathers' roles as providers when the mothers would have steady work and not the fathers. While masculinity was performed in a variety of ways by men of different races and classes, one unifying feature for all fathers was the expectation that they were the breadwinners. Historian Robert L. Griswold claims that breadwinning was synonymous with maturity, respectability and masculinity.[15] Of course, the exact meaning of 'breadwinner' changed according to class differences. Indeed, it meant different things to the poor immigrant working class than it did to the wealthy white Anglo middle-class fathers. While thousands of Americans from all backgrounds were forced to ride the rails looking for work, they did not all do so on an equal footing. Many poor immigrants had a harder time finding and maintaining employment and so their position as breadwinner and thus their claim for masculine authority was constantly being challenged. Throughout the 1930's non-whites were discriminated against, especially black men who were "last hired and first fired" in most industries.[16] When the economic depression hit and many males lost their jobs, the meaning of breadwinning changed dramatically. In the face of wage dependence and an uncertain job market, male breadwinners and fatherly authority were questioned.[17] Male authority was dependent on the American economy and the Depression hurt that authority, which fed into the fear of increasing crime and in turn fed into the appeal of stories about gangsters.

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[14] Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 117-118.
[15] Ibid., 2.
[16] Harvard Sitkoff, *Toward Freedom Land: The Long Struggle for Racial Equality in America* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 23.
[17] Ibid., 35.

The protagonists of gangster films, usually represented as youths, rebelled against the social, patriarchal, domesticated father model. The fear of a rising delinquency rate during the Depression was reflected in gangster films such as *The Public Enemy,* which starts off by showing the main character Tom Powers as a young delinquent in constant conflict with his police officer father. Tom's father represents the stern patriarchal figure of the 1920's, and Tom represents the rebellious youth that rejects the conventional norm. The film follows Tom's life as he becomes the complete antithesis of his father: a violent gangster. Tom's first heist goes wrong and he ends up killing a police officer, making clear Tom's rejection of his father's line of work. The film ends with Tom being killed by a police officer, the very thing he spent his life rejecting. Although there is the obvious argument being made by the film's producers that Tom is killed due to his criminal lifestyle, by establishing that his father was a police officer there is also the argument that Tom is killed due to his rejection of conventional norms and paternal authority. Gangsters offered a more violent and criminal version of masculinity that was separate from the workplace or home. The gangster lifestyle represented an alternative model of masculinity that challenged the hegemonic masculinity of the period.

All three of the gangster films I examine had similar plot lines. *Public Enemy*, directed by William A. Wellman and produced by Warner Bros., follows a couple of minor criminals who evolve into full-fledged outlaws. The two criminals begin bootlegging and get caught up in a gang war. The film's lead, Tom Powers (played by James Cagney), falls further and further into a life of crime, and becomes more and more violent as the film progresses. At the end of the film Powers is graphically killed in a gang war. His death confirms the film's message that crime does not pay. The other two gangster films follow the same general template. *Little Caesar* is about two minor criminals that grow up to be become gangsters before meeting violent ends. The

major difference from *Public Enemy* is that Rico (played by Edward G. Robinson in *Little Caesar*) is killed by a police officer instead of a rival gang member, and Tony Comante (played by Paul Muni in *Scarface*) is killed by the police in his home after Tony murders his gangster friend Rinaldo. All three of these films used violence both to entertain, and to teach the lesson that crime does not pay. Including morality messages at the ends of films helped producers defend them when they came under attack from censors. The films both glamorized and condemned the gangster figure, helping to establish the gangster as a new form of masculinity that opposed the traditional model.

The subversive ideas conveyed in gangster films brought them to the attention of censorship boards in the United States. According to Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson in their book *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, the gangster films popularized:

> a new and controversial image of masculinity. The figure of the gangster embodied a code of manliness that was hard-boiled, ruthless, and violent. Despite being a criminal and (typically) belonging to an ethnic minority group, the gangster exaggerated qualities of ideal American masculinity, particularly ambition. Gangster movies dramatize the arbitrariness and violence of masculine authority, and explore the negative side of the American dream – the drive to succeed at any cost.[18]

While the violence of gangster films served as a tangible excuse to censor them, it was the subversiveness (the gangster's desire to succeed at any cost) that incited the PCA to denounce them. Jonathan Munby argues that gangster films have the capacity to "demonize a full range of (narrative) regimes (political, psychological, moral, nationalist)", making them appear to be a social menace.[19] Even though the films ultimately condemned crime by killing off the gangster

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[18] Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson, *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, *Volume 1* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2004), 331.
[19] Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes,* 216.

characters, they still glorified the gangster and demonized those social institutions associated with authority, such as the police that were responsible for the protagonists' deaths.

The establishment of the PCA is one of the most important consequences of these films. The Production Code acted as Hollywood's self-regulation and censorship board, and put a moratorium on film violence from 1934 until 1942. The Code was created in 1930 by Martin J. Quigly and Reverend Daniel A. Lord, S.J. (although amended and revised by many other un-credited contributors). Quigley used his position as editor of the *Motion Picture Herald* (the main American film industry trade paper of the era) to pressure Hollywood into accepting his censorship.[20] From 1930 until 1945 the PCA was chaired by former postmaster general William H. Hays, and the organization was often referred to as the Hays Board due to his control over it. When the Code was first created, few directors adhered to it, and there was no way for Hays to enforce the Code.[21] However, in 1934 the studios began to enforce the Code themselves following the severe response towards gangster films by various self-appointed censorship boards.[22] Shortly thereafter individual theaters stopped showing any pictures not approved by the Code. The PCA laid down strict rules about morality and decency and emphasized that popular entertainment should not offend the sensibilities of its audience. All of the major studios agreed to follow the Code and allow Hays to have authority over what films could or could not be released. The PCA's Board of Directors viewed every film to determine whether or not it followed the Code, and did not approve any film until the 'necessary' changes had been made.[23]

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[20] Doherty, Thomas. *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 41.

[21] According to Steve Mintz and Randy W. Roberts, the Production Code was initially seen as a public relations device, and not a code of censorship. *Hollywood's America: Twentieth-Century America Through Film* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 17.

[22] Leonard J. Leff and Jerold Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 285.

[23] Ibid., 291.

Hays was the public figurehead of the PCA, but his right-hand man was Joseph Breen, a conservative Catholic journalist. As Production Code director, Breen's authority (informed by his Catholic sense of morality) was on par with the heads of the major studios.[24]

Since the earliest days of Hollywood, film censors worried that films would corrupt young minds or undermine social values. In response, the Hollywood studios of the 1910's and 1920's had their own unwritten code of principles for filmmakers to follow, but in the wake of *Public Enemy* it was not enough. The fear of backlash from groups like the Legion of Decency (also known as the Catholic Legion)[25] forced Hollywood to discard the gangster genre. Nine million Catholics pledged to boycott films that the Legion's rating board condemned, which convinced the studios to stop making gangster films, even though they were profitable.[26] Aside from the Legion of Decency, there was another major reason that the Production Code was enforced by Hollywood: the studios' fear that the government would step in if they did not censor themselves. In response to *Little Caesar*, New York congressman Fiorella La Guardia threatened to "mobilize congressional support for pending federal censorship bills".[27] It was the fear of stricter, government regulated censorship that pushed Hollywood to accept a more rigid form of self-censorship. The PCA's seal of approval allowed the studios to prove to theatre owners and audience members that they had made their films under the supervision of a censorship board. This had the dual effect of making it known to the government that Hollywood was able to censor itself while also appeasing groups like the Legion of Decency.

[24] Ibid., 66; Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Black Out: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 98.
[25] The Legion of Decency was formed in 1934. This watchdog group put pressure on films that were deemed too 'adult' in theme. Because they had a strong following in the Catholic community, they were able to influence Hollywood films to censor certain 'un-Catholic' ideas. Jay Carr, *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' 100 Essential Films*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 233.
[26] Steve Mintz and Randy W. Roberts, *Hollywood's America: Twentieth-Century America Through Film.* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010),17.
[27] Qtd. in John David Slocum, *Violence and American Cinema*, 132.

Hollywood's strict self-enforcement of the Production Code would have been impossible if the studios were not united. During the 1930's eight companies controlled Hollywood: 20th Century Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount Pictures, RKO Radio Pictures, Warner Bros., Universal Pictures, Columbia Pictures, and United Artists. Referred to as the 'Big Eight' they controlled 95 percent of all motion picture rentals and owned 2,800 of the 17,000 theaters in the country.[28] These studios enjoyed a virtual monopoly throughout the 1930's and 1940's because they controlled the distribution of films produced.[29] There were very few independently released films, and as long as the Big Eight agreed, it was a simple matter for the PCA to maintain its authority over most of Hollywood. The Code benefitted the major studios, because Breen discriminated again those films produced by independent studios, effectively supporting the monopoly of the Big Eight.[30]

The level of violence onscreen during the 1930's was limited by the Production Code with the co-operation of the major studios, and not by any squeamish or naïve audience.[31] The popularity of films like *Scarface* attested to the fact that audiences were interested in seeing violence onscreen, and it was the Hollywood studios that were limiting violent content. According to the Code: "theatrical motion pictures... are primarily to be regarded as entertainment".[32] Gangster films used violence to convey a message that did not conform to the Code's definition of 'entertainment.'. The PCA prohibited the presentation of violence in a way that might "throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a

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[28] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 4.

[29] Daniel P. Franklin, *Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006), 40.

[30] William Bruce Johnson, *Miracles & Sacrilege: Roberto Rossellini, the Church and Film Censorship in Hollywood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Inc., 2008), 140.

[31] Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Pre-code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 126.

[32] "The Motion Picture Production Code (as Published 31 March, 1930)" in Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 594.

desire for imitation".[33] Directors got around this section of the Code by claiming the violence they showed reflected contemporary social problems.[34] However, when it came to the issue of murder, there were some restrictions that the Code enforced:

a. The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.

b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.

c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.[35]

While these restrictions could realistically be enforced during peacetime, this section of the Code would become increasingly difficult to follow when studios set out to make realistic war films in 1942, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Starting with prohibition in 1920 there was a marked increase in organized crime and in the number of public gangster figures, such as Al Capone and Lucky Luciano.[36] Criminal life during the Depression would have had greater appeal to American audiences, as there was a popular fear that many men were forced by circumstances to resort to crime (even though it appears there was no real increase in national crime rates).[37] The less than attractive and violent means by which gangsters in the films achieved their 'success' was easy for audiences to overlook for the sake of entertainment. These films subverted the traditional rags to riches stories that appealed to audiences. The gangster character had mass appeal because his struggle for success did not follow the established rules and worked outside of societal norms. Additionally,

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[33] Ibid.,594.

[34] Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 233.

[35] "The Motion Picture Production Code," 594-595.

[36] Jay S. Albanese claims that: "Prohibition is probably more responsible than any single event for the emergence of strong organized crime groups." *Organized Crime in Our Times* (Burglington, M.A.: Elsevier, Inc., 2011), 136.

[37] Jed Handelsman Shugerman, *The People's Courts: Pursuing Judicial Independence in America* (United States of America: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2012), 183.

because Prohibition was generally unpopular, the gangster's rebellion against it through

bootlegging made him an appealing anti-hero for male viewers.

The gangster films were a direct reflection of the economic and social atmosphere of the

1930's. The Great Depression was a worldwide economic depression that began with the stock

market crash of October 1929. It threatened the authority of American manhood through

declining wages and increasing unemployment.[38] Masculinity studies scholar Michael Kimmel

claims that "never before had American men experienced such a massive and system-wide shock

to their ability to prove manhood by providing for their families".[39] Unemployment shot up from

3.2 percent in 1929 to 24.9 percent in 1933,[40] resulting in millions of out of work fathers that

saw their sense of manhood and personal identity crushed by their loss of jobs and income.[41] To

fail at breadwinning was equated with failing as a man, and this was now the reality for almost a

quarter of the working population. Kimmel also argues that the Depression was emasculating

both at home and at work, making men 'impotent patriarchs'.[42] One of the worst impacts of the

Depression was psychological. Unemployed fathers became "morose, depressed, abusive or

suicidal" over their inability to provide for their families, causing many fathers to abandon their

homes in disgrace.[43] Widespread unemployment created a sense of distrust among Americans

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[38] Bret E. Carroll, *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia* (New York, The Moschovitis Group, Inc., 2003), 195.

[39] Kimmel, *Manhood,* 192.

[40] Robert S. McElvanie, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 75.

[41] Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 142.

[42] Kimmel, *Manhood*, 199.

[43] The number of men arraigned for leaving their families rose 134 percent from 1928 to 1931. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 151.

and made space for the appeal of a new trope of masculinity as portrayed by the amoral,

independent, antiauthoritarian gangster.[44]

While the 1930's are defined by the economic depression, the moral depression that

resulted explains why the gangster genre appealed to American men. The loss of jobs forced

many men who were socially obligated to feed and clothe their families to consider extralegal

ways to get money. Jack Shadoian claims that the economic crisis "created some desperate

fantasies," of which the gangster was one.[45] In this context, respectable American masculinity

was corrupted by the Depression. A new and complicated masculinity arose during this period,

fueled by the economic collapse. Prior to the 1930's the male protagonists of most (but not all)

films conformed to the image of a respectable and moral patriarchal figure, but the chaos of the

economic collapse made this an unrealistic and often unattainable icon.[46] The crude, aggressive

and violent gangster films became box office hits because the characters were relevant and their

motivations were easier to relate to. *Hollywood Reporter*, an entertainment magazine, stated that

"exhibitors throughout the country are ready to take their chances with the small minority of their

patrons who have squawked the loudest when shown anything with a gangster element in it".[47]

While the average American male was not a violent criminal, the allure of the rich gangster

lifestyle was a fantasy that entertained audiences. Although there was a vocal group that

denounced the violence of the gangster films, they were extremely profitable nonetheless.

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[44] Nadine Klemens, *Gangster Mythology in Howard Hawks' 'Scarface - Shame of the Nation'*, (Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand GmbH, 2003), 1.

[45] Jack Shadoian, *Dreams & Dead Ends*: *The American Gangster Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15-16.

[46] John C. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 61.

[47] "Gangster Opp. Bunk, Exhibs Want More," *Hollywood Reporter*, 29 June, 1931, 1.

Audiences sympathized with the gangster because there was a great deal of resentment nationally towards authority figures.[48] American citizens held the government responsible for the Depression, and authority figures that represented the state were lambasted. Hardworking Americans saw their entire lives uprooted and the government was blamed for not protecting them. The loss of respect for authority was reflected in households where men that were unable to provide for their families felt their own authority challenged.[49] Traditional patriarchy was believed to be disappearing in the 1930's as many fathers were abandoning their central position in the household and mothers were taking over. [50] The gangster film played off of this bitterness towards authority figures as the gangsters created their own hierarchies outside of the government and the household. As Peter Lehman and William Luhr point out in their book *Thinking About Movies*, films like *Scarface* represent gangsterism "as a form of male bonding and contrast[ed] it with the family sphere and the home".[51] The gangster was separate from the home and so he could not be weighed down by the weakening of patriarchal authority within the family sphere.[52] The gangsters in these films formed new families with their fellow gangsters, and thus had no biological ties. Kimmel and Aronson point out that: "the gangster's hyperbolic masculinity draws attention to manliness as a social role rather than a biological essence".[53] The gangster was separated from the family sphere, and yet he was still able to portray a form of manliness that was asserted through violence; the 'biological essence' of manliness was informed

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[48] William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1930s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 188.

[49] Steve Mintz "From Patriarchy to Androgyny and Other Myths: Placing Men's Family Roles in Historical Perspective," in *Men in Familes: When Do They Get Involved? What Difference Does it Make?*, eds. Alan Booth and Ann C. Crouter (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1998) , 20.

[50] Anthony E. Rotundo, "Patriarchs and Participants: A Historical Perspective on Fatherhood in the United States," in *Beyond Patriarch: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power and Change*, edited by Michael Kaufman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 72.

[51] Peter Lehman and William Luhr, *Thinking About Movies*: *Watching, Questioning, Enjoying* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 20.

[52] According to Stella Bruzzi, films in the 1930's and 1940's were "overly preoccupied with the weak father." *Bringing Up Daddy*, 32.

[53] Kimmel, *Men and Masculinities*, 332.

by the obligation of fathers to provide for their family, but the family was not a concern for the gangster. The patriarchal aspect of manliness, which was already challenged by the Depression, was further challenged by the gangsters' absence of family and lawlessness. Through their rejection of the law, the gangsters of these films created their own authority.[54] Male audience members during the Depression, who saw their authority challenged in the household, could relate to gangsters who deliberately broke free of restricting social institutions.[55] Whereas the traditional model for masculinity was based on obligations to the family and the state through fatherhood and professional work, the gangster's authority came from his self-reliance. The gangster performed his masculinity through crime and violence, and from this he derived his own sense of authority separate from the traditional family and work spheres.[56]

According to Richard Maltby, gangster films were controversial because they were new and different rather than because they were too violent.[57] Censors worried just as much about scenes of "sexual impropriety and glamorous immorality" as they did about violence, notes Sarah Smith.[58] Since the early days of Hollywood moralists were worried that movies were exposing audiences to sin and crime.[59] Real-life gangsters dominated the American news cycle in the 1920's and 1930's,[60] and there was a possibility that the gangster lifestyle could inspire imitation

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[54] Thomas M. Leitch, *Crime Films* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 103.

[55] Barry Langford, *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Ltd., 2005), 139-140.

[56] Leitch, *Crime Films*, 103.

[57] According to Richard Maltby, violence was part of the general category of crime. It was not until onscreen violence became more excessive in the 1960's that is received its own category. "The Spectacle of Criminality," in *Violence and America Cinema*, 120.

[58] Sarah Smith, *Children, Cinema and Censorship; From Dracula to Dead End Kids*, (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 2005), 52.

[59] Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Shots in the Mirror: Crime Films and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000), 33.

[60] Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes*, 84.

and thus corrupt youth.[61] Fear of the corrupting influence of gangsterism led censor groups like

the PCA to condemn the gangster film, which in turn led the major studios to ban the genre.[62]

Jonathan Munby claims: "[a]t stake for censors was the definition of Americanness (determining

both moral and national values). The gangster film presented a dual threat to both nativist-

Protestant and Catholic moral interests."[63] Hollywood was especially aware of Catholic interests,

both because of the Legion of Decency's Catholic following and also because both William H.

Hays and Joseph Breen (who controlled the PCA) were openly Roman Catholic.[64] Gangsters

challenged "ethnic and class inequality and the terms of cultural acceptance",[65] as well as

political, psychological, moral, and nationalist models; these challenges to the norm created

anxieties for censors.[66] Munby attributes a combination of anxieties to the creation of the

gangster genre: fear of foreigners, of immigrant cultures, and of the lower-class mob; fear of

working-class leisure practices, especially bars; and fear of the popular power of the visual to

demonstrate something otherwise concealed in written or 'official' discourse.[67] All of these

anxieties were embodied in the gangster films of the 1930's. What Munby leaves out of his

argument was that while all of these anxieties encouraged the fear of the gangster films, they also

challenged a broader notion of masculinity. The subversive ideas portrayed in these films would

not have worried the censors if there was not a fear that these ideas would influence American

audiences. The biggest problem with the gangsters in these films was that they were imitable and

appealing characters. However, the acts of violence were more visible and therefore easier to

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[61] Peter Lehman and William Luhr, *Thinking About Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying.* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 20.
[62] Black, *Hollywood Censored*, 124.
[63] Jonathan Munby claims that the history of the gangster genre is "the story of how the concerted efforts to contain the subversive potential of this Hollywood film form were resisted and countered". *Public Enemy, Public Heroes,* 85.
[64] Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor*, 7.
[65] Munby, *Public Enemy, Public Heroes* 104.
[66] Ibid., 92-93.
[67] Ibid., 92-93.

censor than intangible notions of morality. While there was a fear of audiences imitating the violence of gangsters, that seem fear does not appear in films where cops or soldiers are shown performing violence. Violence perpetrated by cops or soldiers in films was not nearly as 'bad' because it was legally sanctioned.[68]

When *Gone With the Wind* was released in 1939 the Legion of Decency classified the film as objectionable due to "the low moral character, principles and behavior of the main figures as depicted in the film; suggestive implications; the attractive portrayal of the immoral character of a supporting role in the story".[69] In spite of such concerns, the film won ten Academy Awards and sold more tickets than any other film in the history of the United States (and with inflation and re-releases factored in it remains the top-grossing film of all time).[70] Clearly there was a divergence between what censorship boards believed and what audiences wanted. Even though viewers were aware of the objectionable moral content of films like *Gone With the Wind* they continued to purchase tickets.

Since Hollywood studios used violence to sensationalize their films, they had to defend the immoral behaviors of the films' protagonists. The most obvious example of this kind of rationalization undertaken by Hollywood comes from the disclaimer at the opening of both *Public Enemy* and *Little Caesar*. The disclaimer states that the goal of the film is to "honestly depict an environment that exists today in certain strata [sic] of American life, rather than glorify the hoodlum or the criminal".[71] The studio was claiming that it was not their intention to promote the gangster lifestyle, but rather to teach society that crime does not pay. The films were

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[68] Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968* (United States of America: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 129.
[69] *New York Times*, 2 January 1940.
[70] Peyton Paxson, *Mass Communications and Media Studies: An Introduction* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010), 120.
[71] *The Public Enemy*. DVD. Directed by William A. Wellman. (USA: Warner Bros. Studios, 1931).

able to get past the censors despite their violent content because they contained supposedly

strong moral messages that violence was bad, even though the violence was a big reason people

went to see the movies. *Scarface* included a disclaimer similar to *Public Enemy* and *Little*

Caesar, but also a subtler in-film message later in the film. In a scene about halfway through

Scarface, a newspaper editor defends his decision to publish supposedly sensational news by

stating that he was obligated to tell the public the truth and expose crimes. The film's director,

Howard Hawks, used this scene as a metaphor about his own obligation to tell the truth about

contemporary social ills and the fear of increasing crime in the 1930's. In doing so Hawks, like

many of his contemporaries, justified his use of violence by asserting his film was a social

commentary (as evidenced by the film's opening disclaimer).

While shooting *Scarface*, Hawks worked alongside Production Code officials, even

though producer Howard Hughes wanted to make the film "as realistic as possible".[72] Hughes'

desire to portray gangsterism more realistically (especially the violence attached to it) was at

odds with the censors' new opposition to gangster films in general. The public's initial reaction

to *Public Enemy* and *Little Caesar* made the PCA change its opinion about future gangster films,

including the not yet released *Scarface*. While shooting the film Hawks respected the PCA's

suggestions to tone down the violence, but when the censorship board suggested further cuts

after the film was completed, Hughes refused. In addition to removing certain scenes, the PCA

also wanted Hughes to rename the movie *Scarface: the Shame of a Nation.*[73] Fed up with the

PCA's suggestions, Hughes released the film with its original title, without the further cuts, and

without the PCA's seal of approval. However, this prevented him from giving the film a wide

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[72] Maltby goes into more detail about the changes suggested to *Scarface* in his article *"*The Spectacle of Criminality," 117-152.

[73] Hughes would use this title when the film was released nationwide, but not for its initial release.

release. Hughes eventually gained the PCA's approval, but this was largely a result of the support

from groups advocating free speech.[74] Afterwards, Hughes was able to release the film, violence

and all, proving that the Production Code only had influence because the studios allowed it to.

Scarface's release also proved that Hollywood could get away with making films that ignored the

PCA's demands.[75] This was not a significant loss for the PCA's authority, however, and with the

exception of Hughes, onscreen violence continued to be self-censored by the Big Eight

throughout the 1930's.

Scarface made more of an impact than its predecessors partly because of the fact that its

story drew upon on the real life figure of Al Capone, but also because Hughes chose to release

the film without the approval of the Production Code.[76] Hughes, who was independently

wealthy, often worked against the wishes of the major studios. In 1931, literally all the studio

heads – Louis B. Mayer, Adolph Zukor, B.P. Schulberg, Jack Warner, Samuel Goldwyn, Carl

Laemmle, William Fox, and Joseph Schenck – were Jewish.[77] Hughes was considered an

outsider because he was not.[78] He financed his films independently and was the most prominent

outsider in Hollywood, putting him in a rare position to challenge the PCA's authority.[79] As an

independent producer, Hughes did not have to follow the same rules as other producers or

filmmakers, and even though he ignored the Production Code, he was still able to release his film

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[74] Richard Hack, *Hughes: The Private Diaries, Memos and Letters; The Definitive Biography of the First American Billionaire.* (United States, Phoenix Books, 2006), 87-88.

[75] Maltby, "The Spectacle of Criminality",134.

[76] The film was produced by Howard Hughes, who would very publically ignore the Production Code when he released *The Outlaw* in 1946, without the acceptance of the Production Code. This will be discussed again in Chapter 4.

[77] When Darryl F. Zanuck formed 20th Century Films in 1933 along with Joseph Schenck and William Goetz he was the first non-Jewish studio head, and when he bought out Fox studios in 1935 to form 20th Century Fox, he became part of the big leagues.

[78] Todd McCarthy, *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), 123.

[79] Hughes' production company, Caddo, might have been the only major independent studio film company in Hollywood at the time. Asbjorn Gronstad, *Transfigurations: Violence, Death and Masculinity in American Cinema*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 207.

in limited theatres. Hughes proved that the PCA only had power because the major studios chose to follow its dictates. Although there were outside influences acting on Hollywood (such as the Legion of Decency), it was largely the studios themselves who chose to censor the content of their films. The PCA was the studios' watchdog, and it served to keep them from making films that would not pass external censor boards or, even worse, cause the government to take a role in censoring films.

Following the short burst of gangster films in the early 1930's, violence was strictly controlled by the Production Code for the rest of the decade. While studios were willing to allow themselves to be censored to keep dissenting voices happy, there was another segment of their audience that was unsatisfied with the censorship. Not everyone agreed with the control that Hays and Breen had over Hollywood. One anonymous *Life* magazine reader protested: "What strange passion drives the Hays board… Isn't it just possible that the public is staying away from more and more movies because it is tired of moviedom's fairyland?"[80] This reader was not alone. More public figures also voiced their opinions; in a 1940 *New York Times* article Dr. Brill, the new chairman of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures (which reviewed and recommended films of 'merit'), criticized the "censorship of motion pictures and the undue emphasis placed on the alleged influence of the movies upon children".[81] He believed that "the average person knows right from wrong and therefore 'has the capacity to be his own censor'"[82]. The article ended with Brill praising the Board of Review's opposition to censorship. Despite these protests, however, the co-operation of the Hollywood studios and the PCA ensured that films remained strictly censored for so long.

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[80]*Life*, 3 August 1938, 3.
[81] *New York Times,* 13 January 1940, 11.
[82] *New York Times,* 13 January 1940, 11.

While the gangster film genre was put on hold after the PCA crackdown in 1934, other films continued to draw on often ambivalent and complicated forms of masculinity during the Depression. *Gone With the Wind,* released in 1939, was the most commercially successful movie of its era. Due to its success, Clark Gable's character, Rhett Butler, became representative of an ideal masculinity, even if it did not portray a contemporary one[83]. Butler exemplified the roguish and morally ambivalent protagonists that had been popular in the gangster films. Although Butler was far removed from the criminal protagonists of the gangster films, he was also a reflection of the times. Roguish leading men who refused to let women tie them down, and spouted phrases like "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn" were popular because they ignored the effects of the economic recession on the authority of men. Gangsters were the most iconic of those who chose the path of crime over the more virtuous path of hard work and family life, but as *Gone With the Wind* demonstrates, these roguish characters continued to appear in popular movies for the rest of the decade.

The War and Beyond

Difficult economic times allowed American audiences to identify with less morally sound protagonists like the those of *Public Enemy*, *Little Caesar,* and *Scarface*. The gangster films of the 1930's used violence to sensationalize the gangster lifestyle and a backlash from censors and government officials led to the enforcement of the Production Code. Hollywood used the gangster character to play on anxieties created by the Great Depression, the effects of which challenged male authority at both the national and personal level. Authority was eroded during this period, and the unpopularity of prohibition made gangsters potential anti-heroes. The

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[83] Kimmel, *Men and Masculinities*, 119.

subversiveness of romanticizing immoral lead characters caused censorship groups throughout the United States to become worried that audiences would imitate the films' protagonists. It was the gangsters' challenge to the status quo that most worried censors, but violence became the main target of censorship groups, as it was the most explicit example of immorality in the films, and could easily be removed. Hollywood accepted self-censorship out of the fear of government censorship and the fear of boycotts from groups like the Legion of Decency. Violent films were censored by the PCA from 1934 until the end of 1941, when the outbreak of war dramatically shifted Hollywood's focus back to producing violent films, and the PCA was powerless to prevent it. As the following chapters will show, the war films of the 1940's challenged the censorship of Hollywood violence even more than the gangster films did. However, as violence became more popular in films of the 1940's, the place of authority figures changed due to the patriotic imperative of supporting the war and the end of the Depression. Almost sixteen million men took up the profession of soldering during the war, many of whom had previously been unemployed (although two million were rejected for neuropsychiatric reasons).[84] The male breadwinner of the 1920's returned, but in a more violent guise. As part of their new profession these men were paid to kill or die in the defense of their nation.

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[84] David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 285.

Chapter 2: Hollywood On the Brink of War, 1940-1941

World War II started on 1 September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland, but the

United States remained neutral until 7 December 1941 when they were forced into the war by the

Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Although the country was neutral through 1940 and most of

1941, newspapers and newsreels regularly updated American audiences about what was

happening overseas and the war was a significant topic of conversation. Despite this, the war did

not become a popular topic in Hollywood films before America was directly involved. A few

anti-Nazi films were produced prior to 1942, including: *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *The

Great Dictator* (1940), *Escape* (1940), *Man Hunt* (1941), and *The Man I Married* (1940). The

anti-German sentiment of these films made them the forerunners of the combat film genre

Hollywood would create in 1942. These films were seen as quite radical when they were

released. Jack Warner led the anti-Nazi campaign onscreen, and his studio Warner Bros. also

produced four war films: *Captain of the Clouds*, *Casablanca*, *Across the Pacific* and *Desperate

Journey* in 1942. These films were influential for the combat films that Warner Brothers and the

other studios produced after 1942. Equally important forerunners were the World War I themed

films made before 1942. Although they were not as radical as the anti-Nazi films, they served as

models for the kind of films Hollywood made after Pearl Harbor. World War I was re-imagined

by Hollywood in the 1940's to justify the United States' entry into World War II, and this re-

imagining was important to the form Hollywood's new flood of combat films would take. The

release of Warner Bros.' pro-war *Sergeant York* in 1941 marked a major reversal in how

Hollywood had interpreted war after World War I. In terms of tone it was the complete opposite

of the 1930 anti-war film *All Quiet on the Western Front,* formerly the most popular World War

I film. Through *Sergeant York*, Warner Bros. glorified war and its violence. The acceptance of violence was a necessary transition if Americans were going to support World War II.

Two of the most useful secondary sources for this chapter were Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley's *Warner's War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood* and Thomas Doherty's *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture and World War II.* Both books chronicle Jack Warner's fight against the Nazi regime through his studio's production of films that could be considered propaganda. Kaplan and Blakley argue that Warner Bros. was the first major studio to take an explicit stand on foreign policy and warn Americans about the dangers of the Nazi regime.[1] Doherty also touches on many topics important to this and later chapters, such as: the role of the Production Code Administration (PCA), government propaganda films, and the portrayal of women and minorities in films of the period. Doherty argues that Washington and Hollywood had an alliance during the war to maintain morale through film. I argue that this was a shaky alliance or convience that only existed due to Hollywood's desire to profit from popular enthusiasm for the war effort.

For my discussion of American foreign policy I drew on Thomas H. Buckley and Edwin B. Strong's *American Foreign and National Security Policies, 1914-1945*. The book outlines developments in American foreign relations and military strategy, and argues that from 1914 to 1945 the United States shifted back and forth between traditional isolationism and moral expansionism. I suggest that foreign policy influenced the kind of films Hollywood was willing to make as the PCA prevented pro-war films from being made until after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The sections of this chapter that deal with war films are constructed mainly from primary research, using film reviews, news articles, and analyses of the films themselves. The

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[1] Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley, *Warner's War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood* (United States of America: The Norman Lear Center Press, 2004), 49.

film reviews and articles of critics Frank S. Nugent and Bosley Crowther from the *New York Times* were the most valuable resource for showing the popular perception of these films when they were released.

Media Discussions about the War during the Interwar Period

From 1937 to 1941, the United States remained an observer of the war in Europe and Asia. During this period, the Hollywood studios largely avoided producing films that depicted the war overseas. While the war was being discussed in different American media, for the most part it went unaddressed by Hollywood despite being a popular topic of conversation for many Americans. By 1941, almost every issue of the *New York Times* had war-related news on the front-page, and Hollywood newsreels, documentary shorts and features reported on the war overseas.[2] Since its establishment in the 1910's Hollywood had been a reflection of the American status quo. Issues that concerned the nation played a large role in what would be discussed in films. In the case of World War II the country's isolationist policy prevented the government from openly supporting the war in either Europe or Asia, and Hollywood followed suit because Americans were divided on whether or not the United States should be involved in the war. While the government's official policy was neutrality, discussions taking place in newspapers showed that many Americans were divided on the topic.

Even before the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the United States was very much aware of the war going on in Europe, and to a lesser extent in Asia. This act brought Britain and France to the aid of Poland. While this was the official beginning of World War II, the events leading to the invasion of Poland can be traced back to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The Treaty heavily

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[2] Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: the American Cinema in the 1940s* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 29.

burdened the German economy by making the nation responsible for all damage done to civilian populations during World War I. It imposed heavy military restrictions on Germany and took away land that had been considered German for over fifty years. By 1936 when Germany reoccupied the Rhineland, it was obvious Hitler intended to take back territories lost in 1919.[3] The war in Asia can be traced back to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, but the conflict between the Japanese Kangtung Army and Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang in July 1937 can be considered the beginning of World War II for Asia.[4] Politically, the United States avoided the war, but socially the country was very invested in what happened beyond its borders. The *New York Times,* one of the most influential newspapers in the United States, published articles dealing with issues related to the war daily from 1940 to 1941. Most days the war was front-page news, which shows that it concerned, or at least interested, the average American. Although the United States would not find itself caught up in these conflicts until the very end of 1941, Americans were aware of them before Pearl Harbour.

Following the end of World War I, the objective of American foreign policy was to remain neutral in any wars that did not directly threaten their territorial sovereignty. According to historians Thomas H. Buckley and Edwin B. Strong, isolationists "believed that America could best serve as an example of democracy and should not export democracy abroad through interventions and war. Such activities, in their opinion, would threaten, not defend, the very American values they purported to cherish at home".[5] The American government passed five Neutrality Acts from 1935 to 1941 which were intended to prevent the country from getting

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[3] Max Hastings, *The Second World War: A World in Flames* (Botley, Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004), 47.
[4] John H. Bradley, Thomas E. Griess, Jack W. Dice, and the United States Military Academy Dept. of History, *The Second World War: Asian and the Pacific* (Singapore: Square One Publishers, 2002), 207-208.
[5] Thomas H. Buckley and Edwin B. Strong, *American Foreign and National Security Policies, 1914-1945*(Knoxville: University of Tennesse Press, 1987), 115.

involved in any wars; the Neutrality Act of 1939, however, permitted the selling of war material

to countries as long as they paid cash and transported the materials themselves.[6] While

isolationism remained the country's formal policy, the United States assisted the Allies' war

effort in important ways. For example, the Hyde Park Agreement of April 1941 supplied war

materials to Canada and its Allies through a Lend-Lease program. The Agreement, initiated by

Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, was endorsed by Roosevelt, who was protecting

American interests in Canada.[7] The Agreement ended the pretense of American neutrality.

Roosevelt clearly supported Canada and thus, Britain. While the vilification of Hitler by both the

government and media did not occur publically until after the United States entered the war, a

number of prominent and vocal citizens were already announcing their hatred of Hitler and his

Nazi regime. The most vocal was arguably Jack Warner, who used Warner Bros. to produce the

anti-Nazi film *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* in 1941 during a period when most of the Hollywood

studios avoided the topic of war because they did not want to alienate moviegoers by making

controversial statements.[8]

As mentioned earlier, fear of government censorship was another reason Hollywood

censored itself. By 1940 censorship of the media by the federal government remained relatively

non-existent. Harry Hines Woodring, the Secretary of War, stated: "I have sufficient faith in the

loyalty of our American newspaper men to rely on their judgment in keeping the columns of the

press free from anything that will give aid and comfort to our enemies."[9] For the most part,

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[6] Robert A. Rosenbaum, *Waking to Danger: Americans and Nazi Germany*, *1933-1941*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010), 29.

[7] Thomas C. Howard and William D. Pederson, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Formation of the Modern World* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 148.

[8] Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture and World War II* (New York: Columbia Press, 1994), 14.

[9] "Woodring Against Wartime Censorship; Says the Press Will Protect Our Interests", *New York Times*, 31 January 1940. The Federal Communications Commission was also given more authority around this time, as the Supreme

Hollywood would vindicate Woodring's faith. Surprisingly, President Roosevelt extended his

trust to the film industry when he echoed Woodring's sentiment two years later: "The American

motion picture is one of the most effective mediums in informing and entertaining our citizens.

The motion picture must remain free in so far as national security will permit. I want no

censorship of the motion picture".[10] Hollywood's agreement with the PCA to self-censor war

films prior to 1942 reassured authorities.

The Production Code limited messages about the war in general prior to 1941. For

instance when Warner Bros. attempted to adapt the antiwar play *Idiot's Delight* in 1939 the PCA

threatened to ban it before the film was even made. The play's antiwar message was pointed out

in a letter written by Joseph Breen in March 1936, the head of the PCA at the time. In the letter

discussing the film adaptation of *Idiot's Delight,* Breen warned that the film would be banned

because it was, "fundamentally anti-war propaganda, and contains numerous diatribes against

militarism, fascism and the munitions ring."[11] The film version of *Idiot's Delight* revolves around

Harry Van (played by Clark Gable), a World War I veteran who meets Irene (played by Norma

Shearer), a mistress to a rich entrepreneur who manufactured weapons for the war. While the

play was set in Italy, Warner Bros. placed the film in a fictional country. Irene blames her

husband Achille Weber (played by Edward Arnold) for starting a war, and is left behind by

Achille in the hotel he owns as it is about to be bombed. In the end, Harry stays with Irene while

the hotel is bombed. Although the plot is clearly meant to be a commentary on war profiteering,

the final version of the film was barely about the war. Instead, the film focused on the love story

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Court agree with the government that "the Court of Appeals has no right to supervise the administrative action of the FCC." "Supreme Court Enhances Authority of the FCC", *New York Times*, 5 February 1940.

[10]*Motion Picture Herald*, 27 December 1941.

[11]Qtd. in Leonard J. Leff and Jerold Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code*, (Lexington Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 84.

between Harry and Irene, largely abandoning the play's anti-war message.[12] The PCA limited the

film's commentary and the final product did not include any of the criticism of "militarism,

fascism and munitions rings" that Breen had complained about when the play was being adapted.

Even though Warner Bros. released the film with the approval of the PCA, it was still banned in

Italy, Spain, France, and Switzerland, as Breen had warned it would be.[13]

In part Hollywood avoided war films so as to not alienate any of its European markets,[14]

but the divisiveness within the United States regarding the war likely played a role. Ideologically

it was easy for many to side with the democratic British and French over the fascist Germans, but

Hitler was a very charismatic leader, and found some support in a United States that was still

reeling from the Depression. Hitler's ability to help Germany's economy recover likely appealed

to many out-of-work Americans that also supported fascism's nationalistic ethos. Before 1942

there were Nazi sympathizers in the United States, although American politicians remained

relatively non-committal regarding Hitler's rise to power.[15] Both pro and anti-war sentiments ran

strong in the country. In its 14 January 1940 issue, *The New York Times Magazine* included an

article entitled "Should We Turn to 'Isolation'?" This article outlined the pro and anti-war

debates, including arguments by both Gerald P. Nye (the founder of the America First

Committee) and A.A. Berle Jr. (an American diplomat and part of Roosevelt's 'Brain Trust'). Nye

supported isolation and Berle Jr. did not. Nye's argument was that the United States' "power is

localized sharply in this hemisphere", while Berle Jr. observed that the United States needed to

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[12] Ibid.*,* 85.
[13] Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono,* 85.
[14] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940s: themes and variations* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 1.
[15] Peter Medding, *Jews and Violence: Images, Ideologies, Realities* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc, 2002), 102-103.

be "concerned with the rest of the world".[16] Divisive arguments like this likely discouraged

Hollywood studios from making films that chose one side or the other. As such, Hollywood

studios largely avoided films that condemned Germany. Much like the Allied countries had

avoided dealing with Hitler's fascist Germany until his invasion of Poland in 1939, the United

States decided to stay out of the war until it was forced into it. Films about what Americans

considered to be a 'European war' were not typically box office hits because they were irrelevant

to American audiences. However, there were a few notable exceptions that the next section will

look at.

Official Responses to Hollywood's Anti-Nazi Films

When Warner Bros. produced *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the other major studios tried to

stop Jack Warner because they were worried the film was too blatantly anti-Nazi. Warner was

not deterred. Historians Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley declare *Confessions* "a milestone in

American cinema" because it was "the first major studio production to take an explicit stand on

foreign policy and warn Americans about the dangers of a particular regime".[17] Warner's

determination to produce *Confessions* was due to his personal dislike of Hitler's Germany; the

result of the murder of Joe Kaufmann, Warner's Berlin representative, by Nazi thugs in 1936.[18]

Warner was unafraid to criticize Hitler's fascist government, but the other major studios did not

share his courage or his zeal.[19] Despite being Jewish, most of the studio heads turned a blind eye

towards Hitler's objectives. There was wide-spread antisemitism in the United States and

Hollywood did little to combat this as Jewish characters were largely absent from Hollywood

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[16]*New York Times Magazine*, 14 January 1940, section 7, 1.
[17] Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley, *Warner's War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood* (United States of America: The Norman Lear Center Press, 2004), 49.
[18] Doherty, *Projections of War,* 14.
[19] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940s*, 1.

films throughout the 1930's.[20] Warner's anti-Nazi film garnered a political response from Senator

Gerald P. Nye, who attempted to have any war-themed films censored by the government.[21]

Confessions, along with four other films – *The Great Dictator, Escape, Man Hunt,* and *The Man*

I Married – were declared propaganda by Nye and were brought before the Senate in an attempt

to have them banned for their anti-Nazi statements.[22] This section will go into further detail

about Nye's attempts to ban these films, as well as the importance of each of these films.

Released in 1939, *Confessions* was a spy thriller, a popular genre at the time, and was a

box office success. The movie told the story of an FBI agent who discovers a Nazi spy ring

operating in the United States. By having some of the Nazis escape back to Germany, including

the spy ring's leader, Warner was able to give the illusion that the threat posed by Nazi spies

continued to exist even after the film had ended. In doing this, Warner hoped to bring the war

home for Americans, and to instill a fear of the Nazis. *Confession*'s popularity demonstrates the

potential for Hollywood producers to influence public opinion, although in this case Warner

failed to stir up the anti-Nazi fervor he had hoped for. In spite of its success at the box office, the

film received mixed and often apathetic reviews. According to Frank S. Nugent, a *New York*

Times film critic, "Hitler won't like it; neither will Goebbels; frankly, we were not too favorably

impressed either".[23] Nugent recognized that the film was made to push a political agenda, and

complained that "its editorial bias, however justified, has carried it to several childish

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[20] K.R. M. Short, "Hollywood Fights Anti-Semitism, 1940-1945", in *Film & Radio Propaganda in World War II*, edited by K.R.M. Short (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd.m 1983), 147.

[21] Nicholas Sammond and Chandra Mukerji, "What You Are… I Wouldn't Eat," in *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness*, edited by Daniel Bernardi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 16.

[22] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 44.

[23] Frank S. Nugent, " THE SCREEN; The Warners Make Faces at Hitler in 'Confessions of a Nazi Spy' – 'Cisco Kid Returns' to Roxy", *New York Times*, 29 April 1939.

extremes".[24] The over-vilification of the Nazi party in particular prevented Nugent from accepting Warner's message. It likely had the same effect on many Americans. *Confessions* attracted only "official disfavor and public apathy" (despite being financially successful) according to film historian Colin Shindler.[25] While the film did not produce a measurable increase in anti-Nazi sentiment or a recorded increase in fears about Nazi spy rings, Shindler's assertion is not entirely true. The film did inspire some extreme public responses, but in the opposite form that Warner intended. One example was when Nazi sympathizers burned down a Warner Bros. theatre in Milwaukee. Angry audience members in other cities also picketed theaters, slashed seats, and threatened theatre owners.[26] Overseas the film generated strong public responses as well. Kaplan and Blakley state that, "in Poland, anti-Semitic audiences hanged several theater owners in their movie houses for exhibiting the film. Nazis banned the films everywhere they could exert pressure."[27] Such reactions clearly show that the film made a strong statement. Whether or not its message reflected the beliefs of its audience in 1939 is more debatable. Historian Leonard Dinnestein, in his book *Antisemitism in America,* claims that America was at its most antisemitic in the 1930's, as "rabid antisemites, almost without exception, envisioned an international Jewish conspiracy aimed at controlling the government of the United States. They believed that unless maximum vigilance was exercised, Christian America would be lost".[28] Rather than a fear of Nazi spies, Warner could more easily convince Americans to fear Jewish influence. Libberstein blames a number of different causes for this antisemitism, from the rise of Hitler's Nazi party, to Roosevelt's New Deal, to the rise of

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society, 1939-1952* (Boston, Mass.: Routledge&Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), 9.
[26] Kaplan and Blakley, *Warner's War*, xl.
[27] Ibid., xl.
[28] Dinnestein, *Antisemitism in America*, 105.

Protestant and Catholic demagogues, to the Great Depression.[29] Although Warner's *Confessions*

gives the impression that Americans in 1941 were ready to fight the Nazis, the strong reaction

from many Americans suggests otherwise.

In response to *Confessions,* Senator Gerald P. Nye introduced Senate Resolution 152,

which accused Hollywood of violating America's neutrality through pro-war movies. The Senate

Resolution targeted movies and radio that spread propaganda which supported the United States

entry into the war.[30] Due to the actions of a few producers, Nye sought government censorship of

film; thankfully the resolution did not pass, and Hollywood remained uncensored by the

government. When Warner opposed the government's policies, he was risking this form of

censorship, and this is why the other studios opposed *Confessions*. Nye had an obvious political

agenda in trying to ban these films. Along with helping to develop the Neutrality Acts that

formulated the United States' isolationist policy from 1935 to 1941, Nye also helped to establish

The America First Committee, a non-interventionist lobby group in the United States that

attempted to prevent the entry of the United States into World War II. A group of America First

investigators objected to *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* along with other anti-Nazi films: *The Great*

Dictator, Escape, Man Hunt, and *The Man I Married*.[31] These five films were meant to sway

public opinion, as they all clearly portray Hitler's Nazi regime as ruthless and worthy of fear.

Nye's political campaign against what he believed were propaganda films was short lived and

ended when politician Wendell Willkie made public statements exposing Nye's anti-Hollywood

witch-hunt. Meanwhile, Nye's 'investigation' in conjunction with the America First Committee

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[29] Ibid., 105.
[30] Bernard F. Dick, *The Star-spangled Screen: The American World War II Film* (United States of America: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 89.
[31] Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960,* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 159-160.

was also dropped shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor totally discredited the America First campaign.[32]

Warner was not the only Hollywood figure to condemn Germany prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Charlie Chaplin, a major celebrity, also publically condemned the Nazis. Chaplin's character the Little Tramp portrayed the everyman of the era. The tramp was characterized as vulgar, tough, resourceful, and at times unbelievably strong.[33] Chaplin wrote, produced, directed, and starred in the comedy *The Great Dictator,* which was an obvious parody of Hitler. This film is a perfect example of how one man with enough money and influence was able create a film that carried a very strong political message. The film's satire reflects Chaplin's views and not the perspective of the average American. Nevertheless, *The Great Dictator* was released with high expectations. Due to Chaplin's involvement the film was very popular, and was his most commercially successful film. Bosley Crowther, a *New York Times* critic, detailed popular sentiment regarding Chaplin's film, although it may be somewhat hyperbolic:

> No event in the history of the screen has ever been anticipated with more hopeful excitement than the première of this film… no picture ever made has promised more momentous consequences… from one point of view, perhaps the most significant film ever produced.[34]

[32] Frederick R. Barkley, "WILLKIE DEMANDS WAR FILM REVIEW; Counsel Tells Senate Investigators They Should First See the 'Propaganda' Picture CLARK EXPANDS ATTACK Senator Includes Radio in His Charges of Pro-War Activities on Large Scale", *The New York Times*, 11 September 1941, 20.

[33] Lisa K. Stein, "Chaplin, Charlie (1889-1977)," in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1,* edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2004), 133.

[34] Bosley Crowther, "THE SCREEN IN REVIEW; 'The Great Dictator,' by and With Charlie Chaplin, Tragi-Comic Fable of the Unhappy Lot of Decent Folk in a Totalitarian Land, at the Astor and Capitol CHAPLIN AT THE PREMIERE," *New York Times*, 16 October 1940.

While the film did not alter American sentiment overnight, it likely influenced viewers' image of

Hitler and Germany (it won five Oscar nominations).[35] *The Great Dictator*'s impact only

increased after 1941, although some argue its effect was negative because it portrayed Hitler as a

buffoon.[36]

The other three films accused by Senator Nye of being propaganda – *Escape, Man Hunt,*

and *The Man I Married* – were not as popular as *Confessions* or *The Great Dictator*, but their

makers obviously shared Warner's political perspective. *Escape*, produced by MGM in 1940 and

directed by Mervin LeRoy, tells the story of an American who attempts to rescue his mother

from a German concentration camp, where she is to be executed. Crowther, once again won over

by an anti-Nazi film, wrote: "Propaganda? Well, of course—if you choose to label a picture

which tells a documented story with that word. But this film is something more than a shocking,

repulsive account of brutality and inhumanity directed against helpless beings".[37] Crowther's

pro-war sympathies were obvious in his review of the film and his defense of it. *Man Hunt*,

produced by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1941 and directed by Fritz Lang, is another example of

an obviously anti-Nazi film. Lang was an immigrant to the United States, having fled Germany

in 1933.[38] His anti-Nazi sentiments are made clear through this film, which tells the story of an

English big game hunter who, prior to the war, decides he is going to hunt Hitler for sport. The

movie is one long chase scene where the protagonist tries to escape Germany before the Gestapo

captures him. The movie's anti-Hitler sentiments could not have been clearer, and its plot about

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[35] Charles J. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of Star Image* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 184.

[36] Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 39.

[37] Bosley Crowther, " THE SCREEN; 'Escape,' an Exciting Film Version of the Ethel Vance Novel, at the Music Hall – Farce at Palace", *New York Times*, 1 November 1940.

[38] Although he was half-Jewish, Lang claimed to be offered the position of managing director for the entire German film industry by Joseph Goebbels. Lang turned down the offer and then left Germany that same day. Whether or not the story is true is still debated, as it is based solely on Lang's word. Gösta Werner, "Fritz Lang and Goebbels", *Film Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 24-27.

hunting Hitler was even bolder than Warner's *Confessions*. *The Man I Married*, released in 1940,

is yet another Twentieth Century-Fox film, directed by Irving Pichel. Crowther, not turned off by

the anti-Nazi messages in these films, wrote of this one:

> If we are bound to have a succession of anti-Nazi propaganda pictures… let's hope that
> they all may be as restrained in their emotions, as frank and factual in their reports and as
> generally entertaining cinematically... For here is a "hate" film which, at least, lets the
> villains speak a word for themselves, which pictures the German Nazis as hypnotized
> zealots rather than congenital brutes and which tells a simple, straightforward story
> without wild dramatics and therefore with conviction.[39]

Crowther recognized that it was a 'hate' film, but he approved of its story about an American

woman married to a German-American, with whom she returns to Germany in 1938 with their

young son. Through both her point of view and that of an American newspaper man, the

audience is shown the fanaticism of the Germans, along with images of their cult-like mass

gatherings and brutality. Through the husband's transformation from a skeptic of Nazism to a

fanatic himself, *The Man I Married* very bluntly shows the transformation of the German people.

The husband then renounces his Nazism after discovering he is half-Jewish himself. The film

both denounces the Nazi regime while also showing how seemingly reasonable individuals could

get caught up in the Nazi movement. Senator Nye labeled each of these three films, plus

Warner's *Confessions* and Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* as propaganda, but failed to prove them

as such. Instead they fall into the unique variety of pre-war anti-Nazi films that Hollywood

produced despite the majority of studios' commitment to neutrality. While these films were

unique in 1941, in less than a year the majority of Hollywood's output would share their anti-

Nazi messages. This demonstrates that Hollywood was not entirely united, and while as a whole

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[39]Bosley Crowther, " THE SCREEN; 'The Man I Married,' a Drama of Inside Germany, at the Roxy – 'Prison Camp,'
at the Rialto," *New York Times*, 3 August 1940.

the studios seemed to agree on censorship, there was always the chance of radicals pushing the boundaries of what could be shown onscreen.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, there was a dramatic shift in Hollywood. The American entry into the war led to a greatly intensified American patriotism. All of the studios rushed to produce war-themed films. Pro-war and anti-Nazi films flourished in 1942. Whereas the production of *Confessions* with its anti-Nazi themes had made Warner a rogue, after 1941Warner Bros. became the leader in the production of war films. This was especially the case in the first year of the war when the other studios were rushing to catch up with Warner, who had already produced *Confessions* and had several other anti-Nazi films well into production. His crusade against Hitler paid off as a number of films that Warner Bros. had in production in 1941 were not released until 1942, and their anti-Nazi themes became even more relevant and popular when the United States entered the war.

Combat Films, 1941 to 1942

There were only a few Hollywood films produced before 1942 that depicted Americans and their Allies fighting the Nazis and the Japanese overseas, and Warner Bros. produced four of them. While *Casablanca* was the most popular of these, *Across the Pacific*, *Captain of the Clouds* and *Desperate Journey* are better examples of war films because the main characters are soldiers. The American army was not involved with the war until late 1941, and there were few eyewitness accounts of American soldiers in action until well into 1942. As a result, Hollywood films produced before then were forced to use both the Canadian, British, and Chinese campaigns as stand-ins. These films set the precedent for the American-themed combat films that would start to appear soon after.

In the same vein as *Confessions*, the films *Captain of the Clouds, Casablanca*, *Across the Pacific,* and *Desperate Journey* carried the message that Americans had a duty to participate in the war. Michael Curtiz directed *Captain of the Clouds* in 1941*,* and his lead actor was James Cagney. Cagney played Brian McLean, a Canadian pilot, because the film was released less than two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The film ends with McLean sacrificing himself in order to take out an enemy fighter pilot. The sacrifice of Cagney's character portrays the same message that later appeared in most war films made after 1942: that death in combat was a noble and often necessary sacrifice. In the first year of the war, Warner Bros. released *Casablanca*, also directed by Curtiz. It is often credited as the best film of the war period. Set during the war, but before the entry of the United States, the film focuses on Humphrey Bogart's character Rick Blaine's attempt to escape from the Moroccan city of Casablanca after the Nazis invaded France. Blaine gets involved with the resistance movement, and the climax of the film has him killing a German major. The film was not expected to be as critically acclaimed as it was because although it had an A-list cast (the film starred Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Paul Henreid), Warner Bros. had rushed production so that the film would remain relevant to American audiences. [40] Warner Bros. also released *Across the Pacific* in 1942, directed by John Huston and also starring Bogart. The film's storyline again begins before the United States entered the war. Bogart's character, Captain Rick Leland, was so committed to joining the fight against the Axis that he enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces. After enlisting, Leland was sent to China to join Chiang Kai-shek's forces. Ending up at the Panama Canal, Leland helps to prevent an attack by the Japanese that happened to coincide with the attack on Pearl Harbor. Raoul Walsh directed *Desperate Journey*; also released in 1942, it starred Errol Flynn and

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[40] Roger Ebert, "Casablanca (1942)" September 15, 1996
http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19960915/REVIEWS08/401010308/1023 (Accessed 10 May 2011).

Ronald Reagan as Royal Air Force pilots. In this film, Flynn plays an Australian and Reagan an

American that must escape Nazi Germany in order to get back to England to rejoin the war

effort. *Desperate Journey* is a good example of the positive outlook seen in the early war films; a

view that quickly changed by the end of 1942 as the grim reality of the war reached home

through newsreels and letters. Crowther's review in the *New York Times* aptly captured the

atmosphere of the movie: "[*Desperate Journey*] sounds solemn, but the story which it labels is

certainly not. For a more fun-loving bunch of fellows you'll probably never meet than the crew

of D-for-Danny, R.A.F. bomber, which goes to blast a Nazi town".[41] Unlike *Captain of the*

Clouds, *Desperate Journey* along with *Casablanca* and *Across the Pacific* have upbeat endings.

As the war's death toll rose, honorable sacrifice in combat became increasingly important for

Hollywood to stress. Traceable back to the War of Independence, an American's willingness to

sacrifice himself in war was equated with their patriotic and masculine duty. This belief was so

inherent that during World War II pacifists were jailed or sent to labor camps.[42] Death in combat

was characterized as one of the highest honors, and something expected of all men. Many of the

combat films made during the war ended with every character dying, but the Americans would

succeed in completing their objective, and thus the soldiers died honorably and gloriously.

Captain of the Clouds, *Casablanca*, *Across the Pacific,* and *Desperate Journey* were

written prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbour, but because Warner Bros. released them after 7

December 1941, they received approval from the other Hollywood studios, the government, the

PCA, and American audiences. Warner quickly followed with the first true combat film of the

war period, about the American defeat at Wake Island. While it shared *Captain of the Cloud*'s

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[41]Bosley Crowther, "THE SCREEN; 'Desperate Journey,' a Futile Chase Through Germany, With Errol Flynn and Ronald Reagan, Opens at the Strand," *New York Times*, 26 September 1942.

[42] Bret E. Carroll, *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia* (New York, The Moschovitis Group, Inc., 2003), 104-105.

theme of honorable sacrifice, it also introduced many new themes that would become standard in combat films. *Wake Island* is the main focus of Chapter 3.

Re-visualizing World War I

For close to two decades World War I had been depicted as a mad slaughterhouse, a waste of human life, and a pyrrhic victory. When the United States entered World War II, it was necessary for Americans to re-imagine World War I. In order to justify the current war, Hollywood had to grapple with the memory of the previous one, and the notion that violence was futile and pacifism was noble. This was made difficult because Hollywood had spent the 1920's and 1930's producing anti-war films, the most notable of which was *All Quiet on the Western Front,* released in 1930 by Universal Pictures and directed by Lewis Milestone. Released over a decade after the end of World War I, *All Quiet* presented a gruesome depiction of World War I and was based on a celebrated novel by a German veteran of the front. *All Quiet* (written by a German veteran) told the story of a German soldier's perspective, and it focused on the horrors of war. The film was bleak and argued that there was absolutely no justification for war. Seen from the point-of-view of a German soldier, the penultimate scene of the film involves the main character Paul Baümer (played by Lew Ayres) reaching out to touch a butterfly when he is shot unexpectedly, demonstrating the senselessness of the war. At the end of the film Paul states that: "When it comes to dying for your country, it's better not to die at all".[43] Harold Bloom, noted literary critic, claims that the book the film was based on was regarded by veterans as a "manifestation of the malaise that had engulfed the postwar world, as a symptom of the spirit that

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[43] *All Quiet on the Western Front*, DVD, dir. by Lewis Milestone. (1930: Universal Pictures, 2000 dvd).

had betrayed a generation and its hopes".[44] The same general feeling was maintained for the film version. Eleven years later, Warner Bros released *Sergeant York*, directed by Howard Hawks. The film stood in stark contrast to *All Quiet*. While *Sergeant York* was also a World War I film, it had a radically different premise. The differences between *All Quiet* and *Sergeant York* were central to how radically the United States needed to shift its portrayal of war between 1930 and 1941. This section looks at the reimagining of World War I and the warm reaction surrounding the 1940 release of *Fighting 69th*, another film based on World War I. To show how World War I was viewed by Americans outside of film, this section will end with a look at the obituaries released in newspapers around 1941. These obituaries show how World War I veterans and other American citizens were being remembered for their sacrifice at a time before the United States had formally entered World War II.

In *All Quiet* there is no higher or noble purpose for the sacrifices made. Both the main character and his best friend are killed, having achieved nothing significant throughout the course of the film. The end of the film shows a new group of eager soldiers, demonstrating the seemingly never-ending cycle of death that war represents. Audiences aware that Germany would eventually lose were left with a very bleak ending. Universal Pictures actually attempted to re-release *All Quiet* in an 'updated' version in 1939 with new narration to make it anti-Nazi, but the film was unsuccessful and the studio quickly pulled it.[45] As early as 1939, the studios were trying to make films modernizing interpretations of World War I, and the failed rerelease of *All Quiet* shows that they were not always successful. A less bleak look at the war in *Sergeant York*, released two years later, would be much more popular with American audiences.

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[44] Harold Bloom, *Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 75.
[45]Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 13.

Sergeant York represented Hollywood's recasting of World War I for contemporary audiences. Directed by Howard Hawks and starring Gary Cooper, this best picture nominated film told the biographical story of World War I's most decorated soldier, Alvin York. The film glorifies York's success in killing 28 German soldiers and capturing another 132 all by himself. Crowther, who was won over by Warner's film, wrote in his review of the movie that:

> [Warner Bros.] have brought forth a simple and dignified screen biography of that famous Tennessee mountaineer who put aside his religious scruples against killing for what he felt was the better good of his country and the benefit of mankind.[46]

The film begins with York trying to get out of the war as a conscientious objector, taking the Bible's commandment "Thou shalt not kill" literally. He eventually changes his mind after reading a history book that mentions Daniel Boone. It was not until York found himself in combat that his skill with a rifle gave him the opportunity to become a hero. *Sergeant York* works as an allegory for those that doubted their ability to kill another man. *New York Times* film critic Crowther claimed that the film represented "an honest saga of a plain American who believed in fundamentals and acted with clean simplicity".[47] After praising the film, Crowther pointed out that:

> The manner in which York is persuaded to join the fighting forces and scenes of actual combat betray an unfortunate artificiality, however—in the battle scenes, especially, and the overly glamorized ending, in which York returns to a spotless little farm, jars sharply with the naturalness which has gone before. The suggestion of deliberate propaganda is readily detected here.[48]

Crowther's complaints were specific to the movie he was reviewing, but they could also be true of many of the films made about the war in 1941 or 1942. In the film, York justifies killing so

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[46]Crowther, *New York Times Directory of Film*, 75.
[47] Ibid., 75.
[48] Ibid., 75.

many men by claiming that it would help to end the war sooner, in effect glorifying the violence

of war without actually showing it onscreen. York's simple justification of violence ignores the

senselessness of the war that *All Quiet* had so accurately depicted. One of the major themes of

All Quiet was the difficulty soldiers had with killing, something Hollywood ignored starting with

Sergeant York.

Yet another relevant film about World War I was the *Fighting 69th*, which is worth

discussing because of the reaction it received in New York City. The film, starring James

Cagney as Father Francis P. Duffy was directed by William Keighley and released by Warner

Bros. in 1940. It depicted the actions of an actual Infantry Regiment during the war, and most of

the characters were based on real soldiers. The film was strategically released on 24 January

1940, the 22nd anniversary of the 69th's first appearance on the front lines of France.[49] Among

the speakers at the anniversary dinner were the film's stars: James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and

Jeffrey Lynn, along with the producer Jack Warner. Many significant and high-ranking military

officers were also present. In a review by film critic Frank S. Nugent, he claimed that the film

"was having a little trouble making itself heard yesterday over the cheers and whistles of a

predominantly school-boyish Strand audience. And from what were able to hear and from what

we saw we don't know that we blame them altogether".[50] Based on his review, however, it

seems that it was the topic of the film more than its content that really got the audience excited.

Nugent wrote that:

> The picture is better if can you manage to forget the plot, with all its obvious theatrics,
> hokum and unoriginality, and think of it instead as the human, amusing and frequently

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[49] "Veterans of the 60th Recall War Days", *New York Times*, 25 January 1940.
[50] Frank S. Nugent, " THE SCREEN IN REVIEW; The Old Cagney Formula Still Prevails at the Strand in the Warner Film of 'The Fighting 69th' – Brother Rat and a Baby' Opens at Roxy ", *New York Times*, 27 January 1940.

gripping record of a regiment's marching off to war… as the personal history of Private Plunkett and How He Became a Hero it is embarrassingly unconvincing.[51]

The film set a record at New York's Strand Theatre by selling 71, 210 tickets its opening weekend, beating out the film *G-men*, which had held the record since 1935.[52] There may be a connection between the fact that both *G-men* and *Fighting 69th* were directed by Keighley and starred Cagney, but it is more likely the film's topic that made *Fighting 69th* such a hit, although it must also be acknowledged that Cagney's popularity likely had a role too, as he was Warners' top male star in 1940 and 1941.[53] The film marked Cagney's conversion from the "swaggering, self-centered tough guy" into a "team player on behalf of the war effort".[54] This conversion would be important to the war effort and a common trope in the combat films starting with *Wake Island,* which is discussed in Chapter 3. While audiences cheered the film, *Fighting 69th* took the stance that war is not glorified but rather a tragic necessity.[55] The reimagining of World War I in order to justify World War II would not begin until 1941 with *Sergeant York*.

Despite the pessimistic and downbeat portrayal of World War I for two decades, the pride taken by soldiers who had served in the war had not diminished. While *Fighting 69th* and *Sergeant York* both demonstrate that at least Warner Bros. agreed with them about the importance of World War I, veterans' pride in the war service is probably better evidenced by looking at the obituaries written in 1941. On one day in 1940, no less than five obituaries in the *New York Times* prominently mention some form of war service. One obituary boldly stated

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[51] *New York Times*, 27 January 1940.
[52] "Veterans of the 60th Recall War Days", *New York Times*, 25 January 1940.
[53] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 99.
[54] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 117.
[55] Robert Niemi, *History in the Media: Film and Television* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2006), 50.

"AIDED COUNTRY'S FORCE";[56] the obituary elaborated instead that Richard Farman had worked on the building of hundreds of planes for France during World War I. While an important and worthwhile contribution, it is noteworthy that his service during World War I was given precedence over his other jobs. Another obituary points out that one Colonel Otto W.B. Farr was a "veteran of two wars cited for gallantry at Santiago".[57]While the wars are not stressed, the fact that he was a veteran was clearly important to whoever wrote the obituary. The most interesting obituary is that of Miss Anne Browne, with the subheading "TAUGHT AT AN ARMY POST".[58] Even though it was only the children of soldiers she taught, and not during any wars, this occupation was stressed over any of her other occupations. Whether or not the stress on her service at an army post was her family's choice or the *New York Times* is not certain, but the write-up shows that it was clearly considered worth mentioning.[59] By looking at what these obituaries considered important to mention about people's lives, it is very apparent that war service continued to be an important issue for Americans, even between the two World Wars. War service and what it meant to be a soldier would only become more important in American culture after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the next chapter will look at how Hollywood dealt with the military's changing social importance. In a time when the United States claimed to be neutral, it is worth noting just how important war service remained for the average American. American audiences supported this significance through the popularity of films like *Sergeant York* and *Fighting 69th*.

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[56]*New York Times*, 4 February 1940.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] While the military was seen as largely masculine, this was far from fact. An article about women war veterans, published in 1940, not only proves this, but also demonstrates that it was acknowledged that women had served in the World War. "WOMEN WAR VETERANS PLAN TO RAISE FUND," *New York Times*, 4 February 1940.

The 1930's and Beyond

In the 1930's America's isolationist policy and the PCA prevented most major studios from producing pro-war films, although a select few films that vilified the Nazi regime were released. These films set the stage for later war films that would be fully endorsed by Hollywood, the government, and the PCA. The United States' entry into World War II created a drastic cultural change to which Hollywood studios had to adapt. Hollywood swiftly converted their films to reflect the ongoing war, and the war genre took off. Jack Warner had led the charge when it came to anti-Nazi sentiment in Hollywood and as a result Warner Bros. had a strong lead on the other studios when they all converted to producing war films after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As a result, the effects of Warner's crusade against Nazi Germany is relevant to my next chapter, which focuses on the first wave of war films produced after the United States entered the war.

The war genre is especially useful for looking at cultural change because of its ability to invoke national identity. As the difference between *All Quiet* and *Sergeant York* shows, war films tend to be re-imagined during any major national crisis or social transformation. How Hollywood films portrayed masculinity became increasingly important during the World War II, especially as these films came to present idealized images of men as soldiers. As the next chapter will show, violence in film was made popular by World War II and newsreels, which led to a corresponding increase in war films. Violence, once relegated to gangster films, would now be part of the most popular and patriotic genre that Hollywood was producing, and this would even further complicate how Americans viewed masculinity. Chapter 3 will discuss how the portrayal of masculinity and violence became integrated in Hollywood during the war. Masculinity needed

to be redefined in order to line up with what was needed for the war, and Hollywood helped to

reformulate masculinity in the succeeding years.

Chapter 3: Hollywood Enters the War, 1941-1942

Hollywood underwent a dramatic shift as a result of the United States' entrance into World War II. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 shook American society to its core. Almost overnight the nation became focused on the war overseas, and Hollywood films followed suit. The studios reacted by making the content of their films almost entirely war-based, and Warner Bros. was no longer the exception when it came to producing films that vilified Nazis. Instead, Warner Bros. led the race to produce war films. During the war Hollywood produced 500 films annually, and drew in eighty million paid admissions a week, which was well above box office admissions before the war.[1] From 1942 to 1945 war films were often top of the box office on the home-front.[2]

The policy of isolationism that dominated American international politics was swept away as the country became involved in a war in both the Pacific and Atlantic theaters. Because the United States had been divided between isolationism and expansionism, Hollywood avoided issues that dealt with either topic – with the exception of from Jack Warner, as was mentioned in the last chapter. As the war forcefully thrust the nation into being involved with international politics once again, the government needed to regulate Hollywood. To make sure that Hollywood was reflecting Washington's new foreign policy, the Office of War Information (OWI) was created to act as a go-between for Hollywood and Washington. The OWI was very different from the Production Code Administration (PCA) in its structure, but it held a similar level of authority in Hollywood, and thus had some control over the war films that were

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[1] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, "What to Show the World," *The Journal of American History*, 64, no. 1 (June 1977), 89.

[2] Notable box office hits were *Sergeant York*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *A Guy Named Joe*, *This is the Army*, and *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

produced during the war. There were many topics that Hollywood was pressured to produce films about, and also many issues that Hollywood were told to avoid. The OWI could only push Hollywood in certain directions, however, and was not able to censor the content of films directly .

The precipitous increase in war films was not driven by the government, but rather audience demand was the most influential force behind the types of films that Hollywood made. Viewers bought the tickets that drove the Hollywood economy.[3] Aside from the few examples mentioned last chapter, few films dealing with the war were made until after Pearl Harbor. If audiences lost interest in war films, then the Hollywood studios would as well. [4] Since their inception, the Hollywood studios tried to stay on top of popular trends (or create new ones). As a result, wider trends in Hollywood films have a tendency to mirror trends in American society.[5] Chapter 1 argues how the gangster film was a reaction to the Great Depression, and this chapter argues that the shift towards combat films was a reaction to changes brought about by America's entry into World War II. The combat genre was characterized by specific characteristics that started with Warner Bros.' 1942 film *Wake Island*. As such, *Wake Island* is the main film explored in this chapter as it was one of the most influential films of the era and the originator of the combat film genre.

Combat films had several characteristics established by *Wake Island*. Film historian Jeanine Basinger lists main attributes: they depict a group of ethnically diverse men during

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[3] Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 271.
[4] Determining whether or not Hollywood was making too many of these films was actually a concern for some. A number of articles were written about the issue of too many war films being produced, such as: "Continuing Top Prices for War Themes Belies Fear of 'Too Many Army Films'", *New York Times*, January 27, 1943, 3;"Army Camp Theatres Still Go For War Pix," *New York Times*, 17 February 1943; "Gang of War Pictures Worries Subsequents," *New York Times*, 28 April, 1943.
[5] Werner Peters, *Society on the Run: A European View of Life in America* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1996), 229.

wartime; a hero appears that must separate himself from the group in order to lead them; there is an internal group conflict that is resolved in order to meet the group's objective; the enemy is faceless; for most of the film women are absent; the men hold discussions of home and loved ones; the men hold discussions about conflicting national ideologies (such as democracy versus fascism); the men hold discussions about 'why we fight'; and most importantly, a number of the main characters die.[6] It is through these recurring themes that the combat film genre achieved greater significance, regardless of the meaning of the individual films. These films introduced a new version of masculinity that was directly related to the war. The masculinity of the war years underpinned by military recruitment campaigns was directly tied to males' patriotic duty to their nation and the necessity to kill in order to protect their families and democracy. This new masculinity was closely tied to the military because recruiting and training soldiers became a priority after December 1941, and as a result it was also a priority for Hollywood studios in 1942.[7] Warner Bros. was arguably the most successful studio in 1942 with its release of *Wake Island*, the first film to portray an actual event from the war. As a trendsetter, Warner Bros. helped to establish the kind of masculinity that would be emphasized in subsequent combat films.

1942 was a formative year for Hollywood as it tried to figure out how to portray the war. This year witnessed the release of many films that dealt with war related topics. Genres that had been popular before the war – comedies, romances, musicals and spy films – continued to be produced, but many used World War II as their backdrop. These films were deemed failures by

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[6] Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 56-57.

[7] Robert Eberwein, *The Hollywood War Film* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 21.

the OWI because they did not appropriately tackle issues related to the war.[8] The studios needed

to appeal to audiences while simultaneously serving the demands of the OWI and remaining

within the parameters of the Production Code. As a result many of the first war films that dealt

with America's involvement in the war failed to provide much commentary on it. In 1942

onscreen combat remained relatively bloodless, but in subsequent years there would be

increasing levels of violence in response to the demands of American audiences.

This chapter is largely comprised of analysis of the film *Wake Island*, and the critical

reaction it received. A couple of historians helped with key arguments in this section: Mark H.

Leff and Timothy Stewart-Winter.[9] Leff claims that "*sacrifice* decisively shaped the discourse of

war time politics… Most Americans conceded that they had not many any 'real *sacrifices*,' a

freighted expression largely reserved for our boys at the front."[10] I use Leaf's argument in my

discussion of *Wake Island*, where I argue that sacrifice is a key theme of the film and a trend in

all succeeding combat films. Stewart-Winter's article deals with the 1940 Selective Service Act

and how it created tensions between pacifism and male citizenship. The relationship between

masculinity and violence became a new norm, formalized through the Service Act. The new

form of masculinity, which emphasized the link between fighting and masculinity, created by the

war is another theme I argue was emphasized in *Wake Island*.

Dorothy B. Jones and Thomas Schatz helped to build the context for this section. They

both examine how Hollywood attempted to prepare Americans for the war.[11] Jones and Schatz

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[8] Mintz, *Hollywood's America*, 20.
[9] Mark H. Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," *Journal of American History* 77 (March 1991): 1296-1318; and Timothy Stewart-Winter, "Conscientious Objectors and Male Citizenship in the United States during the Second World War*," Gender & History* 19, no. 13, (2007): 519-542.
[10] Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice", 1296.
[11] Dorothy B. Jones' "The Hollywood War Film: 1942-1944," *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Oct. 1945), 1-19; and Thomas Schatz's *Boom and Bust: the American cinema in the 1940s* (New York: Scribner, 1997).

argue that the studios were not entirely successful because their films ignored the harsh realities

soldiers would face overseas. Many of the early films about war services instead focused on

comedy or romance. Bernard F. Dick's *The Star-spangled Screen: The American World War II*

Film examines the historical accuracy of films about the war. He deals primarily with the films

of the war years, but also discusses those that came after. He writes that:

> we were novices in World War II because we were uneducated; we were uneducated
> because we were unprepared. Mobilization necessitated a crash course in The
> Background to World War II. Anything that could be related to the war, was… when
> the war was not the basis of the plot, it was worked in by means of tag lines and
> prologues.[12]

Michael S. Sweeney's *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* argues that Hollywood films

were more interested in profiting from the increased interest in the war, rather than attempting to

prepare Americans for military service. Sweeney argues that there was a tension between

governments and the press due to the military's desire to release only positive war information

that would boost morale, while the press was more concerned with truth and accuracy.[13] Using

Sweeney's research I argue that the censorship of onscreen violence kept Hollywood from

accurately depicting the war and thus kept films from suitably preparing soldiers for what they

were going to face once in combat.

Richard W. Steele's article "News of the 'Good War' World War II News Management"

deals with Roosevelt's involvement in the Office of Censorship. It details how newsreels became

more graphic as the war progressed, and also how some journalists opposed Roosevelt's

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[12] Bernard F. Dick, *The Star-spangled Screen: The American World War II Film* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996)*, 7.*

[13] Michael S. Sweeney, *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2006).

management of the press. This article does not, however, make the connection between newsreels and Hollywood films. Something that is largely overlooked in the historiography of Hollywood censorship during the war period is the effect that newsreels and other media outside of Hollywood had in lessening the censorship of violence. Sheri Chinen Biesen's *Blackout* and Thomas Doherty's *Projections of War* briefly mention this point when they note that newsreels played a large part in increasing Hollywood's portrayal of war atrocities. I intend to expand on that assertion in this chapter and the next.

The Rise of the Office of War Information (OWI)

While the Production Code Administration (PCA) had been the watchdog of the Hollywood studios since 1934, the creation of the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1942 and its Censorship Policy Board challenged the authority and influence of the PCA. The OWI was created by President Roosevelt and his government to censor any communications into and out of the United States, and was officially intended to support Hollywood in the production of films during wartime. The OWI controlled all of the propaganda agencies during the war, and under Roosevelt's orders was to avoid the excesses of World War I that had given movie propaganda a bad name. [14] The studios were pressured to work alongside the OWI because Washington could forbid the release of any films that hindered the war effort. Historian Christina S. Jarvis argues that the OWI's wartime censorship policies "limited the release of pictures of war dead and presented the public with sanitized images of the war wounded". [15] Like the PCA, the OWI used both public and private pressure to force Hollywood to make the kinds of films they wanted.

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[14] Charles Harpole, in *Boom and Bust: History of the American Cinema: Boom and Bust,* edited by Thomas Schatz (New York: Scribner, 2003), 269.
[15] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 96.

When that failed, the OWI used the support of the federal government to ban any films that they did not approve of from being released internationally.[16]

During World War II, an uneasy alliance between Washington, Hollywood, and American audiences regulated how the horrors of armed conflict were to be represented on the big screen. Washington created the OWI to coordinate government information services that dealt with both the release of war news and the promotion of patriotism. Shortly after the war began, Lowell Mellett was appointed by President Roosevelt as the head of the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures. The Bureau's main purpose was to spread war messages on the homefront through posters and radio broadcasts. The OWI saw Hollywood films as one of the most effective means of delivering information about the war to American audiences. The creation of the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures shows that the government understood the importance of cinema during wartime, even though they did not take over the American film industry and turn it into a propaganda machine as was the case in Germany. [17]

There was a general lack of control over propaganda in the United States at the end of 1941.[18] This was partially due to the United States' attempt to stay out of the War, which kept them from undertaking any sort of preparation prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Initially, this lack of preparation resulted in a relatively unrestricted Hollywood. Upon appointing Mellett to head of the OWI in 1942, Roosevelt wrote: "the American motion picture is one of the most effective mediums in informing and entertaining our citizens. The motion picture must remain

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[16] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990)*,* 239.

[17] Thomas Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture and World War II* (New York: Columbia Press, 1994), 42.

[18] According to Betty Houchin Winfield: "On December 7, 1941, the administration had neither a centralized information, propaganda, or censorship agency, nor an overall commitment for one." Betty Houchin Winfield, *FDR and the News Media* (Illiniois, The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1990), 155.

free in so far as national security will permit. I want no censorship of the motion picture".[19]

Thanks in small part to Roosevelt's early intervention, Hollywood retained a degree of

independence. The relative autonomy of Hollywood studios caused problems as early as

September of 1942 when the OWI complained publically in a report published in the *Motion

Picture Herald* that, "the emphasis in the entire industry is still too much on the exciting blood-

and-thunder aspect of the war and too little on the equally important problems arising in civilian

life and dealing with basic issues of the war and peace to come."[20] While films that focused on

these domestic everyday concerns appeared towards the end of the war, for the most part

Hollywood focused on the more exciting "blood-and-thunder" aspects of the conflict.

The OWI had its own set of rules that it wanted the studios to follow. In 1942 the OWI

created a *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry.* The manual was

designed to "assist the motion picture industry in its endeavor to inform the American people, via

the screen, of the many problems attendant on the war program."[21] In 1942 the OWI possessed

very little direct control over the studios and its mandate remained advisory, so the manual

lacked the same power as the Motion Picture Production Code.[22] The OWI's lack of power

remained a problem in its eyes throughout the war, even though the OWI acknowledged that no

other medium, "is better equipped than motion pictures to enlighten the people in concrete terms

as to the nature and purpose of the enemy."[23] The only significant form of censorship undertaken

by the OWI was to prevent the export of films like MGM's musical *Panama Hattie* because they

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[19] *Motion Picture Herald*, December 27, 1941.

[20] "The OWI Critiques," *Motion Picture Herald,* September 18, 1942, 9.

[21] Office of War Information. "Title Page & Introduction," in *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301 (Accessed 11 October 2011).

[22] Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 110.

[23] Office of War Information. "Section II. The Enemy: Whom We Fight," in *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) <http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301> (Accessed 11 October 2011).

"portray[ed] the [American] armed forces in too comic a light." [24] Control over the exportation of films was the only real power exercised by the OWI, and since they were able to restrict where studios could release their films, it gave them final censorship authority. As a result, the OWI and Hollywood had to find a way to work together. It was not until 20 February, 1943, that the Hollywood studio heads finally agreed to allow the OWI to censor films on an informal basis, as discussed in Chapter 4. The fear of appearing unpatriotic likely forced Hollywood to relent to the OWI's pressure. Nevertheless, official censorship of Hollywood during the war remained minimal.

Determining the full extent of the OWI's influence on the Hollywood film industry is difficult because while there was a partnership and they produced films together, the OWI was not credited for its influence. In its manual, the OWI claimed that, "the easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds, is to let it go in through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized".[25] Following their own advice, the OWI hid their contributions to Hollywood films. Along with influencing Hollywood behind-the-scenes, the OWI also created many of its own short films in conjunction with the various offices that it oversaw.[26] Several of these short films, made with the assistance of Hollywood, were nominated for Academy Awards. One example is John Ford's critically acclaimed *The Battle of Midway*, produced by both the Navy and the War Activities Committee

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[24] Doherty, *Projections of War*, 49.

[25] Elmer Davis to Byron Price, Jan 27, 1943, Box 3, *Records of the Office of War Information*, RG 208 (Federal Records Center, Suitland, Md.), in "What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945".

[26] The OWI controlled many different offices that produced various propaganda films: the U.S. Army Signal Corps, the Army Air Force, the Navy, the Department of War, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Treasury, the Office of Inter-American Affairs, the Office for Emergency Management, the Office of Strategic Services, and the War Activities Committee of the Motion Pictures Industry.

of the Motion Pictures Industry (WACMPI).[27] The film was distributed by 20th Century Fox and won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 1942.[28]

The WACMPI, along with many different federal offices, produced many shorts in 1942. All of these films were designed to educate Americans about their roles in the war. These shorts allowed the OWI to address the general public directly. By their own admission, the OWI sought to propagandize American audiences. In partnership with Hollywood, the OWI was able to instruct American audiences in two different ways: their short films that were obvious, formal propaganda and Hollywood's feature films that were more subtle, less formal propaganda. As Hollywood's reason for making films was to entertain first and foremost, it often clashed with the OWI over what kind of films to make.[29]

A New Kind of Masculinity

World War II made the mass recruitment of soldiers necessary, and recruitment campaigns that targeted young, able-bodied men established them as the ideal masculinity.[30] Whereas Chapter 1 discussed the importance of fatherhood, during the war the focus shifted to youth and the importance of older men with experience and knowledge. In film, these young soldiers always looked up to middle-aged authority figures, played by actors like Humphrey Bogart (*Sahara*) and Cary Grant (*Destination Tokyo*). The stars of the combat films were always

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[27] The WACMPI was a group formed by Hollywood to assist the war effort by producing propaganda films and organizing war bond drives.

[28] "Reflections on the Battle of Midway: An Interview with John Ford (August 17, 1943)", in *John Ford in Focus: Essays on the Filmmaker's Life and Work*, eds. Kevin L. Stoehr and Michael C. Connolly (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008).

[29] Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War,* 120.

[30] John Tosh, "Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender," in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 31. Gender sociologist R.W. Connell claims that "hegemonic" masculinities are defined in relation to "subordinated" and "marginalized" patterns of masculinity. *The Men and the Boys.* (St.Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

men with knowledge and experience that could win the day, but only with the assistance of a crew of able soldiers to support them. The popular lone hero of the westerns and spy films lost popularity during the war, and the importance of teamwork was emphasized. While the hard-boiled masculine ideal had already existed during the Depression (as seen in Cagney's role in *G-men* or Bogart's in *Maltese Falcon),* the war's violence turned the courage and aggression of these character types into a reality for the thousands of American soldiers that encountered life-and-death situations overseas.[31]

Hollywood supported the association of masculinity and the military through the explosion of films in 1942 that dealt with recruitment, training, and service life.[32] Due to the large number of films that showed soldiers in uniform, Hollywood also stressed the association between men and uniforms. An ideal masculinity was visually represented by the soldier in uniform.[33] American society became focused on supporting and winning the war, and soldiers played the most crucial role in achieving victory. These soldiers were called on to make the ultimate sacrifice for their nation. In order to win the war, the United States needed men that were better at killing than their enemies. Men in uniform, who were expected to go off and fight for their nation, were the most important and essential component to winning, and so they were prized above everything else. As a result, the civilian masculinities were expected to support and encourage soldiers. Many civilians were transformed into soldiers, and military training was seen to transform these men both physically by making them more fit and also mentally by forcing them to adopt new codes of morality and behaviour.[34] The separation between civilian men and

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[31] Penner, *Pinks, Pansies and Punks*, 72.
[32] Mintz, *Hollywood's America*, 20.
[33] Ibid., 18.
[34] Mike Chopra-Gant, Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 99.

military men was facilitated by the soldier's uniform, which helped to ensure that military men were seen as part of an alternate and privileged form of masculinity.

The ideal soldier became synonymous with the ideal masculinity. The military's advertising campaigns placed a greater emphasis on diversity in race and class.[35] Hollywood also attempted to portray soldiers as racially and ethnically diverse in order to mirror America's fighting forces. In part this was undertaken in response to the OWI's desire to make World War II a 'people's war'.[36] Despite Hollywood attempts to depict the war as an equalizing force, there was a clear hierarchy presented onscreen in which White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) were clearly the dominant form of masculinity.[37] A hierarchy of race and ethnicity lay at the heart of how masculinity was represented by Hollywood, and reflected the dominant social norms of the day. Despite the intentions of Hollywood, it was clearly a 'white man's war' that they were presenting.

Hollywood took part in the legitimization of violence for soldiers. The violence that soldiers were expected to undertake was deemed necessary because it was for a higher purpose – defending the nation's liberty. As a result, the violence associated with war was regarded as unavoidable and a point of sacrifice and bravery. Hollywood's leading men were re-imagined as tools for mass slaughter, and their violence was justified because it served a higher purpose. Hollywood supported and emphasized the longstanding link between violence and masculinity. Soldiers needed to be willing to fight and kill, and Hollywood undertook the task of showing

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[35] Thomas A. Bruscino, *A Nation Forged in War: How World War II Taught Americans to Get Along* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 60.

[36] Office of War Information. "Section I. The Issues: Why We Fight," in *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) <http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301>

[37] Ralph E. Pyle writes that "[a]s America's first large immigrant cluster, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants played a major role in shaping the core cluster… For most of American history, non-Protestants who wanted to advance in the business and legal Establishment were forced to assimilate to an Anglo-Protestant core culture". *Persistence and Change in the Protestant Establishment* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 46.

American society why such sacrifices were required. Drawing on fictionalized accounts of actual battles, films like *Wake Island* attempted to persuade audiences that it was normal and necessary for soldiers to kill; an act that was linked to defending one's nation and home. Soldiers were often depicted in films reminiscing about their lives back home, as a potent reminder of why they fought.

Hollywood films shifted at the outset of the war from portraying a troubled and threatened masculinity shaped by the Great Depression to the patriotic, invigorated hyper-masculinity demanded by World War II. While there was no one definition of military masculinity, the prevailing characteristics according to Hutchings include "risk taking and rationality as well as discipline, endurance, and absence of emotion".[38] These are the most common character traits in the combat films of the era as well, as portrayed by actors like Humphrey Bogart in *Sahara* and Cary Grant in *Destination Tokyo*, both discussed in Chapter 4. There was a fear that the United States had become a soft and feminized nation, which was supported by eugenics rhetoric.[39] The United States needed to reinvent itself in order to stand up to the disciplined and physically strong German soldiers.[40] In part this shift took place in response to the Nazi's 'Übermensch' (Aryan superman) ideal, which was promoted by Germany's propaganda machine.[41] Since the outset of the war, the average American had received a great deal of his or her information about the German war machine through newsreels

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[38] Kimberly Hutchings, "Making Sense of Masculinity and War," in *Men and Masculinities* 10, no. 4 (June 2008), 393.

[39] Bret E. Carroll, *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia* (New York, The Moschovitis Group, Inc., 2003), 154; *Michael Kane, Modern Men: Mapping Masculinity in English and German Literature, 1880-1930* (New York: Wellington House, 1999), 112.

[40] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 19.

[41] The Nazi regime emphasized the Aryan superman as its masculine ideal. Hitler's superman was based on German historical and racial beliefs, and the Aryan soldier represented a "healthy" nation. Cyprian Blamries, *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2006), 466.

and a few German films. [42] In this context, Hitler's military successes in Europe must have

seemed overwhelming. After 1941, the American government took steps to vilify the German

people.[43] The OWI opposed the atrocity stories and hate pictures produced during World War I

because they did not help the public understand legitimate war issues. Instead they pushed for a

nuanced portrayal of German soldiers that showed them as cunning, tough, and cruel, but also

blamed their fascist government and not the people for the war.[44] While the threat of the Nazi

army was not easily diminished, building up the reputation of the American army certainly made

the threat appear more manageable. The negative masculine stereotypes of the immoral and self-

serving loner that had been prevalent in Hollywood in the previous decade (best represented in

the gangster films) were quickly overshadowed by the surge of war films that drew upon a much

more heroic and desirable portrayal of masculinity through the citizen soldier.[45] Violence was

condemned in the gangster film (delinquent youths became violent criminals) yet encouraged in

the combat films (youthful, inexperienced soldiers became battle-hardened soldiers). The

acceptance of violence between 1939 and 1945 allowed for the Film Noir genre to make the leap

from the novels and short stories that many of the films were based on.

The establishment of a standing professional army in most western nations created a

sense of pride in their soldiers. Historian Robert A. Nye points out that towards the middle of the

twentieth-century there was a shift in the ideal male body type. Soldiers, not just in the United

States and Germany but throughout the Western world, were portrayed as "more physical,

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[42] The most popular newsreel series was *The March of Time*, which was viewed by twenty million people a month in 9,000 theaters during the war. One of their segments, *Inside Nazi Germany*, released in 1938, was controversial due to its presentation of the Nazi party's plans for military and economic expansion at a time when the United States was still strongly isolationist. Jack C. Ellis and Besty A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2005), 79.

[43] For more on Hollywood's propaganda, see Robert Fyne's *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II* (Portland, OR.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997).

[44] Koppes, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 248.

[45] Ibid., 307.

sculpted, and aggressively masculine than in previous wars."[46] Historian Christina S. Jarvis

draws on recruiting posters and movies, government propaganda, and popular culture to show

that in the United States these medias conveyed ideas of national strength and determination both

on the home and warfront.[47] Such images were most often of young, white, and well-muscled

men. After 1941 these men were seen everywhere, especially in the popular press.

The OWI did not want to portray the war as an Anglo-Saxon war, despite the fact that the

OWI's propaganda drew predominantly on white soldiers. The OWI's manual told Hollywood

that: "we must emphasize that this country is a melting pot, a nation of many races and creeds,

who have demonstrated that they can live together and progress".[48] The concept of the United

States as a melting pot can be traced back to the 18th century, but it was not as apparent in

Hollywood films made before the war. In order to encourage non-Anglo-Saxons to enlist, the

OWI required studios to: "emphasize that this is a people's war that we must hang together or we

shall all hang separately."[49] Beginning with *Wake Island*, combat films attempted to include men

from a number of different classes, ethnicities, and races, but the films' stars remained white

men, in their mid-thirties, like Humphrey Bogart (in *Sahara*) and James Cagney (in *Destination*

Tokyo). These middle-aged stars were supported by younger soldiers who although strong and

brave were shown to be less capable because of their inexperience. The message Hollywood

pushed was that all men would be treated equally in the war, regardless of class or race, but

authority must be respected. The leads in these films were generally top-ranking soldiers, and

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[46] Robert A. Nye, "Western Masculinities in War and Peace", *American Historical Review*, 112 (Apr. 2007), 417–38.

[47] Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II* (DeKalb, Ill.: University Press, 2004), 56–85.

[48] Office of War Information. "Section I. The Issues: Why We Fight," in *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) <http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301>

[49] Ibid.

they demanded respect. This respect for authority was the complete opposite of the disrespect for authority seen in the gangster films a decade earlier. The protagonists in *Public Enemy*, *Little Caesar* and *Scarface* used brutal acts of violence, challenged authority, and opposed the state. In the films of the war years, American soldiers were upstanding citizens whose foremost goal was to protect their nation.

The idea of a "people's war" was in direct contrast to the kind of films that were popular in Hollywood before the war—spy, gangster, western—that stressed the individual and encouraged suspicion and mistrust about the 'other.' The combat film portrayed this new group mentality. Rugged individualism and defiance of authority and the status quo was replaced by a patriotic group of men working together, following the command structure and listening to the experience and wisdom of their elders (who were white middle-class men). Soldiers of different backgrounds cooperated and worked towards a shared purpose.

Before and after the war racial segregation was a major problem in the United States, but for the period of the war there was the appearance of equality and shared vision.[50] Though minority groups had made some progress in breaking through these barriers within the military since World War I, racially segregated units still existed.[51] Hollywood conveniently ignored this reality. The white authority figures' ethnically and racially diverse comrades played important roles because the protagonist always relied on their units in combat situations. Indeed, solo efforts by the lead characters were downplayed in favor of team efforts in combat situations. Every soldier had to be equally willing to fight and die for their country. Still, although

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[50] Thomas Cripps, "Casablance, Tennessee Johnson and The Negro Soldier - Hollywood Liberals and World War II," in *Feature Films as History*, edited by K.R.M. Short (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981), 138.
[51] John Whiteclay Chambers and Fred Anderson claim that most of the 900,000 African-Americans that served were in segregated units, though there was some integration. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.

Hollywood tried to embrace diversity, it often fell short.[52] These marginalized groups (or subordinate masculinities) were not fairly portrayed; they were more likely to die and frequently their death scenes were depicted as less heroic and therefore less meaningful.

The hierarchy created in these films follows R.W. Connell's concept that there are multiple tiers of masculinity.[53] Connell suggests that historically there has always been a hegemonic form of masculinity and multiple subordinate ones. In all of the combat films produced during the war, the lead characters were representative of the hegemonic masculinity of the time, which was white, able-bodied, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. Anyone not fitting all of these categories was treated as subordinate.[54] Americans during the 1940's were aware of this hierarchy, upheld by all the major American institutions: religion, education, military, police, industry, and mass media, to name a few of the white male-dominated areas of American life.[55]

Wake Island – Trend Setter?

Wake Island, the prototypical combat film, is violent, downbeat, and hyperactive.[56] The film did not have the same optimism as the other war films released in 1942, making it the trendsetter of a darker, more realistic style. *Wake Island* recast masculinity in light of the violence of the war, and romanticized soldiering through the heroic deaths of every soldier on the island. The film also established some of the trends unique to the combat film genre: a diverse

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[52] Mintz, *Hollywood's America*, 20.
[53] Connell, *Men*, 10.
[54] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Connell, R.W. *The Men and the Boys*, (St.Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000); Connell, R.W. *Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2002). See also Robert A. Nye, "Locating Masculinities: Some Recent Work on Men," *Signs* 30, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 1937–1962.
[55] Connell claims that in different cultures masculinities are sustained by different institutions. *The Men and the Boys*, 11.
[56] Nick Browne, *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 113.

cast that represented different types of masculinity; the justification of violence through references to patriotism and/or the defense of the home front; and the noble and worthy sacrifice of soldiers for home, nation, and teammates.[57] American soldiers were not the only masculinity represented in the film, as Japanese soldiers were also present. The Japanese soldiers in the film were represented as the opposite of the American soldier. The Japanese were demonized because they were the enemy, and their physical difference made it easier to portray them as the antithesis to Hollywood's image of the American soldier.

Wake Island, released by Paramount Pictures in 1942, was the first film to dramatize an event from the war. It depicts the military garrison on Wake Island being defeated by the Japanese following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The film's prologue embodies the glorification of violence that became typical of war films:

> America and Americans have long been used to victory but the great names of her military history—Valley Forge—Custer's Last Stand—The Lost Battalion—represent the dark hours. There, small groups of men fought savagely to the death because in dying they gave eternal life to the ideas for which they died.[58]

The link between violence and war that Hollywood constructed is clear in this introduction; it recalls famous American battles where men sacrificed their lives for the ideals that they were defending. Hollywood used the ideals of liberty and justice to validate being involved in World War II. America is labeled as female in this prologue because 'she' represents the homefront, and soldiers were fighting and dying to protect their families. More commonly, however, the male symbol of Uncle Sam was used to represent the American nation. World War II's rhetoric

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[57] Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 56-57.
[58] *Wake Island*, DVD, directed by John Farrow (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1942).

pitted democracy against fascism, meaning that the United States was fighting a hypermasculinized German fatherland.[59] Against a threat like this, the United States needed a strong male national symbol. Especially when the role of men and notion of masculinity in the United States prior to the war was one of the failed breadwinner and protector of the home (as discussed in Chapter 1).

The cast of *Wake Island* depicted Americans from all over the United States, giving the sense that these soldiers were 'average citizens' doing what was expected of them, and people of diverse backgrounds coming together for the common good. This also meant that representatives of both hegemonic and subordinate masculinities could be portrayed as part of the same unit, although in *Wake Island* it is mostly class and not race that differentiates the soldiers. The soldiers were mostly family men, with dreams of domesticity, such as the character of Randall (played by William Bendix) who after the war wanted to own a pig, chicken, or duck farm. References to the domestic dreams of these soldiers were common and necessary because they connected the soldiers to the homefront. While these films justified men killing other men, the filmmakers knew that many of the men sent overseas were citizen soldiers and not professional ones. By and large, these soldiers were fighting to protect the domestic dream that they intended to return to once the war ended. Films had to justify and rationalize for audiences why these men were being forced into life-and-death combat situations. Films used the rhetoric of country and nation to justify the war, but many soldiers needed more tangible concepts to fight for, like family, jobs and property. Soldiers were romanticized as fighting to protect liberty and freedom, and dying to keep their loved ones safe.

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[59] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 38.

Wake Island begins with several of the main characters shipping out of Pearl Harbor just before the bombing. Several women are shown here—wives, girlfriends and daughters—but they do not reappear and serve only to represent what the male characters were fighting for. While many of these combat films used rhetoric about democracy versus fascism, historian Robert L. Griswold argues that the war was about the "defense of the American home and its traditional division of labor".[60] The bombing of Pearl Harbor takes place during the events of the movie, one character even loses his wife in the attack, but the violence of it is not shown. For instance, after Lieutenant Bruce Cameron (played by Macdonald Carey) finds out that his wife has died, Major Caton (played by Brian Donlevy) gives a speech about the reasons why they fight.[61] Such discussions take place in all of the major combat films made during the war. Through this speech, Cameron's loss is used to reaffirm the necessity of war. In turn, Cameron does not wallow in self-pity, but harnesses his grief, remaining a valuable soldier to the end and fearlessly sacrificing himself to take out a Japanese cruiser. Fearlessness in the face of battle is a common theme in all of the combat films, but perhaps more so in *Wake Island* because of the film's early release. Later films, influenced by the realities of the war, allowed some soldiers to show fear, though it was more often those soldiers that represented a subordinate masculinity. These young soldiers had not yet been hardened by the war, and were thus not yet ideal soldiers. By the end of the films, these young soldiers either died in battle or survived to become battle-hardened soldiers. This concept is explored in more detail in Chapter 4 with the discussion of *Guadalcanal Diary*.

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[60] Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 162.

[61] Brian Donlevy was known for playing the tough guy in gangster films before the war, and would go on to star in many Film Noirs after it.

A common trend in combat films made during the war is the patriotic speech that justified soldiers' need to commit violence, such as Major Caton's in *Wake Island* when he attempts to justify their need to fight, referencing the death of Cameron's wife as an example of those they need to protect from the evil Japanese. These speeches, along with the common references to their domestic life, helped to present these soldiers as peace-loving family men who were committing violence out of necessity in order to protect their families. This stands in stark contrast to the Japanese, who were depicted as violent without reason – they did not fight for a greater good. In contrast, American men killed in order to protect their families or avenge their lost countrymen. The emphasis on motivating and justifying violence in these scenes seems to imply that violence, while not natural, was acceptable for the soldiers in the defense of liberty and justice. In all of these films, the American soldiers were fully capable of committing violence when the time came, no matter what their initial reservations were. While this does not accurately reflect the reality of the war, it was the reality that Hollywood created and showed the American public.

Wake Island also set the standard for films that depicted an entire combat unit sacrificing themselves for the war effort. Hollywood produced a number of combat films in which every character died by the end, although only after all their military objectives were achieved.[62] The sacrificial deaths in these films served to reaffirm the American values for which these men gave their lives.[63] Even though all the marines die, *Wake Island* it is not entirely downbeat. At one point, the Americans trick the Japanese into bringing their battleships within range of the island's cannons, and a large number of Japanese ships are destroyed. While Hollywood did not shy away from showing that 1942 was characterized by American losses, they re-envisioned those

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[62] *Guadalcanal Diary* and *Sahara* were two of the most prominent of these films, and will be discussed in Chapter 3.
[63] Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," 1296.

battles to allow for small victories by the Americans. In the real battle at Wake Island, the Americans surrendered after the first assault, which was much less heroic. This early surrender was inimical to the notion of the fearless American soldier desired by the general viewing audience. Regardless of their historical inaccuracies these films often shaped popular knowledge about real events, and to many the film *Wake Island* was seen as an accurate portrayal of this major event in the war. Indeed, in the *New York Times* Bosley Crowther referred to the film as "a literal document of the manner in which the Wake detachment of Marines fought and died in the finest tradition of their tough and indomitable corps".[64] Clearly audiences were willing to accept Hollywood's hyperbole in 1942, but as the war progressed audiences demanded the combat films were more accurate and realistic.

As one of the first films made during the war, the deaths in *Wake Island* are largely bloodless, and much of the actual violence takes place off-screen. Crowther described the way each man gave his life as if it were his natural duty: "There is no necessity for inspiring any juvenile delinquents with zeal; no unsuspected hero suddenly rockets to undying fame. Each man does his duty in his own efficient way".[65] There were no delinquents or unexpected heroes in these films; for the studios there was no question that the violence committed by these men was justified by their patriotic sense of duty. Hollywood would not question whether this violence was truly justified until after the war, a topic discussed in Chapter 5. There were no shades of grey, and the act of killing was not questioned during the war. The Allies were right to kill, and the Axis was wrong.

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[64] Bosley Crowther, *The New York Times Directory of the Film* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 78; as the film critic for the *New York Times* from 1940 to 1967, Crowther was one of the preeminent reviewers of his day, and his writing affected how many viewed these films.
[65] Crowther, *The New York Times Directory of the Film*, 79.

The film also emphasizes the importance of the uniform, which was synonymous with the soldier and important for creating a team seemingly undifferentiated by class. Early in the film it is established that Randall is to be sent home, where he plans to be married. He exchanges his uniform for his civilian clothes, which leads him to be mocked by the other marines. Randall complains to his superior that since losing his uniform, he has lost control over his emotions. The bombing of Pearl Harbor prevents Randall from being sent home after all, and he is proud to put his uniform back on. Randall's desire to be in uniform and the order and control it gives him over his emotions reflects a cultural change taking place on the American homefront during the war, wherein men in military service were linked with responsible male citizenship due to the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940.[66] By emphasizing the image of the courageous soldier in uniform, this film appealed to the soldiers in training that wanted to live up to the image of soldiers onscreen.[67]

Much can be said about the representations of the Japanese in *Wake Island*. Warner Bros. took a number of liberties in the vilification and degradation of the Japanese. *Wake Island* had the difficult task of simultaneously making the enemy appear to be objects of ridicule and as dangerous military opponents. If the film mocked the Japanese too much, it would make the Americans look weak. The same day as the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the Japanese successfully attacked Wake Island, Guam, and the Philippines, proving that Japan was a legitimate threat. Warner Bros. needed to explain away early Americans losses in the Pacific. For foreshadowing, the film portrays a Japanese diplomat coming to Wake Island prior to the bombing to bring a

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[66] Stewart-Winter, "Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker," 519.

[67] Another interesting fact mentioned by Crowther is that when he first saw the film, it was at the Quantico Marine base, and that "2,000 fighters cheered it with thunderous applause". As far as propaganda goes, *Wake Island* could be considered a success, despite portraying the death of every American soldier in the film. The soldiers that made up this audience had to know that a similar fate could await them, yet their applause showed their desire to be seen as courageous like the men in the film. Bosley Crowther, *The New York Times Directory of the Film*, 79.

message of peace; a peace that is obviously broken only shortly after. This is done in order to portray the Japanese as deceitful, especially regarding the surprise attack of Pearl Harbor. While Nazis were often portrayed as cold-blooded killers, the Japanese were characterized as degenerates and monsters.[68] In other media as well, such as advertisements and posters, the Germans received a more nuanced treatment while the Japanese were seen as evil and less than human.[69] As white men, German soldiers were portrayed as the real threat to American soldiers and potential equals in combat both physically and strategically, whereas the Japanese resorted to tactics that required trickery.[70] For the average American Japan was the truly hated enemy as they attacked the United States in the first place. In fact, 50 percent of Americans claimed they wanted to kill a Japanese soldier, while less than 10 percent wanted to kill a German soldier.[71] Hollywood films gave a more heroic representation not only to their own soldiers, but to white people in general. This reflected the racial hierarchy in the United States during the war, in which white Americans were the most dominant.

While it was not an accurate or realistic reproduction of World War II, *Wake Island* was the Warner Bros.' best shot at producing a combat film given the restraints they operated under. They still needed to worry about the PCA, while trying to make a film quickly. *Wake Island* was a trendsetter because it was the first combat film to be released. If Warner Bros. had not been the first studio to produce a combat film, another studio would have been. Succeeding combat films were not trying to imitate *Wake Island* so much as they were trying to imitate past film tropes while reflecting the same modern event.

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[68] The United States experienced many race riots and the government forcefully relocated 120,000 Japanese Americans into internment camps. Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 123.

[69] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 131.

[70] This can be seen best in my analyses of *Sahara*, *Guadalcanal Diary* and *Destination Tokyo* in Chapter 4.

[71] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*,

Onscreen Combat

News media such as newspapers, newsreels and photographic magazines affected how
audiences perceived the war. Influenced by these other media, Hollywood films adopted a more
documentary-like style in order to portray the war realistically.[72] In 1942, Hollywood tried to
prepare audiences, but failed to do so by not addressing the real problems presented by the war.
Hollywood's early war films were too unrealistic to be helpful. Instead Hollywood produced
comedies and musicals that were too light-hearted to prepare anyone for the realities of war. The
OWI wanted Hollywood to address issues relating to the war directly, and not just make war-
themed movies.

Newsreels and letters home can largely be credited for the change in tone and style of the
war films made after *Wake Island* because they forced Hollywood to replicate the war more
accurately now that audiences had more intimate knowledge. [73] In turn, this made Hollywood
films more violent. This change was inspired largely by newsreels. Documentaries from
England, Russia, and Germany also had an impact on how Americans perceived the war.[74]
Ironically, much of what was shown in newsreels was staged because newsreel crews usually
showed up after the battle.[75] The OWI supported Hollywood's increasing desire to portray
realistic films:

> Thousands of soldiers and sailors on leave are attending local moving picture theatres.
> They constitute, as they should, the most critical audience of pictures dealing with the

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[72] Mintz, *Hollywood's America*, 129.
[73] Doherty, *Projections of War*, 9.
[74] Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Black Out: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins
University Press, 2005), 73.
[75] "Action – No Camera! Complaints From Service Camera Men Who Are Not Allowed to Take Pictures*," New
York Times*, 28 February, 1943.

war. It is up to us to give them a realistic picture of army life, for they will accept nothing else.[76]

Audiences knew that the image of the soldier created by Hollywood was not entirely realistic (or at times even accurate), but for the sake of entertainment some liberties were allowed. Audiences went to the movies for escapism, and the newsreels already gave them the facts about war. Hollywood took advantage of the freedom they were given to make the war seem as exciting and heroic as possible.

The United States was psychologically unprepared to enter the war. Even worse, average Americans did not understand why the war was their concern.[77] To get prepared for the war, the first year of the United States' involvement was spent recruiting and training troops.[78] Early war films focused on the issue of preparing men for combat, while also serving as escapist entertainment that aimed to benefit the war effort by boosting morale.[79] Rarely, however, did these early films reflect the reality that American soldiers were to experience overseas. According to film historian Michael S. Sweeney, "of the sixty-one fictional war movies Hollywood produced between May and November 1942, only five showed an American combat death".[80] Many of these films were actually other genres—comedies or spy films—that had been quickly converted into war films. Optimism about the war and the United States' assured victory dominated early war films, and even found its way into the narration of the downbeat *Wake Island.*

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[76] Office of War Information. "Section VI. The Fighting Forces: The Job of the Fighting Man at the Front," in *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) <http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301>

[77] Jones, "The Hollywood War Film: 1942-1944," , 3.

[78] Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: the American cinema in the 1940s* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 138.

[79] Mintz, *Hollywood's America*, 20.

[80] Michael S. Sweeney, *The Military and the Press: An Uneasy Truce* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 89.

Hollywood had relatively few problems with the PCA during the war. The restrictions regarding onscreen violence that were enforced by the Code (as shown in Chapter 1) were greatly reduced for war films. The need to portray the war trumped concerns regarding excessive violence.[81] The OWI was less strict than the Code had been, and often the OWI's desire to promote the war was in direct conflict with the Code's attempts to restrict violence on film. Increasingly throughout the war, the OWI and the federal Office of Censorship[82] (OOC) allowed screen violence for propaganda purposes, most notably in the newsreels. This undermined the authority and influence of the PCA. Byron Price, the Director of Censorship, actually protested because he considered combat zone censorship too severe.[83] However, both the studios and the OWI remained wary of presenting too realistic and graphic a picture of the war.[84] Instead the OWI and OOC chose to increase the amount of violence depicted in films gradually, which was done alongside formulaic narratives with upbeat endings.[85] This would remain the practice throughout the war.

As the war progressed, American audiences became more aware of its realities. American audiences demanded more violence in films because it reflected their own experiences or those of their loved ones. Prior to the United States' entry into the war, the newsreels did not show dead bodies, and the Production Code ensured that onscreen combat appeared bloodless (as discussed in Chapter 1). The bombing of Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt's demand that Hollywood

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[81] Biesen, *Blackout*, 8.
[82] The Office of Censorship was set up during the War to censor communications into and out of the United States, and was given absolute discretion. More can be found in Michael S. Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).
[83] Sweeney, *Secrets of Victory,* 96.
[84] Biesen, *Black Out*, 70.
[85] Ibid., 54.

remain unrestricted, however, ensured the suspension of the Code's fight against violence.[86] In collaboration with Washington, Hollywood used images of violence to validate certain values, such as gaining revenge for the attack on Pearl Harbor, or protecting the liberty that fascists threatened. Violence was justified when it was done under the guise of protecting important American values.

Thanks to other forms of mass communication—radio, newspapers, and after 1942, *Life* magazine—Hollywood was able to get away with showing more explicit scenes of violence.[87] These other media were not restricted in the same way film was, but they were also hesitant at the beginning of the war to show or discuss violence that was too shocking. *Life*'s December 15th and 22nd 1941 issues included images of Pearl Harbor, but not of the men who were injured or killed in the bombing.[88] Nor did *Life* mention the devastation in the Allied countries that had already been at war since 1939.[89] The December 29th issue showed images of America's victory in World War I alongside pictures of Pearl Harbor.[90] Letters to the editor mentioned the soldiers who had died in Hawaii.[91] A major portion of the issue was dedicated to the war, including articles on the FBI catching Nazi spies, advertisements with Uncle Sam, and reports on Allied battlefronts in both the Atlantic and the Pacific.[92] Historian George Roeder Jr. claims that "the government prohibited publication of any photographs of the American dead… for the first twenty-one months of American involvement in World War II".[93] It would not be until 1943 that

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[86] Doherty, *Projections of War*, 57.
[87] Prince, *Classical Film Violence*, 151.
[88] *Life*, 15 December 1942; *Life*, 22 December 1942.
[89] Ibid.
[90] *Life*, 29 December 1942.
[91] Ibid.
[92] *Life*, 29 Decembe 1942.
[93] George H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 8.

images of dead American soldiers would appear in *Life* magazine, and we will see in Chapter 4

what kind of effect this had on combat films made after 1943.

Hollywood often used World War II as a backdrop for their standard mystery and action

films, rather than directly dealing with issues about the war. The OWI wanted Hollywood to

focus on issues concerning the homefront, which got little attention. Moreover, the treatment of

war service in comedies or musicals concerned the OWI.[94] The vast majority of films produced

in 1942 did not attempt to portray the war accurately . Even Warner Bros.' *Wake Island* and the

films like *Mrs. Miniver* (which focused on the English homefront) were far more embellished

than later films. MGM's *Mrs. Miniver* was the most talked about film of the year and won six

Oscars, including one for Best Picture.[95] While MGM followed the OWI's advice of focusing on

not just the "blood-and-thunder aspect of the war,"[96] they still managed to give the film some

excitement by having Mrs. Miniver capture a downed Nazi pilot. This is one of the rare examples

of women taking part in Hollywood's version of the war.[97] Like *Wake Island*, *Mrs. Miniver* was

an exceptionally unique film in 1942, when Hollywood was not yet concerned with non-combat

films. The decision by Hollywood to produce combat films was spurred on by the box-office

success of the first major war pictures released in 1942, which included *Wake Island* and

Sergeant York. Of the ten films nominated for best picture at the Oscars in 1942, six dealt with

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[94] Gregory D. Black and Clayton R. Koppes, "OWI Goes to the Movies: The Bureau of Intelligence's Criticism of Hollywood, 1942-1943", *Prologue*, 6 (Spring 1974), 44-59.

[95] Emanuel Levy, *All About Oscar: The History and Politics of the Academy Awards*, (New York: The Continuum International Publish Group Inc., 2003), 359.

[96] "The OWI Critiques", *Motion Picture Herald,* September 18, 1942, 9.

[97] Koppes, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 104.

war: *The Invaders*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *The Pied Piper*, *Random Harvest*, *Wake Island*, and *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.[98] *Mrs. Miniver* won six Oscars, including best picture.

The War Continues

In the first year of the United States' entry into the war, the definition of masculinity underwent a dramatic shift from the domesticated patriarchy of the beginning of the twentieth century that favored fatherhood. Although the paternalistic model was still present in the experienced middle aged male authority figure, war films focused on young soldiers in uniform and typically excluded fathers, who were not drafted until the last year of the war. Aggressiveness and masculinity came to be strongly associated with each other, and were regarded as essential and necessary traits for soldiers in combat. Many of the expectations of soldiers did not dramatically change from World War I: ideas of personal courage, the willingness to sacrifice for comrades, and the fear of shame or dishonor were popular tropes during the previous war. Many of these tropes were challenged by films like *All Quiet on the Western Front* during the interwar period. These tropes were even further challenged by the gangster films that had protagonists with no sense of shame or dishonor, and little loyalty to their comrades. For much of the 1930's the values stressed during World War I were neglected or purposely contested; films made during World War II, however, brought more positive and paternalistic masculine values back to the forefront.[99]

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[98] *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is discussed in Chapter 2 and *Wake Island* in Chapter 3. *Mrs. Miniver* tells the story of a middleclass English housewife and her family during the war. *The Pied Piper* tells the story of an Englishman and a group of children in France during the German invasion. *Random Harvest* tells the story of a World War I veteran with amnesia.

[99] Robert A. Nye, "Western Masculinities in War and Peace", *American Historical Review*, 112 (Apr. 2007): 417–38.

After 1942, Hollywood was asked to submit its scripts to the OWI for review.[100] By the fall of 1942 the OWI's influence could be seen through their script reviews and their *Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*.[101] The relationship between Hollywood and the OWI became more strained as the war progressed. Short of committing treason, however, the studios were allowed to produce almost any film they wanted. Hollywood's relationship with the OWI could be described as one of reluctant cooperation.[102] There were other bigger influences on Hollywood's portrayal of the war; Hollywood was primarily concerned with what sold tickets, and so they catered to what audiences wanted to see. Onscreen violence would become more prevalent, and while *Wake Island* was an important trendsetter for the combat film genre, studios other than Warner Bros. soon began to take the war seriously. The lighthearted nature of most early war films disappeared, as films like *Sahara, Guadalcanal Diary* and *Destination Tokyo* discussed in the next chapter mimicked the tone and style of *Wake Island*, with a marked increase in realism and onscreen violence.

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[100] Biesen, *Blackou*t, 103.
[101] Koppes and Black, "What to Show the World", 95.
[102] Koppes, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 109.

Chapter 4: The Combat Genre Develops

By 1943 many Americans had seen combat and reported home about their experiences. The Battle of Guadalcanal alone saw 60,000 marines deployed between August of 1942 and February of 1943.[1] Hollywood, always eager to make their films appeal to American audiences, imitated current events by making more war films. Major combat at Wake Island had ended by 1943, but other islands like Guadalcanal continued to be strategic battle grounds in the Pacific, and influenced *Guadalacanal Diary*, one of *Wake Island*'s most obvious successors. Hollywood rushed to produce pictures that mirrored the country's participation in the war since many of these combat films attracted audiences because they were topical. Films could be considered dated by the time they were released if the landscape of the war had changed too quickly. A number of films were loosely based on specific battles and theatres; air and naval battles in the Pacific inspired films such as *Destination Tokyo*, *Air Force,* and *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo.* Allied fighting in North Africa also received attention from Hollywood, and served as the inspiration for films like *Sahara*. These films represent Hollywood's best efforts to 'recreate' the war for audiences. The studios constantly struggled to portray events as realistically as possible while under the constraints of the Production Code Administration (PCA). The studios willingly followed the PCA in the pre-war years, because it prevented any films from alienating audiences, but the need to portray the war realistically forced the studios to go beyond what the Production Code allowed in terms of onscreen violence.

This chapter looks at the relationship between the Office of War Information (OWI) and Hollywood from 1943 to 1945. The OWI and Hollywood were at odds over how to depict the

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[1] *The Reader's Companion to Military History*, edited by Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 191.

war realistically while simultaneously promote the war effort. This chapter will also examine

how violence in film increased dramatically during the war, and how violence was justified by

Hollywood in its major combat films like *Guadalcanal Diary*, *Sahara*, *Destination Tokyo, Air

Force*, *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* and *Bataan*. I focus on these six films for three reasons: they

were the most popular films of the war, they shared the combat film format laid out by *Wake

Island*, and they best characterized contemporary discussions of masculinity and violence. The

studios tried hard to make their films more realistic, largely through an increase in onscreen

violence. George Roeder Jr. argues that by 1943 audiences had grown skeptical of films where

no Americans "get badly shot or spill any blood".[2] Moreover, those films based on real events

were more popular because American audiences wanted to experience the war through the safety

of the big screen, and Hollywood facilitated this. Obviously stories depicting successful battles

were more popular because American audiences related the experiences of onscreen soldiers to

their sons, husbands, and fathers overseas, and did not want to see them fail. Nevertheless, in

order to show realistic battle scenes the American death toll onscreen remained high. The bloody

reality of the war and the real cost in the lives of soldiers could not be censored from viewing

audiences.

Primarily this chapter is concerned with exploring the connections between the increasing

level of violence and the increasing militarization of masculinity from 1943 to 1945. I argue that

the combat films facilitated a new hegemonic masculinity that was seen as inherently violent due

to the war. Gender sociologist R.W. Connell points out that hegemonic (or ideal) masculinity is

defined in relation to "subordinated" and "marginalized" patterns of masculinity.[3] In her work

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[2] George H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 12.

[3] R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*. (St.Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 30.

Masculinities she argues that "violence can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in [only male] group struggles." [4] In the masculine combat space of World War II, men proved they were dominant by being more successfully violent than anyone else, especially their enemies. The gangster films discussed in Chapter 1 dealt directly with this kind of dominant masculinity asserted through violence as well, but gangsterism was not condoned by major American institutions like soldiering was. [5] After the outbreak of war the authorization of violence against other human beings was necessary and therefore violence and masculinity had to be re-imagined as positive. I draw on Connell to argue that because World War II was a war in which only men were expected to fight, violence was a uniquely male characteristic and both the military and mass media supported this ideology. Violence performed by soldiers was therefore supported by the social and economic institutions of Hollywood studios while violence by women or non-soldiers continued to be condemned. Hollywood reflected contemporary societal expectations that women would not fight, and would only play supportive roles in the war.

As mentioned previously, Jeanine Basinger looks at violence in the combat film, but she does so to prove that these films were different from what came before them. [6] I use Basinger's work to argue that through the genre of the combat film, the level of physical violence shown by Hollywood had increased measurably during the war, but was connected to the gangster films. I use her analysis of the genre as a starting point, and expand on it to show how the violence in each film both influenced and was influenced by American society. Nor does Basinger examine the gendering of violence, which is an essential characteristic of these films.

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[4] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 83.
[5] Connell also claims that "hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion". R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept", *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (Dec., 2005), 832.
[6] Basinger, *World War II Combat Film*, 9.

This chapter also includes sections on the changing treatment of race and gender during the war. For my discussion of the treatment of black actors in film I make use of Thomas Cripps' argument that the war gave African-Americans greater influence and power in both Washington and Hollywood.[7] A unified nation was needed to win the war, and so Washington encouraged Americans of all different races to serve, and Hollywood followed suit. One of the main results for this was an increase in the roles of black actors onscreen during the war, especially in the combat films *Bataan* and *Sahara*, discussed in this chapter. For my section on the changing roles of women during the war I rely on Maureen Honey's examination of the changing values of the war period, which made it socially acceptable for women to work in what were seen as primarily male jobs.[8] She also examines how prewar values quickly returned after the war, making those jobs unacceptable for women once again. This radical change in a short period is also important for my next chapter which examines postwar films.

The Office of War Information (OWI) and Hollywood's Fight Against Censorship

Hollywood studios exercised conditional freedom, as long as they were willing to cooperate with the government and support the war effort. In comparison to the propaganda machine that was the studio system in Germany, Hollywood was relatively free in terms of the kinds of films they produced during the war. While they were not forced to make propaganda for the government, the studios were required to accept some government censorship. One of the ways Hollywood contributed to the war effort was through training films that promoted war service. The most notable of these was Frank Capra's *Why We Fight*, produced at the request of

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[7] Thomas Cripps shows how films reflected Americans' changing ideas about race in *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie From World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1993)

[8] Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda During World War II* (United States of America: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1948).

President Roosevelt.[9] The various Hollywood studios also produced many training films for the

Signal Corps and other branches of the military. Hollywood studios were not forced to make

these films, but chose to do so out of a combination of patriotic duty and the good will that came

from complying with the government's requests. The most notable Hollywood supporter of the

war effort was the studio head at Twentieth Century-Fox, Darryl F. Zanuck. Zanuck was

appointed by the War Department to supervise propaganda films. He was also made a lieutenant-

colonel in the Signal Corps and a chairman of its Council for his service, and gave up his duties

as production chief at Fox for the duration of the war.[10]

Hollywood generally tried to work closely with Washington to support the war effort and

ensure victory, but the studios sometimes butted heads with the Office of War Information

(OWI) over the kinds of movies that were made. Hollywood had been collaborating with

Washington even before the war; in the spring of 1940, a group of motion picture executives

formed the Motion Picture Committee Cooperating for National Defense (which was replaced by

the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry (WACMPI) in 1941). Before the

attack on Pearl Harbor, this committee was well established and was, in fact, working with the

government.[11] Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 the studios

requested Roosevelt set up a federal office through which the government could communicate

directly with the film industry, which led to the creation of the OWI.[12] The studios helped the

war effort in other ways as well. They formed the WACMPI in 1941 with a mandate to aid in the

distribution of propaganda films.[13] The studios also helped create a national campaign where

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[9] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940s,* 5.
[10] Bosley Crowther, "War Gives Many Special Jobs," *New York Times*, 3 January, 1943.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 335.
[13] McLaughlin, *We'll Always Have the Movies,* 21.

theatres sold war bonds and stamps and movie stars went on promotional tours selling war

bonds for the Treasury Department.[14] Hollywood's conflict with the OWI was largely a result of

the fact that studios believed, rightly or wrongly, that they knew how to best portray the war, and

did not need outside advice.

Hollywood wanted to make films that focused on the excitement of combat and the OWI

wanted Hollywood to discuss civilian life and basic issues of the war.[15] A foundational event in

the relationship between the OWI and Hollywood began on 9 December 1942, when Lowell

Mellett (the head of the OWI) published a letter that requested all studios submit their scripts and

long-cut films for his approval.[16] When the studios complained, Mellett's assistant Nelson

Poynter argued that the OWI's objective was not censorship, but to avoid releasing material

harmful to the war effort.[17] Poynter also stated that in some cases, such as with Paramount's *For

Whom the Bell Tolls*, the government was never consulted, even though the film dealt with the

Spanish Civil War.[18] Spain remained neutral during World War II and war films about the

country were considered politically sensitive because the United States did not want to offend the

country's government. Although Spain was a non-belligerent nation (much like the United States

had been prior to Pearl Harbour) they were still in a position to provide material support to either

the Axis or the Allies, and so Hollywood needed to be cautious about what kind of messages

they pushed about Spain. Mellett's letter led to a heated response from producers who believed

the OWI did not trust their judgment. An article by film critic Bosley Crowther in the *New York

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[14] "At the end of the first year of the war it was estimated that 270 had made a total of 2,773 appearances in connection with the sale of bonds all over the nation". Bosley Crowther, "War Gives Many Special Jobs," *New York Times*, 3 January, 1940.

[15] "The OWI Critiques," *Motion Picture Herald, 18* September, 1942, 9.

[16] Koppes, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 108.

[17] Thomas F. Brady, "Hollywood vs. OWI—Government Agency's Request to Pass On Film Scripts Antagonizes Producers," *New York Times*, 3 January, 1943.

[18] Ibid. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* tells the story of a guerilla anti-fascist fighter during the Spanish Civil War. The film is based on a book by Ernest Hemingway.

Times described the studios' reactions as "hot resistance which flamed in certain quarters of Hollywood when the Office of War Information circulated a reasonable request that the content of all new pictures be submitted for review".[19] Crowther defended the OWI, arguing that the producers should "let their pictures be checked by the OWI for possible slips" in the best interests of the nation.[20] Despite actively supporting the war, Hollywood resisted any outside influence on its films' content. If Hollywood allowed the OWI to censor its films, it had no reassurance that this government censorship would end with the war. The studios had not forgotten recent campaigns by Senator Nye in favour of government censorship of films (discussed in chapter 2).

Of the sixty or so Hollywood films that were produced dealing with issues related to the war, Crowther claimed that no more than twenty could be considered "respectable representations of plausible events".[21] *Invisible Agent* and *The Devil with Hitler* he called "deceptive claptrap", while *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *To Be or Not to Be* were "very dangerous distortions of the grave significance of this war".[22] Crowther went on to write that Hollywood needed to be advised by the OWI, both for the sake of diplomacy and national morale. Not that surprisingly, Warner Bros. was the only major studio that publically agreed to submit scripts and show rough cuts to Mellett.[23] Jack Warner had been the first major studio head to support the war effort. Thomas F. Brady, a writer for the *New York Times*, claimed that the other studios' reluctance to follow Warner's example was "actually no more than a continuation of the long-

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[19] Bosley Crowther, "Matter for Advisement—The Dispute Between Hollywood and the OWI Raises a Fundamental Question," *New York Times*, 10 January, 1943.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Thomas F. Brady, "Hollywood vs. OWI—Government Agency's Request to Pass On Film Scripts Antagonizes Producers," *New York Times*, 3 January, 1943.

time industry policy of opposing outside interference".[24] Despite the backlash from

Hollywood's producers, the OWI pressured Hollywood by publically commenting on films.[25]

While Hollywood clearly did not like the control the OWI was trying to exert over them, they

knew that informal censorship was better than formal censorship, and so they relented and gave

in to the OWI's request. Three months after Mellet's letter of 2 February 1943 the studio heads

agreed to allow the OWI to review scripts informally.[26]

After 2 February 1943, Hollywood's efforts to produce realistic and relevant war films

brought it into increasing conflict with Washington. For instance, as Americans entered the

North African theatre, Hollywood rushed to produce films about the conflict. However,

Washington warned the studios to drop their projects about the region, some of which

Hollywood had already spent large sums of money on.[27] While Washington had only warned the

studios against making films about certain topics, the federal government was prepared to deny

distribution rights to films that could prove damaging to American war interests.[28] Not every

studio heeded Washington's advice, and some of the films that were produced still managed to be

released. Columbia produced *Sahara*, for example, which took place in Libya, despite the

warning. *Sahara* was allowed because it did not deal with politically sensitive issues and the

geographic setting was ambiguous and could have been anywhere in Africa. Washington could,

and at times did, restrict the kinds of films Hollywood made, but the OWI remained the focus of

Hollywood's ire because it was the public face of the government and dealt directly with the

studios.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Koppes, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 108-110.

[26] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940's*, xii.

[27] "Hollywood Steers Clear of French Politics; Four Projected Films on North Africa Are Shelved—What's in a Title," *New York Times*, 31 Jan., 1943.

[28] Washington maintained the right to formally censor films, as they did with MGM's *Panama Hattie* for "portraying the armed forces in too comic a light". Doherty, *Projections of War*, 49.

Despite some conflicts between the OWI and the studios, the treatment of foreign countries was also as important to Hollywood as it was to the OWI and Washington. Even though many countries were cut off due to the war, 33 percent of Hollywood's gross earnings came from movie sales outside the United States. [29] Markets in South America actually saw growth in the number of Hollywood films audiences watched during the early 1940s, and business continued to remain surprisingly high in neutral European counties like Spain and Portugal.[30] In a *New York Times* article by film critic Thomas F. Brady, he mentioned that the OWI had frowned upon two MGM pictures, *Kim* and *White Cargo*, because the films raised the issue of the "white man's burden".[31] Based on the OWI's suggestion, MGM shelved *Kim*, but produced *White Cargo* anyway. North Africa became an increasingly important market for the OWI as General Eishenhower's forces moved into the area and Axis films were replaced by American ones. According to the OWI, it was through film that the Axis had "poisoned the minds" of North Africans. [32] Germany and their allies had used films, even in hard to reach places, to sway public opinion against the Allies. Hollywood's war films had the potential to combat German propaganda, and as such played a larger role in the war effort overseas than initially imagined.

Hollywood's Struggle for Realistic War Films

The Hollywood studios' fight against censorship made ground during the war, often through small concessions made by the Production Code Administration (PCA). The 'real life' violence shown in newsreels played an enormous role in expanding what could be shown in

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[29] "Planning For the Future; Hollywood Trains 'Diplomat-Executives' For Foreign Duty—OWI African Report," *New York Times*, 24 Jan., 1943.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Brady, "Hollywood vs. OWI" *New York Times*, 3 January, 1943.
[32] "Planning For the Future" *New York Times*, 24 Jan., 1943.

feature films. Before the war, the newsreels were under the same self-censorship as feature films.[33] In 1942, 80 percent of all newsreels included war coverage, much of it showing combat situations.[34] The violence in newsreels was allowed because it was supposed to show realistically what was happening overseas, but it was mostly re-enactments that took place later.[35] However, newsreels remained constrained by certain restrictions. While the PCA agreed to allow the words 'hell' and 'damn' to be used in one of the *March of Time* newsreels, *We Are the Marines* because they agreed that censoring the language used by soldiers in combat was being unfaithful to the war and the experience of soldiers. [36] However, many curse words continued to be banned, and the PCA was forced to come up with a policy regarding soldiers swearing on film.[37] Small concessions like these eroded the PCA's control over Hollywood.

Hollywood's feature films were strongly influenced by the newsreels. For example, *The Story of G.I. Joe* (based on the life of war correspondent Ernie Pyle) relied on footage taken by the Signal Corps in the North African and Italian campaigns.[38] Documentary-style films took on new meaning during the war and influenced Hollywood's shift towards realism on the big screen.[39] Newsreels were given greater leeway by censors because they were 'news' about real events going on overseas.[40] Attempts of the newsreel producers to depict realistically the war

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[33] Richard Maltby, "The Spectacle of Criminality" in *Violence and American Cinema*, edited by John David Slocum, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 124.
[34] Biesen, *Black Out*, 73.
[35] "Action – No Camera! Complaints From Service Camera Men Who Are Not Allowed to Take Pictures*," New York Times*, 28 February, 1943.
[36] *The March of Time* was a monthly newsreel series sponsored by *Time* magazine.
[37] "March of Time Marines To Use 'Hell' and 'Damn'", *New York Times*, 22 January, 1943.
[38] *The New York Times Directory of the Film*, (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 89. *The Story of G.I. Joe*, tells the story of war correspondent Ernie Pyle's war experiences in Tunisia and Italy. Pyle was killed in action before the film was released.
[39] Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 132.
[40] The newsreels also ran into a problem of censorship on the warfront. Many of the trained camera men who went overseas to film the war were being prevented from doing so. Louis de Rochemont, producer of the *March of Time*, claimed that many of his camera men were either kept away from combat situations or else forbidden from shooting

challenged what the censors thought could be shown onscreen. The arguments put forth by these producers that the war should be depicted realistically and that war films should not be censored was also used by Hollywood in their own dramatizations of the war. When Hollywood pushed to show scenes of violence in its feature films, it was able to piggyback on the headway made by the newsreels.

An example of the increasing demand for realism in war films comes from Crowther's review of *Gorilla Man*, released in 1943 by Warner Bros., and directed by D. Ross Lederman. In *Gorilla Man,* Nazi spies attempt to make shell-shocked Royal Air Force (RAF) pilot, Captain Craig Killian, (played by John Loder) appear clinically insane. In the film the Nazis murder several women and blame it on Killian. Crowther was disgusted by the unbelievable storyline, commenting "[a]ll we can say is that this method seems a little too devious for belief. The Warner Nazi agents must be slipping".[41] While Crowther had spent the pre-war years praising overtly villainous portrayals of the Nazis in film (as seen in Chapter 2), he had become much more skeptical by 1943. He wanted realism and not fiction in his war films. Another example comes from a letter published in the *New York Times*, written by Lester Cowan, producer of the film *Commandos Strike at Dawn*. Cowan defended the movie's final scene against criticism by saying that it had been "approved by Canadian officers" before the film was made, and those Canadian officers agreed that the scene's Western style was okay.[42] To support this, Cowan used evidence from an Army officer, Colonel Hunt, who noted that many soldiers' stories "read like a

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by military officers. "Action—No Camera! Complaints From Service Camera Men Who Are Not Allowed to Take Pictures," *New York Times*, 28 February, 1943.

[41] Bosley Crowther, "The Gorilla Man - THE SCREEN", *New York Times*,15 January, 1943.

[42] "Striking Commandos," *New York Times*, 24 Jan., 1943.

dime novel".[43] The unbelievable situations happening overseas were difficult to portray in a way that was authentic without seeming overdone.

The demand for accurate portrayals of war was a common problem for Hollywood, and led Crowther to write "the only thing you can go by in judging a war picture's trust is the quality of the creation and its genuine sincerity. If it has a genuine flavor you've got to swallow it".[44] Crowther criticized the film *Immortal Sergeant* made by Twentieth Century-Fox. Crowther claimed that although the film viewed less like a dime novel than some other combat films it rang less true. He placed part of the blame for *Immortal Sergeant*'s lack of realism on the way Maureen O'Hara's character Valentine Lee was "dragged" into the picture. Valentine only appears through flashbacks intended to remind the main character of what he left behind. Because war was a masculine space, Valentine appeared out of place because the film takes place overseas where American women were absent.[45]

One of the biggest obstacles Hollywood faced in trying to ensure realism in combat films was not censorship, but rather making the unbelievable believable. Often the very real stories coming from the front lines seemed implausible when portrayed on the big screen. The violence and horror of war was hard to believe, and hard to make seem authentic onscreen. The studios overcompensated for the horror of war by exposing audiences to unprecedented levels of onscreen violence, as the next section will examine.

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[43] Bosley Crowther, "The New Tax on Credulity: In View of the Fabulous Things That Happen in This War, the Filmgoer Has to Believe Almost All He Sees," *New York Times*, 7 Feb., 1943.
[44] Crowther, "The New Tax on Credulity" *New York Times*, 7 Feb., 1943.
[45] Ibid.

Consolidating the Combat Film Genre

The state needed to coordinate all industries towards the war effort, and the mass appeal of Hollywood films made them an excellent tool for social control.[46] The military structure was heavily redefined during the war as the draft made war service mandatory for adult males. As a result, masculinity was changed through its association with the military. Combat films helped transform popular definitions of masculinity in the early 1940's. In the United States, the ideal masculinity was White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, which was not a change from the masculinity of the previous decade. Combat films depicted their heroes as team leaders and family men rather than as the independent loners of the 1930's. The idea of a team was used to assimilate the civilian experience with the military one.[47] Military training and recruitment efforts fostered the notion that a good soldier was an unquestioning member of the team effort.[48] The individual was still important but only in relation to the team. Authority figures, who were often derided during the Great Depression, were now hailed as brave and wise heroes for young soldiers to emulate. How these soldiers were positioned when they either killed the 'enemy' or died was central to how audiences perceived their masculinity.

Violence and death were a major facet of the lives of soldiers and combat films reflected this. The combat film was Hollywood's response to its audience's desire to see stories about the ongoing war. These films questioned the changing social values that were necessary to support the war; soldiers needed to know the war was justified and Hollywood took part in reassuring

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[46] Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 306.

[47] Gordon Martel, *The World War Two Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 155.

[48] Andre J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (United States of America: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 253.

them that their sacrifices were necessary. Jeanine Basinger summarizes the major questions

asked in all of these combat films:

> What makes a good life and what makes a good person? What should we be willing to
> die for and how do you die right? If you die young, what would make you a noble
> sacrifice and what would make it all a waste? What about killing? If you had to do it, did
> that make you a killer? What about when the war was over, and you returned home,
> having killed? Would it change you forever? [49]

Soldiers' discussions about killing and their fears of dying take place in all of the combat films

this chapter looks at: *Guadalcanal Diary, Sahara, Destination Tokyo, Air Force,* and *Thirty

Seconds to Tokyo.* While the soldiers in these films are killed in a number of different ways, the

most honorable deaths are generally reserved for the films' lead actors, who always represented

the ideal masculinity of the time.

The new masculinity created by the war and embellished by Hollywood took place

alongside the reshaping of masculinity within other contexts. The actors chosen to play the

soldiers were used as a lens through which to portray contemporary notions of masculinity and

violence. Hollywood's representation of soldiers was a reflection of the military's portrayal of

soldiers. The state called on every man between the ages of 18 and 64 to register for possible war

service.[50] Every man who registered was expected to take part in the war effort, and those sent

overseas would be required to commit violence. In Hollywood's combat films, violence and

masculinity became linked as natural and normal. These films made it appear as though all

soldiers had a natural affinity for violence, and it was something that was naturally masculine for

them to do. The war required soldiers to kill for their nation, meaning that Hollywood films

could not represent soldiers who were afraid or hesitant to perform their duty. Combat films

needed to inspire soldiers to be brave in combat. According to Hollywood, all soldiers were

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[49] Basinger, *World War II Combat Film*, 73.
[50] Mintz, *Hollywood's America*, 149.

capable of killing regardless of their initial reservations. As a result, combat films helped to normalize violence as an inherently masculine behavior.

Each of the combat films this chapter looks at includes a scene in which soldiers talk about what they are fighting for, ensuring that audiences knew what the duty of these soldiers was. In World War II combat films the lead characters were often portrayed as stoic, unemotional, unflinching, and extremely patriotic. Humphrey Bogart's character Sergeant Gunn in *Sahara* was typical of the hegemonic masculinity of the war years. Bogart was praised by *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther, for his "toughness, his trenchant laconism and genius for using a poker-face," which marked him as "probably the best screen notion of the American soldier to date".[51] Crowther described Bogart as the "rugged" and "indomitable" leading figure in what he calls a "he-man picture".[52] In 1943 Gunn was the ideal soldier: tough, laconic, and poker-faced. Gunn represented the ideal version of masculinity for the American military and society. In the 1940's these qualities were regarded as necessary if men were going to fight and die for their country, and such films served as an essential recruitment and propaganda tool.[53] In the fall of 1943 Dorothy B. Jones (the former head of the Film Reviewing and Analysis Section of the OWI's Hollywood office) pointed out that those men in training camps preferred war films, while those who had already seen combat disliked them.[54] It would seem that Hollywood's films were not made for combatants. Instead these films were for domestic audiences who had not fought overseas in order to make them feel connected to the war, and as an important recruitment tool. Potential soldiers watched combat films to see how glorious their service in the war could be.

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[51] Bosley Crowther, "THE SCREEN; ' Sahara,' an Exciting Picture of Desert War, With Humphrey Bogart as a Heroic Sergeant, Is New Feature at the Capitol," *New York Times*, 12 November, 1943.
[52] *The New York Times Directory of the Film*, 83.
[53] Basinger, *World War II Combat Film*, 15.
[54] Jones, "The Hollywood War Film*"*, 95.

For soldiers who had already experienced combat, characters like Bogart's must have appeared extremely unrealistic. Experienced combat soldiers were very aware of the disparity between what was being shown onscreen and the realities of combat. Moreover, such films forced battle-worn soldiers to relive combat. In 1945 the editors of *Look* noted that: "[w]ar movies do not appeal to fighting men, nor do Westerns. Men who have seen real shooting do not care for the synthetic variety".[55] According to the *Motion Picture Herald*, however, in 1943 the most popular films in army theatres overseas were *Guadalcanal Diary, Crash Dive, Destination Tokyo, Air Force*, and *Sahara*.[56] Even though they tended to have high American death tolls, combat films managed to remain the most popular in army theatres. These films were used to instruct soldiers that had not yet seen combat about what it meant to be a soldier and convey the message that they were expected to fight and possibly die for their nation.

Guadalcanal Diary, Sahara, Destination Tokyo, and *Air Force* were the most popular combat films from World War II. Indeed, historian Jeanine Basinger claims that they were all "the same movie."[57] Each movie constructed an image of the ideal soldier who was surrounded by subordinate masculinities that made him appear even more perfect. While Basinger outlines a number of similarities between the films, what is most obvious and significant is that each film contains a group of men (often an ethnic mix) led by the reluctant hero (a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) who, against his better instincts, has to undertake an impossible mission in order to accomplish an important military objective in which members of the group would die (sometimes all of them).[58] As discussed in the previous chapter, *Wake Island* established the new

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[55] Editors of *Look, From Movie Lot to Beachhead* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1945), 105.
[56] *Motion Picture Herald*, 22 January, 1944. *Crash Dive* involves a romantic triangle that involves two officers of a US Navy submarine.
[57] Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film,* 67.
[58] Ibid., 69.

genre of combat films in 1942, and *Guadalcanal Diary* was the first major film to replicate it the following year.

Guadalcanal Diary and Hollywood's Representations of Japanese Masculinity

When *Guadalcanal Diary* was released in 1943 by Twentieth-Century Fox, the film was considered a realistic depiction of combat. It is not, however, a very accurate portrayal of the actual battle. The film was based on the best-selling book by Richard Tregaskis, a war correspondent at the Battle of Guadalcanal. *Guadalcanal Diary* recounts the first Japanese attack on Guadalacanal in 1941. The American soldiers on the island were bombed by Japanese planes and shelled by Japanese destroyers until they surrendered.[59] Like *Wake Island*, *Guadalcanal Diary* includes an ethnically diverse group of Americans from all different walks of life. *Guadalcanal Diary* cemented the combat film genre started with *Wake Island*, and furthered Hollywood's portrayal of a militarized masculinity. As with the other combat films, one of the most important components of masculinity in *Guadalcanal Diary* was for real men to be fearless in combat. The subordinate masculinities are also clearly at play in the film, through young soldiers like Private Johnny Anderson and the Hispanic character Private Alvarez. Anderson is a young, inexperienced soldier who has not yet become a man, while Alvarez is a stand-in for the non-white Americans that fought in the war but were not as commonly portrayed by Hollywood.

Guadalcanal Diary includes several scenes showing men talking about the practical aspects of being a soldier like taking care of their guns and machinery. The character of Corporal Potts (played by William Bendix) even brings his own club from home, which is "not

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[59] Donald J. Young, *Final Hours in the Pacific: The Allied Surrenders of Wake Island, Bataan, Corregidor, Hong Kong and Singapore* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 31.

government issue."[60] The viewer is meant to assume that Potts used the club in his life before the war. Potts later uses this club to kill a Japanese soldier, merging the violence from his past with the violence of his present that he was trained for as a soldier. Violence is seen as natural for the character of Potts, and as natural for the other soldiers in the film because that is their job.

In several scenes, the soldiers in *Guadalcanal Diary* discuss their fear of combat, but that fear disappears when they are in battle. The soldiers struggle with this fear and it is overcome by their desire to defeat the Japanese. The soldiers appear outwardly fearless when they are shelled by Japanese battleships. In one scene Father Donnelly (Preston Foster's character) recounts the bravery of the Navy doctors who finish an operation during the bombing, casually adding that he stayed to help with the surgery. There is a similar scene in Tregaskis' book that describes an unnamed doctor that was "scared to death", yet acted "with the greatest coolness and bravery under fire".[61] The scene was included in order to show that all soldiers were fearless in combat – no matter what tasks they performed. Bendix's character Potts tells the priest, in his own version of a prayer: "I'm no hero. I'm just a guy. I came out here because somebody had to come. I don't want no medals. I just want to get this thing over with and go back home. I'm just like everybody else and I'm telling you I don't like it".[62] All of the soldiers in the film agree with Potts that they are doing what is necessary. By committing violence, Potts is fulfilling his obligation to his nation, and nothing more. He does not need to further justify why he does it, and he does not need to be any more than an average American in order to do his duty. This scene justifies the violence of war as an act of duty.

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[60] *Guadalcanal Diary*, DVD, directed by Lewis Seiler (USA: 20th Century Fox Film Corporation, 1943).
[61] Richard Tregaskis. *Guadalcanal Diary* (Malden, Massachusetts: Popular Library, 1959), 32 .
[62] *Guadalcanal Diary*. DVD.

Only the youngest soldier (Richard Jaeckel's character, Private Johnny Anderson) is seen crying during the bombing. However, Anderson's weakness is acceptable because he is portrayed as the least masculine and youngest of the soldiers, and has not yet learned to be a man (meaning he was not yet a real soldier). Hollywood constructed a relationship between combat and manhood; you proved you were a man through combat.[63] Twice during the film Anderson is believed to be mortally wounded, but he survives and at the end of the film comments that his facial hair is finally growing in, a clear marker that he is becoming a man. Anderson's transition into manhood (read soldier) is referenced in the film's narration before the final battle: "Gone now is the loud surface toughness of last summer. In its place is the coolest, quiet fortitude that comes only with battle experience. There is to be but one command: Attack. Attack. And Attack."[64] The final battle scene shows Anderson fearlessly joining in the assault on the Japanese.[65] He is now a real soldier (represented by his new facial hair).

Although *Guadalcanal Diary* was made a year after *Wake Island* the deaths are virtually bloodless and very few named characters are killed in the film. The most notable death is that of Captain Cross, who is led along with his unit into an ambush by a Japanese prisoner. As Cross lies dying, the camera shows viewers a picture inside Cross's helmet of his wife, daughter, and son in order to remind the audience why he died (and to play on their emotional heartstrings). The only character to survive the ambush was Private Alvarez (played by Anthony Quinn). Alvarez was the only Hispanic cast member. While Alvarez survives this battle, he is not shown as a coward for running away, because he fearlessly returns to combat again. Before escaping,

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[63] Bruzzi, *Bringing up Daddy*, 1.
[64] *Guadalcanal Diary.* DVD.
[65] Anderson's growth as a character is supported by the novel the film was based on. According to Tregaskis, inexperienced soldiers tended to show "loud surface toughness" but needed time to "develop the cool, quiet fortitude that comes with battle experience". Tregaskis, *Guadalcanal Diary* (Malden, Massachusetts: Popular Library, 1959), 193.

Alvarez witnesses the Japanese bayoneting his comrades' bodies. After this film, gruesome scenes like this were banned by the OWI because they feared that showing the desecration of the dead would provoke the Japanese to do so.[66] Alvarez later dies when he is shot in the back by the enemy during a raid against the Japanese. The characters that represent subordinate masculinities die following the orders of their white middle class officers. While Alvarez's death was as honorable as Cross's, he died to avenge his Captain. Soldiers were expected to follow the orders of their authority figures without question, and there is no dissent among the soldiers in any of these war-era combat films. This respect for authority is in direct contrast to the gangster films of the early 1930's, in which the lead characters openly disobeyed authority figures (as discussed in Chapter 1). The disrespect for authority of the 1930's did not transfer into these combat films. Rather combat films actually showed the opposite and revered authority and experience as part of the militarization of masculinity.

In *Guadalcanal Diary*, as in *Wake Island*, the Japanese are portrayed as sneaky, animal-like, and without mercy. Richard Tregaski (the novel's author) also points out that the Japanese soldiers refused to be taken prisoner.[67] He characterizes this fight-to-the-death attitude of the Japanese as "dishonorable". [68] The Japanese's actions and tactics are always shown in stark contrast to the Americans'. Such comparisons are used to emphasize the honour and patriotism of the Americans and characterize the Japanese as their antithesis. In one scene three captured Japanese laborers expect to be shot by the American marines that captured them, but instead

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[66] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940's*, 100.

[67] Joseph C. Grew, former United States Ambassador to Tokyo, explained Japanese tactics as a natural extension of the art of jiu-jitsu. A Japanese art of self-defense, jiu-jitsu employs the tactic of simulating defeat in order to catch the adversary off guard. Grew warned the American military that these tactics would continue throughout the war. "Japanese Trickery Forecast by Grew; Former Envoy Warns Against 'Ju-Jitsu' Tactics in Form of Peace Offensive," *New York Times*, 17 January, 1943.

[68] Tregaskis' written treatment of the Japanese was discussed in "With the Marines on Guadalcanal: Details of the Action on the Ground That the Japanese Call Death Island", *New York Times*, 24 Jan., 1943.

have their wounds treated. This scene clearly shows the difference in how Americans viewed

themselves in relation to the Japanese: kindness and compassion versus cruelty and

maliciousness. The Japanese were shown committing the most gruesome acts of onscreen

violence. For example, the act of 'bayoneting' appears throughout the film and is shown as

particularly gruesome and cruel – an action without honor or humanity. While both sides are

shown using bayonets, Americans only resort to the bayonet in life-or-death situations.

Americans believed the Japanese did not adhere to Hollywood's code of war or sense of

morality, and Hollywood encouraged the war to be viewed as a conflict between the civilized

west and the barbaric east.[69]

The portrayal of the Japanese as untrustworthy and sinister in both *Wake Island* and

Guadalcanal Diary was influenced by the act that brought the United States into the war – Pearl

Harbor. The bombing of Pearl Harbor shaped the way the Japanese were portrayed throughout

the war, but it also relied on pre-existing racism in American society. The relocation and

segregation of Japanese-Americans in camps was based on an erroneous belief that Japanese-

Americans were disloyal and would betray the nation.[70] Women's studies researcher Mire

Koikari argues that during the war, Japanese American masculinity was viewed as deviant and

despised, and Japanese Americans were often viewed as indistinguishable from the Japanese.[71]

Racism towards the Japanese was prevalent in the United States and revealed itself through the

portrayal of Japanese soldiers in combat films.

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[69] Randy Roberts, "John Wayne and Wartime Hollywood: John Wayne Goes to War" in Hollywood's America: Twentieth-Century America Through Film, eds. Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, *Hollywood's America: Twentieth-Century America Through Film* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 144.

[70] For more on the discrimination of Asian Americans prior to the war, see Angelo N. Ancheta's *Race, Rights and the Asian American Experience* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[71] Mire Koikari, "Japanese Eyes, American Heart': Politics of Race, Nation, and Masculinity in Japanese American Veterans' WII Narratives", in *Men and Masculinities* 12, no. 5, 550.

The OWI banned the depiction of brutal Japanese violence against Americans in response to a scene from the film *Bataan*.[72] The film includes a scene where a soldier is beheaded by a sword-wielding Japanese soldier. Jeanine Basinger notes that this scene was one of the most violent in any film before the 1960's.[73] *Bataan* was directed by Tay Garnett for MGM, and released in 1943, and tells about the defense of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines by both the Americans and the Filipinos in 1941. A group of thirteen soldiers are tasked with blowing up a bridge in order to delay the Japanese advance into the region. The group includes a Mexican-American, an African-American, and a Philippine scout. This ethnically mixed combat was not very representative of real combat units, which remained racially segregated.[74] The Jim Crow system of segregation was well entrenched in the American military.[75] While this segregation was conveniently ignored in the combat films, it asserted itself in the way subordinate masculinities were treated. In *Bataan*, the natures of soldiers' deaths were clearly used to demarcate certain types of masculinity. For example, non-white soldiers were more likely to experience gruesome deaths than the films' leads. For instance, the violent beheading perpetrated by a Japanese soldier is carried out on a black and not a white soldier. This death is very unflattering for the black soldier both because his body is mutilated by the act and also to a lesser extent because beheadings were still associated with capital punishment.[76] By the end of *Guadalcanal Diary* every American soldier is killed, but none as gruesomely as the African-American. The character Steve Bentley (played by George Murphy, a white actor) sacrifices himself by crashing his plane into the bridge in order to ensure the success of his unit's objective.

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[72] For more on *Bataan*, see Koppes and Black's *Hollywood Goes to War*.

[73] Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, 58.

[74] Other films with segregated units include *Canteen, Lifeboat, Purple Heart, The Fighting 69th* and *Stagedoor Canteen.*, which include Italian, Jewish, and Mexican American characters. Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 138.

[75] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 122.

[76] James Q. Whitman, *Harsh Justice: Criminal Punishment and the Widening Divide Between America and Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 157.

His death was both heroic and bloodless. The main character of the film, Sergeant Bill Dane (played by Robert Taylor, another white actor) is last shown firing fearlessly at the oncoming enemy as the movie ends. Even though Dane is certainly going to die, the fact that his death remains unseen suggests that his heroic (and American) spirit cannot be vanquished. The brutal death of the only black soldier in the film was just part of the largely unflattering treatment of African-Americans during the war.[77] However, as is noted in the next section on *Sahara*, Hollywood tried somewhat to improve its depiction of black people.

Sahara and the Treatment of Subordinate Masculinities

Sahara was produced by Columbia and released in 1943, just a month after *Guadalcanal Diary*. Directed by Zoltan Kora for Columbia Pictures, *Sahara* features a group of Allied soldiers that form a motley tank unit in an unspecified North African country. The main plot revolves around the defence of a strategic water supply from a much larger German army. Over the course of the movie the Allied crew also rescue a Sudanese soldier and his Italian prisoner of war, shoot down a German plane and capture its pilot. Gunn, along with his crew of Allied companions, fight almost to the last man against an entire German battalion . Although only two men survive, the tank unit captures the Germany battalion.

Sahara's cast portrays a wide range of subordinate masculinities, the representatives of which are all expected to respect the authority of U.S. Army Sergeant, Joe Gunn (played by Humphrey Bogart). Gunn represents the ideal version of masculinity used in the combat films. Gunn leads a diverse group of soldiers: five from the Commonwealth, one Frenchman, and one

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[77] African-Americans during the war had to put up with "treatment as second-class citizens, segregation in the armed services, and being shut out of most munitions jobs." Joe Wilson, *The 761st "Black Panther" Tank Battalion in World War II* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 1999), 7.

Sudanese. When the crew first meets up they all cede command to Gunn, including the higher

ranking British officer because Gunn is the most dominant man in the unit. There are also two

prisoners of war, one Italian and one German. Both P.O.Ws are forced to accept Gunn's

authority, but do so in very different ways, and their fates are very different as a result. The

Italian P.O.W. (Giuseppe) is stabbed in the back by the German P.O.W. (von Schletow) after

refusing to help kill the Americans and accusing the Nazis of turning Italy into a "concentration

camp".[78] Giuseppe's final act before dying is warning the Americans that von Schletow had

escaped. The most cowardly death was reserved for the German P.O.W. (von Schletow), who is

killed by suffocation after trying to escape. The Sudanese soldier, Tambul, risks being shot by

the attacking Germans in order to make sure that von Schletow dies. Tambul acts as a stand-in

for African-Americans serving in the war. While he is clearly a subordinate to Gunn in the film,

he is given a much more equal position within the group than African-Americans were

traditionally given by Hollywood, or even during the war.[79]

When the crew first gathers together, Gunn's masculinity and fearlessness make him the

most qualified and obvious leader. The character of Gunn represents the ideal male figure, who

unflinchingly makes difficult choices that he knows will result in the deaths of his men. This

stoicism is a key element of the period's masculinity. Gunn is not entirely unsympathetic when

making tough choices, however, he makes his men save the life of the Italian P.O.W., Giuseppe,

instead of abandoning him in the desert, even though he risks the lives of his men to do so.

Gunn's authority is unquestioned by his crew, and even though they do not know one another

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[78] *Sahara*, DVD, dir. by Zoltan Korda. (1943: Columbia Pictures Corporation, 2001 dvd).
[79] The poor treatment of African-Americans had a long tradition in Hollywood dating back to the first ever feature film *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which was made to serve as Ku Klux Klan propaganda. In the decade prior to World War II, the PCA prevented Hollywood from producing films that touched on the social problems surrounding black equality. Thomas Cripps actually referred to these social themes as "trouble and box-office poison" for Hollywood in his book *Making Movies Black*, 10.

well, they follow Gunn's orders and fight to their deaths bravely. Whether the producers realized it or not, *Sahara* dealt pretty heavily with the idea of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. The characters in the film represent the various countries involved in the European theatre of the war, and their hierarchy within the unit reflects how *Sahara*'s producers viewed the hierarchy of the various countries taking part in the war. Through Gunn's unquestioned authority, the United States was portrayed as the most dominant, and the characters representing the Allied nations gladly followed his lead. The German and Italian P.OW.s, through their prisoner status, are also made subordinate to Gunn's authority, as well as to the authority of the rest of his team. By the end of the film, the Italian P.O.W. has come to fully accept Gunn's authority, denouncing the Nazis and blaming them for his country's situation.

Kurt Kreuger, the actor chosen to portray von Schletow, has the most physically intimidating presence in the film. Although physically he represents a hegemonic masculinity, von Schletow's Nazism makes him less honorable, and thus less dominant. Von Schletow refuses to accept Gunn's authority. Initially, Von Schletow is shown as worthy of respect because of his loyalty to his country. His constant attempts to get his captors killed make him appear truly villainous. Von Schletow is eventually choked to death by Tambul, the film's only black actor, while the other soldiers cheer Tambul on. By depicting a white soldier being killed by a black man *Guadalcanal Diary* made it clear that the German soldiers that von Schletow represented were weaker and thus less dominant than the black soldiers that fought for the Allies. This dishonorable death for the Nazi soldier was part of the racial humiliation and vilification of the enemy that was commonly seen during the war.

Unlike the Japanese of *Guadalcanal Diary* the Germans were still when men and worthy of fear because of their physical strength. One of the main differences between the two was that

while the Japanese were portrayed as inherently untrustworthy, the Germans were shown to be untrustworthy only as a result of their devotion to a flawed ideology. As a result of Germany's shared Anglo background with the Americans, Hollywood regularly addressed why Nazism was flawed in order to explain why it would fail. Germans were more familiar to many Americans than the Japanese because of a shared European background, but the fascism, totalitarianism and ultranationalism of both Germany and Japan's governments was incompatible with American democracy. As a result, Nazi fascism was seen as worthy of hate and thus, by association, so was von Schletow.

Every soldier in *Sahara* acts as part of the team with a common goal (defeating the Axis), even though they come from different nations. Before the final battle scene, Gunn tells his men that he intends to hold off the overwhelming number of German soldiers until reinforcements arrive. He gives his crew the choice of fighting alongside him or running away. Not a single man considers abandoning Gunn, and even the soldier who is sent for reinforcements is reluctant to leave. By operating as a team rather than as individuals the entire unit becomes the hero of the film. While the lone hero had been popular in films before the war (such as the spy, western and gangster genres) the combat film genre focused on comradery and teamwork. As in *Wake Island* and *Guadalcanal Diary*, it is not just Gunn, but Gunn's entire unit that is heroic, although certainly Gunn's leadership was crucial. Through this group mentality the film exemplifies how the Americans viewed their wartime allies as equally brave comrades, but not in charge, and so they remained subordinate to Gunn's (read American) authority. Even Tambul (the Sudanese soldier) is treated as a relative equal in the unit. Tambul's character was a major break with the

kind of roles normally given to black actors in Hollywood films during the period.[80] He is even trusted to collect the last of the well water for his fellow soldiers, and the scene plays up his ability to keep from taking the water for himself, which shows that he is reliable. Although he is given a menial task that demonstrates his subordination to the rest of the group the scene shows the group's trust in him, and when Tambul later kills von Scheltow he manages to prove himself as an equal member of the team. While Gunn and his fellow Americans were the dominant characters in *Guadalcanal Diary*, respect was reserved for all soldiers of Allied countries, and not just white soldiers. Tambul's role in *Sahara* is just one example of the attempt to portray both Americans and their allies of different races as 'equals' in combat. [81] This change represented Hollywood's acknowledgment of both African-Americans' service in the military and their increased presence in factory work on the homefront.[82] African-Americans made some strides toward equality during the war, although these privileges were quickly revoked afterwards, and Hollywood tried to reflect this social change through *Sahara*.

***Destination Tokyo* and the Construction of Japanese Masculinity by Hollywood**

Destination Tokyo, released in 1943, was produced by Warner Bros. and directed by Delmer Daves. The film tells the story of Captain Cassidy (played by Cary Grant) and the submarine crew of the USS Copperfin. The submarine is sent to Tokyo Bay to get weather

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[80] Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie From World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73-75.

[81] Due to the service of African-Americans in World War II, Hollywood deemed it necessary to represent them better. At the suggestion of Washington, both MGM and Twentieth Century-Fox made precedent-setting films with *Cabin in the Sky* and *Stormy Weather*. Released in 1943, these 'negro musicals' were especially noteworthy due to their largely African-American casts. In these films, many of the common negative stereotypes associated with African-Americans were avoided according to a *New York Times* article. "Hollywood Takes a Hint From Washington; Two Big Negro Musicals Are Under Way—A Goldwyn Opportunity Awaits Babies," *New York Times*, 7 Feb., 1943.

[82] Charles D. Chamberlain, *Victory at Home: Manpower and Race in the American South During World War II* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 130-134.

intelligence for the Doolittle Raid, the first air strike by the United States on the Japanese islands.[83] Due to the nature of submarine warfare, the crew spends more time hiding than fighting. Nevertheless, the movie offers several opportunities for the men to illustrate their bravery in combat. The submarine is attacked by two Japanese planes, undergoes a perilous trip through a minefield, deals with the emergency appendectomy of a crew member, is responsible for sinking both a Japanese aircraft carrier and a destroyer, and completes its mission. There is one aspect that makes this film stand out from the other combat films of the period; its portrayal of the Japanese is more complicated and nuanced.

While the film continues the trend started by *Wake Island* of depicting the Japanese as untrustworthy, it also sympathizes with the individual Japanese soldier without supporting the nation. The film's most memorable scene involves one of the crew members (Tom Tully's character Mike) who is knifed by a Japanese soldier that he tries to save from drowning. Once again, the violence inflicted by the Japanese man is seen as inappropriate and unreasonable, even in the context of the war. Cassidy justifies the Japanese soldier's action as an unfortunate character trait due to his Japanese culture, rather than something inherently evil about all Japanese people. It is pointed out that while Mike's son had received a pair of roller skates when he was five, the Japanese soldier that killed Mike had received a dagger when he was that age. According to Captain Cassidy: "That Jap was started twenty years ago to putting a knife in Mike's back… and a lot more Mikes will die. Until we wipe out the system that puts daggers in the hands of five-year old children".[84] This scene turns the damnation of the Japanese from the individual to the Japanese political and cultural regime. According to film critic and historian

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[83] Philip A. Seaton, J*apan's Contested War Memories: The 'Memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 164.
[84] *Destination Tokyo, DVD, directed by Delmer Davis (USA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1943).*

Wheeler Winston Dixon the film was intended to convince audiences that the Japanese were a product of their government and not naturally evil. [85] This was a more nuanced approach than the usual depiction of the Japanese by Hollywood. Earlier films like *Guadalcanal Diary* and *Bataan* that portrayed the Japanese as evil savages conveniently ignored the Japanese perspective. Before *Destination Tokyo*, Warner Bros. had made *Wake Island* which showed the Japanese as extremely underhanded, and bordering on evil. Racism towards the Japanese certainly played a role in the portrayal of them, and makes *Destination Tokyo*'s sympathetic attitude that much more surprising.

Destination Tokyo's realistic portrait of the war received more criticism than earlier war films. Even though the scene of the crew performing an emergency appendectomy while submerged is based on a true account, Bosley Crowther's review for the *New York Times* used the scene as an example of why the film was not "authentic", or a "fair account", or even "credible".[86] This is in contrast to his review of *Wake Island*, which blindly accepted the film's false version of a real battle. Crowther had declared *Wake Island* "a literal document of the manner in which the Wake detachment of Marines fought and died in the finest tradition of their tough and indomitable corps".[87] The difference between Crowther's reviews of *Wake Island* and *Guadalcanal Diary* show that as the war dragged on he became increasingly critical of war films and expected more realism. While Hollywood audiences were willing to suspend their disbelief in order to watch films about American soldiers performing great feats overseas, they did not accept everything presented to them. Audiences still treated films as entertainment, but

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[85] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940's*, 103.
[86] *The New York Times Directory of the Film*, 84.
[87] Bosley Crowther, *The New York Times Directory of the Film* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 78.

entertainment that needed to look and feel real. Crowther justified his criticism of *Destination Tokyo* in a later article:

> All of these things may have happened, plus many more, as set down in this film. But to us it seems wholly implausible… It has a lot of exciting incidents in it; some slick, manly performances are turned in… But an essential rule of visual drama, which is to put within a frame only so much explicit action as can be realistically accepted in a space of time, is here completely violated. The Warners have a big but too extravagant action film.[88]

Crowther believed that the film was unrealistic because of the combination of all of the scenes added up to a story that was too 'extravagant' to be realistic. The unrealistic aspects of the film, however, did not prevent the character of Captain Cassidy from serving as a role model and as an example of contemporary hegemonic masculinity. Although audiences wanted to be entertained, they still wanted to be informed. Like the other films discussed in this chapter, *Destination Tokyo* was a box office hit, and was shown extensively overseas. However, *Destination Tokyo* was also used as a training film for American soldiers and thus played an important role in shaping the ways in which soldiers believed they should act.[89]

Women and Masculinity During the War

Citizenship and masculinity were largely defined by military service while women were entirely excluded from overseas combat. As this section will argue, although American women were largely excluded from the fighting, they too were affected by the growing acceptance of violence, as well as by shifting ideas of masculinity. Women's war work influenced their representation in Hollywood films and vice versa. Obviously many women saw the films and

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[88] Bosley Crowther, " CATCHING UP; Some Late Afterthoughts on 'Madame Curie' and Two Other Current Films," *New York Times*, 9 January, 1944.

[89] Catherine L. Preston, "Movies and National Identity", in *American Cinema of the 1940s: Themes and Variations,* edited by Wheeler W. Dixon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 101.

newsreels depicting violence overseas. Through the films, women were made aware that it was the role of men to take part in violence, and it was the role of women to prevent it. The role of women as peacemakers predated World War II, but the association was strengthened during the 1940's as a result of the conflation between violence and masculinity.[90]

In adding to women's connection to the war through family overseas and support roles in the military, women on the homefront participated in the wartime economy. By 1943 4,000,000 women had entered the workforce and another 2,000,000 were expected to do so before the end of the year.[91] By taking on factory work that was considered to be traditionally male women were becoming masculinized, but they remained separated from the violence of combat. Although many of the places where women worked were munitions factories, violence remained a uniquely masculine area. A *Life* magazine article published 6 July 1942 claimed that "the woman worker in a war industry in the U.S. has acquired some of the glamour of the man in uniform. In labor's social scale, she belongs to the elite".[92] Women's uniforms are stressed by the article because they legitimized women workers much like the uniform legitimized soldiers who went overseas to kill. Even though they were not military uniforms, women workers "are the girls who, without the rattle of drums of the blare of trumpets, are doing the jobs vital for victory" of the nation.[93] The majority of women's wartime jobs were considered to be only for the duration of the war and in support of the troops.[94] Propaganda campaigns trying to recruit women as factory workers (the most famous of which were the series of posters featuring Rosie

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[90] According to a *New York Times* article, the National Federation of Women's Republican Clubs sought to establish special committees to conduct a study of peace and post-war proposals. Mrs. Ann Scott Wilson, the first vice president of the Federation, believed that "the thoughtful judgment of American women must be felt at the peace table." "Women Formulate Post-War Program," *New York Times*, 21 January, 1943.

[91] "4,000,000 Women Busy in War Jobs," *New York Times,* January 11, 1943.

[92] "Girls in Uniform: In U.S.. industry they help make weapons of war," *Life*, July 7, 1942, 41.

[93] "Girls in Uniform: In U.S.. industry they help make weapons of war," *Life*, July 7, 1942, 41.

[94] Stanley Sandler, World War II in the Pacific: An *Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2001), 416.

the Riveter) masculinized women by showing them as physically capable of performing formerly male-dominated jobs.[95] Advertisements emphasized that women could be simultaneously physically strong, glamorous, and feminine.[96] The masculinization of women was temporary and necessary and was expected to revert to prewar norms once the war ended.[97] Although many female factory workers lost their jobs after the war, that did not necessarily mean a return to prewar gender norms. Hollywood would present this new postwar society and the complications it presented through the Film Noir genre, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Women overseas were shown in *Life* magazine in nursing uniforms and away from the front lines. In contrast, when *Life* showed men, they were in soldier uniforms and carried rifles. The OWI summarized how service women should be treated in propaganda in 1942: "It is not a lipstick, hairpin affair. It is performing an essential task in a businesslike manner, replacing Army men in non-combatant duties."[98] The Woman's Army's work was to be treated seriously, as they were now taking on what had typically been men's jobs in the military; however, they remained separated from the violence that was still exclusively the purview of men. Women undertook supportive roles in the military which mirrored traditional gender roles.

A clear physical separation existed between the homefront and the warfront because the United States was fighting a war overseas, although civilians were at times brought into the combat, most notably through the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Due to fears of invasion or spies, the homefront was not always considered to be safe. The internment of Japanese was a reaction to this fear, and an attempt to keep the home front safe. Many factories were considered potential

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[95] Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 104.
[96] Ibid., 111-115.
[97] *Griswold, Fatherhood in America*, 164.
[98] Office of War Information. "Section VI. The Fighting Forces: The Job of the Fighting Man at the Front," in *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington, D.C., Office of War Information, 1942) <http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3301>

targets for saboteurs, and as a result some women guards were trained in jiu-jitsu.[99] Although

their jobs were on the homefront, these women guards were expected to protect that home front

just like the soldiers overseas (although in a nonlethal and less bloody way). While there was a

strong divide between how American men and women served during the war, both women and

men were shaped by the increasingly violent world of the 1940's. Women may not have directly

taken part in the violence, but they were informed about it through Hollywood films, newsreels,

family, and friends.

In most of Hollywood's combat films there was not a single female role unless you

considered inanimate objects; the planes, ships and tanks were always referred to as female. In

Sahara the crew affectionately called their M-3 tank Lulu Belle. Similar to *Sahara*'s Lulu Belle,

the airplane in *Air Force* is known as "Mary Ann", and due to the lack of any female characters

(aside from some unnamed nurses), Mary Ann is the film's defacto leading lady.[100] The plane in

Thirty Seconds was titled the "Ruptured Duck", a far less feminine name than Mary Ann or Lulu

Belle, but with good reason—the Ruptured Duck is destroyed. Another example is the HMS

Torrin (a masculine name this time) from the British film *In Which We Serve*, directed by Noel

Coward and David Lean for the Ministry of Information (the British equivalent to the Office of

War Information). The film's plot deals with the sinking of a Royal Navy destroyer, and starts

with the narration "this is the story of a ship".[101] Crowther praised *In Which We Serve* for its

expression of "national fortitude," and points out how the ship's men of all ranks are "filled with

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[99] "4,000,000 Women Busy in War Jobs," *New York Times, 11* January, 1943.

[100] An article in the *New York Times* discusses the fact that American aircraft began to get names during World War II. This idea had already been put in place by the British effectively with both tanks and planes, and made for "less confusion and better reading for the public". "All Our Aircraft in War Get Names," *New York Times*, 4 Jan., 1943.

[101] *In Which We Serve*, DVD, directed by Noel Coward and David Lean. (United Kingdom: Two Cities Films, 1942).

deep pride in their vessel and a personal attachment to her".[102] The film contains a scene where

the character Alex Kinross (played by Celia Johnson), the wife of the Torrin's Captain Kinross

(played by Noel Coward), explains that every navy woman has "one undefeated rival—her

husband's ship".[103] Further proving this statement is a scene in which Chief Petty Officer Hardy

(played by Bernard Miles) lifts his glass in a Christmas toast and states: "I love her—I love her

with every fiber of my being; ladies and gentlemen—HMS Torrin". Crowther points out that the

ship symbolizes everything that these soldiers are: "The ship represents themselves, their

families. It is their nation. It is their world. The ship is the heart and sinew of all who sail in

her".[104] Even more than Lulu Belle in *Sahara* or Mary Ann in *Air Force*, the men of *In Which

We Serve* have turned their weapon of war into a surrogate woman. While women on the

homefront were masculinized during the war, soldiers' weapons on the warfront were feminized

because women represented the domestic ideal that men were fighting to protect.[105]

The End of the War

As this chapter has shown, Hollywood's combat films covered all branches of the

military: the army (*Sahara*), marines (*Guadalcanal Diary*), navy (*Destination Tokyo*) and air

force (*Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*). All of these films stressed similar ideas about masculinity by

tying it to soldiering. Whether it was emphasizing the uniform, bravery, leadership, or the ability

to inflict violence, the ideal masculinity was also the ideal combat soldier. A number of different

masculinities were present in these films, but all of them respected the authority of the

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[102] Bosley Crowther, 'In Which We Serve,' Depicting Cruel Realities of This War, Is Presented at Capitol. Noel Coward Heads Cast," *New York Times*, 24 December, 1942.
[103] *In Which We Serve*, DVD, directed by Noel Coward and David Lean. (United Kingdom: Two Cities Films, 1942).
[104] *In Which We Serve*, Noel Coward and David Lean.
[105] Biesen, *Blackout*, 92.

hegemonic masculinity, which was always the white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant character. The various masculinities were also shown through how these soldiers killed the enemy or were killed by the enemy. Most characters that represented subordinate masculinities experienced the least noble death scenes. While authority figures could die in combat, they were portrayed as brave and heroic until the very end, with the rare exception of in *They Were Expendable*, discussed in the next chapter.

As the next chapter will show, the growing acceptance, indeed expectation, of violence in these combat films continued after the war had ended. After 1945 a new wave of films dealing with the consequences of war complicated masculinity by showing both mentally and physically disabled soldiers. While the hegemonic masculinity would continue to assert itself through violence in Hollywood films, the association with the military declined. Post-war films also depicted the violence of the war as more brutal and less heroic, and thus less importance was placed on men being good at carrying out violence.

Chapter 5: Violence in Films After the War

As victory over the Germans and the Japanese became more certain, combat films began to lose their appeal to American audiences. Hollywood started to produce films about the Allies' imminent victory and postwar society. Although a few war films were released in 1945 and 1946, they were not as popular as in previous years. After four years of war American viewing audiences were tired of watching films about the war. Additionally, the 'perfect' soldier was no longer necessary, and soldiers could be portrayed as men with the same weaknesses as non-combatants. As a result, Hollywood began to portray soldiers as fallible and less heroic. Instead of films that characterized American soldiers as the embodiment of American masculinity, Hollywood produced films showing soldiers as average men thrown into war. Many postwar films also focused on the social problems that affected returning veterans, exploring the consequences of war and the physical and emotional well-being of the men involved. The previous chapters explored how changes in American society affected the kinds of films Hollywood produced, and this became no less true after the war. The films about returning soldiers and their readjustment to civilian life show that representations of masculinity changed to incorporate the large number of mentally and physically damaged veterans. Able-bodied physically and mentally fit men were idealized by recruitment efforts for the war, but the large number of heroic disabled veterans returning from overseas challenged the era's hegemonic masculinity.[106] Popular perceptions of American masculinity changed in the postwar period and Hollywood was uniquely situated to influence this change – or at least show it onscreen.

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[106] David A. Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 9.

Hollywood was increasingly able to influence society; more than 90 million Americans (60 percent of the population) went to the movies every week in 1946.[107]

As the previous chapters discussed, concepts of masculinity and violence reflected contemporary events and popular concerns. In the early 1930's Hollywood showed the rise of organized crime and gangsters, and from 1941 to 1945 Hollywood portrayed World War II. Now that the war was over, Hollywood needed to produce films that reflected contemporary concerns. While combat films released after 1945 did poorly (such as *A Walk in the Sun* and *They Were Expendable*), some of the most popular postwar films dealt with veterans or issues arising from the war. For example, *Pride of the Marines*, *The Best Years of Our Lives,* and *The Men* all looked at the rehabilitation of war veterans. While these films examined a major social issue of the period, by focusing on physical disabilities, Hollywood largely avoided officially acknowledging the emotional and psychological impact of the war on masculinity.[108]

Postwar masculinity continued to be defined by the hypermasculine characteristics of the war, but there was also a fragility and vulnerability from the large number of mentally and physically disabled veterans.[109] Marlon Brando's portrayal of the paraplegic war veteran Ken in the film *The Men* shows the reliance on women that was necessary for many men to recover, despite their tough exterior. Women's roles were clearly defined as gentle nurturers and caretakers by Hollywood in the postwar period. While there was a desire to return to the domestic masculinity of the prewar years, society had been unalterably changed by the war. Reverting to the "golden years" of the past was simply not possible. Many Americans felt a

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[107] Wheeler W. Dixon, "Movies and Postwar Recovery," in *American Cinema of the 1940s: Themes and Variations,* edited by Wheeler W. Dixon (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 165.
[108] Stella Bruzzi, *Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-War Hollywood* (London: British Film Institue, 2005), 20.
[109] Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History*, 10.

nostalgia for the fictional time before the war. As Peter G. Filene points out, definitions of masculinity have typically placed importance on men's occupation in defining their identities. This led to problems when men whose identities were defined by military service were no longer required after 1945.[110] The defining characteristic of American masculinity during the war was the military, but the importance of the military declined with the defeat of the Axis. As a result, male identity was not clearly defined after the war, and went through a long period of transition. Postwar masculinity showed an underlying vulnerability that was hidden during the war, and many films rejected the aggressive and self-assured model for manhood.[111] The transition from military to civilian life was abrupt, and the difficulty in making this change for many veterans was reflected in *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

Although several movies from the Film Noir genre (*Maltese Falcon* and *Double Indemnity)* were made before the war, the genre became increasingly popular after 1945. The war strongly informed Film Noir and it was the 1946 release of films such as *The Blue Dahlia* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* that popularized the genre. Film Noir offered a darker and more realistic portrayal of American society than Hollywood had shown before the war. The connection between Film Noirs and the war itself requires an understanding of the social changes produced by the war. By building on the gangster films of the 1930's, Hollywood created a bleaker and more menacing America that reflected society's constant renegotiation of masculinity. [112] Gender researcher Greg Forter describes the hardboiled detective novel as "the

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[110] Peter. G Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 165.
[111] Kimmel, *Men and Masculinities*, 96.
[112] John Wesley Fawell, *The Hidden Art of Hollywood: In Defense of the Studio Era Film (*Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Groups, Inc., 2008), 2.

most resolutely masculinist" genre.[113] He argues that the books include a misogyny that defines

the male hero by vanquishing a feminine character that threatens his sense of self. In the case of

Film Noirs, masculinity largely reverted to the prewar model seen in gangster films: lone

protagonists that challenged authority by associating themselves with crime and violence.[114] This

conflict reflected the very real problem that many soldiers had readjusting to domestic life;

soldiers that were praised for their ability to perform violence during the war were now expected

to become domesticated, loving fathers, and put the war behind them.[115] This was made difficult

in the years immediately after 1945 when uneducated veterans saturated the labor force and

made it difficult for men to reclaim their status as breadwinners.[116] Many veterans also suffered

from unrecognized psychological damage wrought by the war, leading to an increase in

alcoholism and domestic abuse.[117] While historian Robert L. Grisworld's *Fatherhood in America*

deals with masculinity, he focuses on fatherhood. The United States avoided drafting fathers

until almost the end of the war,[118] so they were not commonly seen in the films I look at, but I

expand on his research to include other aspects of gender roles (especially husbands). Griswold

discusses the importance placed on fathers being wage earners for their families, and the concern

over the large numbers of unemployed soldiers returning from the war. Expanding on Griswold's

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[113] Greg Forter, *Murdering Masculinities: Fantasies of Gender and Violence in the American Crime Novel* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), 11.

[114] Biesen, *Blackout*, 157.

[115] John Bodnar, *Blue-Collar Hollywood: Liberalism Democracy and Working People in American Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 94.

[116] Thomas A. Bruscino, *A Nation Forged in War: How World War II Taught Americans to Get Along* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 165. Some other useful scholarly works on the G.I. Bill are: Keith W. Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 1974); David R. B. Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); and Theodore R. Mosch, *The G.I. Bill: A Breakthrough in Educational and Social Policy in the United States* (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition, 1975).

[117] Aphrodite Matsakis, *Back from the Front: Combat Trauma, Love, and the Family* (Baltimore, MD: Sidran Institute Press, 2007), 38.

[118] "Wheeler Moves to Defer Fathers over 30 in Cases Where Their Children are Minors," *New York Times*, 25 February 1945.

research I examine the effort of veterans to reclaim their male breadwinner status, and these issues were reflected in several of the films I discuss in this chapter.

My discussion of Hollywood's treatment of the disabled in film is influenced by historian Martin F. Norden's *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies*, which provides a history of Hollywood's presentation of the physically disabled during the twentieth century.[119] Although only a portion of his study is dedicated to World War II, he argues that Hollywood films portrayed disabled veterans as different, or 'other'. According to Norden, in Hollywood physical disabilities were and are treated as either worthy of pity or fear, thus separating them from the 'normal' and able-bodied of 'regular' American society.[120] Thus, the first round of postwar films dealt with disabled veterans' relationships with their families, and specifically their feelings of doubt regarding their ability to still be 'men' and provide for their families. [121] This caused many men to doubt whether they would be accepted by their families. I build on Norden's work through an examination of Hollywood's presentation of how veterans' disabilities weakened their senses of manliness. I argue that their disabilities prevented veterans from portraying their masculine physical strength, making them feel emasculated. Films like *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Men* served to reassure audiences that disabled men could provide for their families just as well as able-bodied men.

Particularly difficult for the construction of masculinity in the post war period was how disabled veterans challenged the relationship between the norm and the able-bodied. Due to their psychical and physical disabilities, the veterans were treated as a marginalized form of masculinity. According to historian David A. Gerber, the disabled veteran played a significant

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[119] Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies* (United States of America: Martin F. Norden, 1994).
[120] Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation*, 11.
[121] Ibid., 167.

role in the renegotiation of masculinity after World War II.[122] Gerber's work claims that

Hollywood presented a hopeful story for disabled veterans in their struggle to come to terms with

their handicaps, thus ignoring the reality that veterans perpetually struggled with their disabilities

in a society that had little interest in learning about their challenges. One of the main anxieties of

postwar American was the fear of 'damaged soldiers' bringing the violence and aggression of the

war back to the homefront.[123] Christian S. Jarvis' study on postwar masculinity confirms

society's disinterest in the physically and emotionally disabled. During the war, Jarvis notes, that

the masculine ideal was: muscular, fearless, youthful and athletic. The demands of winning the

war necessitated that soldiers possess such traits in order to ensure the nation's victory.

Interestingly, Jarvis draws attention the paradox of war: in order to win, the military needed men

that were physically fit, but the nature of war ensured that these same men would be either killed,

maimed, or damaged emotionally in the process. This paradox is readily apparent in the films

about disabled veterans that I discuss. Because I am tying violence to masculinity, it is the

performance of masculinity that is most important to my argument, and I use Jarvis's focus on

the physical aspects more for contextual purposes. My study confirms much of what Jarvis found

that because physical strength was seen as an intrinsic part of masculinity, many disabled

veterans found it hard to retain their sense of manhood, as reflected in *The Best Years of Our*

Lives and *The Men*. The physical was important during the war, because America needed

physically fit men to fight the war, but in the postwar years it was less stressed. Masculinity

would continue to be renegotiated by Hollywood after 1945, however, and non-war films would

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[122] See David A. Gerber, "Heroes and Misfits: The Troubled Social Reintegration of Disabled Veterans in *The Best Years of Our Lives*" and "In Search of Al Schmid: War Hero, Blinded Veteran, Everyman."
[123] Brian Baker, *Masculinity in Fiction and Film* (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 1-2.

begin to define it post-war. The Film Noirs that I discuss in the last part of this chapter deal more with the performance of masculinity.

Sheri Chinen Biesen's *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* traces how the political and social changes brought about by World War II were responsible for shaping this genre. Drawing on discussions between the studios and the Production Code, she argues that the conditions of World War II were essential to developing the Film Noir genre.[124] Biesen argues that the war changed how Americans regarded onscreen violence through exposure to harsh and brutal violence. I expand on Biesen's work in this chapter by examining the effect that returning veterans had on American society's acceptance of violence, especially through the disabled veterans that served as a constant reminder of the brutality of the war. In the book *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir* Mike Chopra-Gant discusses the role of the femme fatale in Film Noirs.[125] The large number of women forced out of their jobs so men could reclaim their prewar jobs also had an impact on American society. There were real social anxieties regarding the liberation many women experienced by working in previously male-only sectors, and these anxieties informed the Film Noirs, making the femme fatale a commentary on postwar American society.[126]

Postwar American Social Issues

While the postwar years are often viewed by Hollywood with nostalgia as a period of fun and innocence before the Korean War, historians have described it as a period of fear and

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[124] Biesen, *Blackout*, 218.
[125] Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America*, 161-164.
[126] Ibid., 163.

paranoia.[127] Having survived two world wars, the United States wanted to avoid a third.

Nonetheless, the United States did not revert to the isolationism that had informed international

relations during the 1930's. A new international body, the United Nations, was created to replace

the defunct League of Nations. Ratified on 24 October 1945, the charter of the United Nations

promised "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime

has brought untold sorrow to mankind".[128] Following the war, there was a brief period of

optimism in the United States, created by the formation of the United Nations and the fact that a

postwar depression did not occur.[129] Prosperity and peace seemed possible, but by 1948 the first

short recession began and fear of communism had many Americans worried.[130]

Europe was physically divided after the war between Eastern and Western Europe. This

division is best represented by the situation in Germany after 1945; the country was divided into

an Eastern Sector occupied by the Soviet Union, and three Western sectors divided between the

United States, the United Kingdom and France. The United States attempted to influence and

financially support the democratic countries of Western Europe, most notably France and the

United Kingdom through the Marshall Plan, which attempted to speed up European economic

recovery.[131] Eastern Europe remained more suspicious of American influence, especially when

the Soviet Union began to play a greater role in world politics.[132] The creation of the United

Nations did not quell fears regarding future wars between the superpowers. Moreover, the

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[127] Cynthia Hendershot, *Paranoia, the Bomb, and the 1950s Science Fiction Films* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 7.

[128] "Charter of the United Nations; Preamble," http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/preamble.shtml. (Accessed 11 June 2011).

[129] For a discussion of the contrast between the Film Noir and an optimistic postwar America, see Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America*, 4.

[130] June Axinn and Mark J. Stern, *Social Welfare: A History of the American Response to Need* (United States of America: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon, 2007), 243.

[131] Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshal Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 26.

[132] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 8.

creation of the atomic bomb in 1945 meant that the next world war would be even more destructive, and unlike the last war it would likely not remain conveniently overseas for Americans. Even without the fear of nuclear war, the toll of the last war remained ever present. This fear created a nostalgia for pre-war America and a desire to return to the way things were imagined to have been before the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

After the war the PCA and local censorship boards fought to regain their relevance.[133] During World War II the censorship of films had come from three main sources: self-censorship by producers, censorship from private groups (PCA, Legion of Decency and local censor boards), and censorship by the government (OWI and in some cased Washington's War Department). The groups were often at odds with each other (as shown in Chapters 3 and 4).The studio producers were interested in making films that appealed to audiences; the PCA was interested in maintaining certain social morals; and the OWI was interested in supporting the war effort. The PCA's strict control over violence had been eroded by the OWI's influence, as well as Hollywood's need to more realistically portray the war. With the war over, the OWI dissolved on 31 August 1945.[134] At the same time, the PCA failed to reclaim its pre-war stature and influence. Although combat films lost their appeal in the post-war period, the onscreen violence made possible by combat films did not. Indeed, onscreen violence became a regular feature of many post-war films. For the most part, Hollywood continued its practice of self-censorship but became more lenient regarding onscreen violence.

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) attained considerable power in 1945 (although it was first established in 1938) when it became a permanent investigative

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[133] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 320-323.
[134] Betty Houchin Winfield, *FDR and the News Media* (Illiniois, The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 1990), 165.

committee of the United States House of Representatives. Represented by politician Edward J.

Hart, HUAC investigated suspected threats of undemocratic or communist propaganda.[135] This

form of censorship was more threatening than either the PCA or the OWI because it had the full

backing of Congress and HUAC was able to censor Hollywood films using federal legislation. In

1945 William Hays retired from his role as head of the PCA and passed the position to Eric

Johnston, a former Chamber of Commerce President, who willingly supported the HUAC's

investigation of Hollywood.[136] Whereas the PCA's charter was intended to "uphold the larger

moral responsibility of motion pictures"[137] the HUAC was interested in maintaining American

political values in order to prevent Communist sympathizers from carrying out any subversive

activities.[138] Gender historian Robert J. Corber argues that during the Cold War, American were

discouraged from exerting their independence from the domestic sphere and were instead

expected to be active participants in family life.[139] As a result, men were more likely to surrender

their individuality to an external authority. The Cold War-era was shaped by anxieties

concerning gender, sexuality and the male self. Men lost their sense of power and autonomy due

to American political culture of the era. At the same time, the Cold War demanded hard

masculine toughness and branded anything else as a potential threat to national security.[140] The

fear of appearing soft dominated cultural and politics life through the 1940's and 1950's, and the

HUAC's investigations exploited that fear to accuse men of being Communist sympathizers.

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[135] Louis Pizzitola, *Heart Over Hollywood: Power, Passion, and Propaganda in the Movies* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2002), 415.

[136] Jon Lewis, *Hollywood V. Hard Core: How the Struggle Over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002), 37.

[137] "The Motion Picture Production Code (as Published 31 March, 1930)" in Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 594.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Robert J. Corber, "Cold War Masculinity", in *Men and Masculinities*, 162.

[140] K.A. Cuordileone, "'Politics in an Age of Anxiety': Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960", in *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (Sep., 2000), 516.

The HUAC began to investigate the influence of Communists in Hollywood on 20 October 1947. In response to the forming of the HUAC, Hollywood producers began blacklisting actors, screenwriters and directors who were suspected to have had some affiliation with the Communist Party.[141] When the Hollywood Ten (prominent Hollywood screenwriters and directors) were blacklisted by Jonhston's PCA on 25 November 1947 all opposition to the HUAC collapsed.[142] The HUAC did not force Hollywood to blacklist so many prominent Hollywood figures, rather the decision to blacklist them was made by the heads of studios.[143] Much like before, Hollywood chose to restrict the content of its films on its own. In part, Hollywood's self-censorship was undertaken in order to avoid the scrutiny of the HUAC, but primarily it was a function of trying to avoid the appearance of being 'un-American'.[144] Indeed, Hollywood went to great lengths to ensure that it appeared as American as apple pie. Under its own auspices, Hollywood was far more restrictive than either the PCA or OWI.

Nonetheless, the HUAC meticulously investigated the film industry. By the 1950's over 200 suspected Communists had been blacklisted by Hollywood studios.[145] Blacklisted individuals remained 'in exile' from 1947 until 1960 when Dalton Trumbo (one of the Hollywood Ten) was given a screenwriter credit on both Otto Preminger's *Exodus* and Kirk Douglas' *Spartacus*.[146] Fear of being singled out as a Communist sympathizer encouraged Hollywood producers to make movies that were patriotic in content and this prevented any harsh criticism of World War II from being undertaken. The environment of the Cold War and the activities of

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[141] Pizzitola, *Hearst Over Hollywood*, 417.

[142] Robert J. Bresler, *Us vs. Them: American Political and Cultural Conflict from WW II to Watergate* (Willmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 22.

[143] Larry Ceplain and Steven Englun, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community,1930-60,* (United States of America: First Illinois, 2003) xv.

[144] John Fuegi, *Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics, and the Making of Modern Drama* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2002), 473.

[145] Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 283.

[146] John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture* (United States of America: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 242.

HUAC led to a new form of Hollywood self-censorship that severely limited what topics Hollywood was willing to tackle onscreen. Any topics considered 'un-American' were avoided.

Aside from the obvious change brought about by the end of hostilities, the end of World War II also initiated other transformations in American society. Returning soldiers worked hard to make up for lost time and to return to 'normal.' The postwar period witnessed an enormous baby boom. In 1945, there were 2.29 million marriages and 3.4 million live births. [147] By the end of the 1950's there were more than 50 million new births in the United States.[148] As the typical American family size grew, Hollywood stressed the importance and integrity of the nuclear heterosexual family.[149] Increasing family size caused fathers to reclaim their status in the household as the patriarchal breadwinner. This also lead to an increase in consumer culture, as men and women reunited after the war rushed to make up for lost time.

While the consumer culture of the 1920's had been disrupted by the Great Depression and World War II, it resumed in the postwar years.[150] The late 1940's came to be dominated by a 'cult of domesticity' that attempted to redefine women as domestic workers and not factory workers. This was part of an effort to return American society to what was considered 'normal' in the prewar years.[151] Women were forced out of the jobs they had acquired during the war, and films recast them as housewives and mothers. These women were expected to take on the task of welcoming soldiers home and reintegrating them back into American society. Wives were expected to assess their husbands' needs, monitor their behavior, and if the husbands remained

[147] William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *World War II and the Postwar Years in America: A Historical and Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC., 2010), 73.
[148] David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, and Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant, Volume II: To 1865* (Boston: Cengage Learning, Inc, 2010), 745.
[149] Chuck Dixon uses *The Clock*, *Weekend at Waldorf* and *Thrill of a Romance* as examples of post-war films that all stressed couple's relationships. Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940s*, 142.
[150] Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 195.
[151] Gary Dymski and Dorene Isenberg, *Seeking Shelter on the Pacific Rim: Financing Globalization, Social Change, and The Housing Market* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002), 105.

disillusioned after several months of being home, the wives were to urge their husbands to seek counseling (or to give counseling themselves).[152] At the same time, women were expected to defer to returning soldiers in the workplace.[153] Obviously this was not always the reality and many women resisted giving up their jobs, but Hollywood enthusiastically supported the fantasy of a postwar society that was premised upon the male breadwinner, the heterosexual couple, and the nuclear family.

Veterans and Post-War Films

Returning veterans who wanted to return to their prewar lives came to the harsh realization that society had fundamentally changed in their absence.[154] Many soldiers found it extremely difficult to readjust to civilian life. Hollywood began to examine the experience of returning soldiers in *Pride of the Marines*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, and *The Men*. The issue of veteran rehabilitation became a major topic in postwar American society.[155] Many returning soldiers found they had little training, that their only real skill set was soldiering, and that the military no longer needed them.[156] Issues like spiraling inflation, labour disputes, and housing shortages led many of these war veterans to wonder if the war had truly been won and to

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[152]Ann Pfau, "Allotment Annies and Other Wayward Wives: Wartime Concerns About Female Disloyalty and the Problem of the Return Veteran", in *The United States and the Second World War: New Perspectives on Diplomacy, War and the Home Front*, edited by G. Kurt Piehler (United States of America: Faltom University Press, 2010), 107-108.

[153] For more on the problem surrounding women's role in the recovering of disabled veterans, and how it was reflected in post-1945 Hollywood films (especially *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Men*), see Sonya Michel, "Danger on the Home Front. Motherhood, Sexuality, and Disabled Veterans in American Postwar Films," in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3, 1 (1992): 109-128.

[154] Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture From the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 51-52.

[155] David A. Gerber, "Heroes and Misfits: The Troubled Social Reintegration of Disabled Veterans in The Best Years of Our Lives," in *Disabled Veterans in History*, edited by David A. Gerber (United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 70-95.

[156] Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 177.

question what they had fought for.[157] All of these problems effectively created a sense of postwar disenchantment.

Films that showed soldiers having human weaknesses like fear and alcoholism were not made during the war because American society needed its soldiers to appear strong and invincible. The United States needed heroes and Hollywood delivered. While average men needed to be convinced to kill, Hollywood could not deal with issues that made potential soldiers appear afraid or unwilling to fight. However, once the war was won soldiering was open to re-interpretation, and the optimistic combat films of the latter war years quickly lost their appeal. Two of the last combat films produced during the war were *They Were Expendable* (released in 1945, directed and produced by John Ford and released by Metro-Goldwin-Mayer)*,* a film about a Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron during the Battle of the Philippines, and *A Walk in the Sun* (released in 1945, directed and produced by Lewis Milestone, and distributed by 20th Century Fox), a film about a platoon that took part in the Invasion of Italy. About *They Were Expendable, New York Times* critic Bosley Crowther wrote that if the film "had been released last year—or the year before—it would have been a ringing smash" and that "with the war concluded and the burning thirst for vengeance somewhat cooled, it comes as a cinematic postscript to the martial heat and passion of the last four years".[158] According to a *LIFE* magazine article by Oliver Jensen, "uniforms [had become] 'box-office poison,' the movies beat all other industries to reconversion. Save for a few films dealing with the warriors' readjustment to civilian life".[159]

A Walk in the Sun (1945) tells the story of the 1943 invasion of Italy, and was considered to be a very realistic portrayal of the common soldier's experience. Released before the end of

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[157] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940s*, 163.
[158] *The New York Times Directory of the Film*, 89.
[159] Oliver Jensen, "Too Much Success; Movies Made More Money Than Progress," *LIFE*, Nov, 25, 1946, 70.

the war the film's failure at the box office showed that the combat film genre had already worn itself out. While earlier combat films like *Wake Island* had shown battle scenes where men fought gloriously to the last man, *A Walk in the Sun* offered a much bleaker view of American casualties. Even authority figures were no longer infallible. When the character of Captain Tyne (Dana Andrews) is killed, Sergeant Porter (Herbert Rudley) takes charge of the unit, however, Porter later suffers from battle fatigue and has to be replaced. The last time Porter is seen he is openly crying. This portrayal of a leader breaking under pressure would have been unimaginable only a year earlier. Aside from this film, the mental stress soldiers experienced was not one of the realities of combat discussed by Hollywood. Such an oversight ignored the realities of combat, in which many soldiers experienced gross stress reactions quite commonly.[160] Described as either 'war neurosis' or 'combat exhaustion', gross stress reactions were seen as a sign of weakness by the military because it was not yet considered a psychological disorder.[161] *A Walk in the Sun* portrayed battle fatigue as something that could affect any soldier no matter how brave and heroic.

To complicate the experience of war further , *A Walk in the Sun* purposely kept the crew's mission objectives vague. By not outlining a clear goal, the soldiers' deaths are made to appear meaningless and without purpose, whereas earlier combat films had clear objectives that justified the cost in soldiers' lives. Both through Captain Tyne's death, Sergeant Potter's breakdown, and the lack of a clear objective, the previously unquestionable authority of commanding officers is

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[160] Terry Copp, "From Neurasthenia to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," in *The Veterans Charter and Post-World War II Canada*, eds. Peter Neary and J.L. Granatstein (Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 154.
[161] Jennifer L. Hillman writes that: "During World War II, soldiers who displayed depression, tremors, and exaggerated startle responses after traumatic battle events were called 'psychos' by their commanding officers. However, in response to information that soldiers were more likely to return to the battlefield if some level of compassion were shown to them, their ailments were the referred to as war neurosis or combat exhaustion," *Crisis Intervention and Trauma Counseling: New Approaches to Evidence-Based Practice* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2002), 62.

eroded in this film. The film stands in direct contrast to films like *Sahara* and *Thirty Seconds to Tokyo* that showed strong authoritative leads played by major stars like Humphrey Bogart and Carey Grant. The general sense that the average soldier had very little control over their lives or understanding of the broader objectives of the war was common in several other combat pictures as well, namely *The Story of G.I. Joe*, *They Were Expendable*, and *Objective, Burma!* All of these films were made near the end of the war. These films portrayed the brutal American defeats in the early days of the war. By 1945 the war's high cost in American lives was impossible to ignore, and *A Walk in the Sun* depressingly acknowledged the war's toll.

Physically disabled soldiers were also problematic in the portrayal of American masculinity; on the one hand these soldiers were no longer able-bodied men, but on the other they had become disabled in the most heroic of circumstances – fighting for their country's freedom. The first disabled World War II veteran was shown in the 1944 film *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (discussed in Chapter 4) . The film's main character was permanently injured in a plane crash. According to Martin F. Norden while *Thirty Seconds* "didn't go terribly far in exploring the vets' post-disablement lives. Nevertheless, they did endow their disabled characters with an aura of acceptability and formed the basis for a trend that would flourish during the first few years of the postwar era. The so-called 'Noble Warrior' had returned."[162] Physical disability had to be re-imagined because the large numbers of heroically disabled veterans challenged social norms about masculinity.

Hollywood produced a number of films dealing with social problems surrounding the rehabilitation of soldiers. *Pride of the Marines*, released in 1946 by Warner Bros. and directed by

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[162] Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation*, 156.

Delmer Davis, addressed the issue of soldier rehabilitation.[163] The film was based on the real-life

story of Marine Sergeant Al Schmid who singlehandedly killed over 200 Japanese soldiers while

defending his post on Guadalcanal. [164] The film made Schmid into the World War II equivalent

of Sergeant York, discussed in Chapter 2.[165] The major difference in Schmid's story was that he

was blinded while carrying out his mission. His disability made him reliant on his wife to help

him return to civilian life. As historian Ann Pfau states, women were seen as necessary for the

reintegration of veterans after the war, and this was even more true with disabled men.[166] It is

Schmid's girlfriend Ruth that helps him learn how to cope with his disability in the third chapter

of the film. The theme of women as rehabilitators was common in the postwar period, and the

positive effects of women's loving devotion and marriage are clearly evident in this film.[167]

While *Pride of the Marines* portrays Schmid's story as ultimately positive, the reality was far

different. Negative stereotypes which characterized blind men as a drain on society, as beggars,

and as helpless and dependent on their families made it difficult for Schmid and others like him

to readjust to civilian life. In spite of the cheerful attitude Schmid presented to the public, he

experienced a great deal of difficulty adjusting to being blind.[168] While *Pride of the Marines* had

a very optimistic ending, future films would be more grim when dealing with similar issues. The

disabled soldiers in *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Men* are shown struggling with their

handicaps.

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[163] The film's director Delmer Daves had also directed *Destination Tokyo*, discussed in Chapter 3. Also worth noting, one of the film's screenwriters, Albert Maltz, was part of the Hollywood Ten that were blacklisted in 1947 for their 'un-American' views.

[164] A more elaborate look at Al Schmid's story is told by David A. Gerber in "In Search of Al Schmid: War Hero, Blinded Veteran, Everyman," in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discources of Disability*, edited by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 111-133.

[165] As discussed in Chapter 1, Alvin York lead an attack with just seven other Americans that killed 28 German soldiers and captured another 132. The film *Sergeant York* (1941) was made about his life.

[166] Ann Pfau, "Allotment Annies and Other Wayward Wives", 107-108.

[167] Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 102.

[168] Gerber, *In Search of Al Schmid*, 116.

The Best Years of Our Lives was not a combat film and certainly did not glorify war. Instead, the film focused on the mental and physical sacrifices made by many American men. It was the year's most popular film and demonstrates the relevance that films about the war continued to have for audiences.[169] Released in 1946, *The Best Years* was based on MacKinlay Kantor's novel *Glory for Me*.[170] Produced by Samuel Goldwyn and directed by William Wyler, the film told the story of servicemen: Fred, Al and Homer after the war. Each had a debilitating condition that made their return to civilian life difficult. The character of Fred Derry (Dana Andrews) was an ace bomber during the war and now suffered from nightmares. His wife Marie (Virginia Mayo) is more interested in spending his money and exploiting his status as an ex-soldier, than helping him adjust to civilian life. Marie shirks her duties as housewife, and to make matters even worse, Fred also discovers that she has been cheating on him. While the film clearly condemns Marie's behavior, her treatment of Fred's condition was not unusual. Many women had no idea of how to deal with their husbands who had returned from the war. Pfau argues that there were widespread doubts about the sexual morality of soldiers' wives, which undermined family stability and led to domestic violence.[171] By the film's end, it is implied that Fred will marry Al's daughter Peggy, who is expected to do a better job than Marie of helping him cope with civilian life. The character of Al (Frederic March) becomes an alcoholic and also has difficulties returning to civilian life. He is troubled by his alcoholism, but overcomes it. He manages better than the other two veterans in the film, thanks to the support of his loyal wife Milly. The most conflicted character is Homer (Harold Russell) who lost both his hands when his

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[169] For more discussion on *The Best Years of Our Lives*, see David A. Gerber's "Heroes and Misfits: The Troubled Social Reintegration of Disabled Veterans in The Best Years of Our Lives", in *Disabled Veterans in History*, edited by David A. Gerber (United States of America: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[170] *The Best Years of Our Lives* was multi-award winning, with seven Oscar wins, including Best Picture. Harold Russell also won two Oscars, one for best supporting actor, and an honorary one for "bringing hope and courage to his fellow veterans".

[171] Pfau, "Allotment Annies and Other Wayward Wives", 100.

aircraft carrier sank.[172] Homer's troubles are alleviated when he marries Wilma, who loves him despite his disabilities. While the film is bleak at times, its message is optimistic: while rehabilitation is not easy, things will turn out fine in the end, and everything is made easier with the help of a good woman.

The Best Years was the prototypical film in Hollywood's discussion of disabled veterans. The presentation of intimate relations between able-bodied and disabled persons had never been shown as explicitly on film before.[173] According to gender and disabilities researcher Russell P. Shuttleworth men with disabilities feared that they did not embody the masculine model; their inability to embrace or hold their partner made men see themselves as undesirable to the opposite sex.[174] As a result, disabled men often waited for the women to make the first move, as reflected in *The Best Years*.[175] The difficulties Homer experienced without the use of his hands is shown in a scene where Wilma helps him to undress. Although he is very insecure about letting his wife undress him, Homer is not emasculated in the scene. By showing Wilma and Homer in the bedroom together the scene reassures audiences that the disabled are still fully functional as men despite not being able-bodied. Many returning veterans were dependent on women, and this scene helped to alleviate fears that many men had about appearing weak if they had to rely on their wives for simple physical tasks like undressing. This would have been a sensational scene even if Homer were not disabled, but as it humanist realism rather than sexuality, the Code approved it.[176] It is doubtful that this scene would have been approved under different

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[172] Bernard Frizell, "Handless Veteran: Amateur Actor Harold Russell has no trouble with hooks, a great deal with anxious driends," *LIFE*, 16 December 1946, 74.

[173] Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation*, 314.

[174] Russel P. Shuttleworth, "Disabled Masculinity: Expanding the Masculine Repertoire", in *Gendering Disability*, eds. Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchison (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 170.

[175] Shuttleworth, "Disabled Masculinity," 172.

[176] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940's*, 167,

circumstances because films in the 1940's did not allow men and women to be shown sharing a room unless they were clearly in separate beds.

Five years after the war ended the issue of disabled veterans continued to be addressed in film. Produced in 1950, *The Men*, directed by Fred Zinnemann and produced by Stanley Kramer, is about a Lieutenant who was injured in combat and became a paraplegic. Like *The Best Years*, the film explores the psychological drama of postwar rehabilitation, and how preexisting gender relationships could help veterans readjust.[177] Ken (Marlon Brando) initially resists rehabilitation, and ends his engagement with his fiancé Ellen because he believes that he is "not a man anymore".[178] After convincing Ken that she needs him, and that he will be able to support her with his government pension (like any man would), Ellen convinces Brando's character to marry her. However, unlike *The Best Years* and *Pride of the Marines*, the wedding does not end his problems. He continues to exhibit the violent behaviors he learnt during the war. It is not until he is involved in a drinking and driving accident that Ken accepts professional help in order to fulfill his responsibilities as husband and provider. The film ends with Brando's character recognizing that his proper role is as a husband.[179] *The Men*'s message about disabled veterans reestablishing their prewar lifestyles reflects the broader social ethos of the era, when men were expected to be both the family provider and the responsible husband. This expectation for returning soldiers (disabled or not) to find jobs, get married, and start families was part of the broader attempt to reclaim 'normal' prewar American society.

The Men is very clear about the role Ellen plays in his recovery. Her responsibility is to help her husband accept his life as a paraplegic and fulfill his duties as a husband, and thus

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[177] Michel, "Danger on the Home Front," 123.
[178] *The Men,* DVD, directed by Fred Zinnemann (USA: Stanley Kramer Productions, 1950).
[179] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 111.

ensured he can return to a 'normal' life and put the war behind him. Under the insistence of his wife, Ken learns to deal with his disability. As in *Pride of the Marines* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*, the theme of rehabilitating war veterans reflects a major issue in American society. Whereas Schmid was made into a hero in *Pride of the Marines*, helping to justify his disability, Fred and Ken both found rehabilitation more difficult because they saw themselves as defined more by their disability than their heroism. Hollywood's attitude was that through the efforts of their wives disabled soldiers were reassured of their manliness. The message conveyed in all three films was that those injuries suffered by these veterans as a result of the war were reparable, much like the damage to American society as a whole.[180]

The Emergence of Film Noir

During the war filmmakers saw film violence as a necessary tool to illustrate what was happening overseas and why the Axis needed to be defeated.[181] For the sake of the war effort, Hollywood's combat films had to 'legitimize' violence. Hollywood grappled with this issue, and violence was re-imagined during and after the war. This re-imagining was reflected in the Film Noirs that flourished in the postwar years as Americans came to terms with the 'new world' of violence that was thrust upon them. Hollywood could no longer shy away from violence as they had with gangster films.

Many historians consider *The Maltese Falcon*, released in 1941, to be the first in the Film Noir genre.[182] While producers and directors of the 1940's and 1950's were not actively trying to

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[180] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 112.

[181] Lester D. Friedman, *Citizen Spielberg* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 182.

[182] Again stressing that none of these films were made in a vacuum, Crowther points out the obvious influences *Maltese Falcon* had: "Warners and Mr. Huston give us again something of the old thrill we got from Alfred Hitchcock's brilliant melodramas or from 'The Thin Man' before he died of hunger. Crowther makes no mention that

make 'Film Noirs,' as the term had not yet been coined, they were very conscious of making films that were stark commentaries about contemporary social problems.[183] These films were typically described as 'dark,' 'black,' and 'gloomy'.[184] Most of the films dealt with crime and were inspired by hard-boiled detective novels.[185] The most prominent Film Noir produced during the war was *Double Indemnity* released in 1944. *Double Indemnity* served as the prototype for Film Noir. According to film historian Sheri Chinen Biesen, the Film Noir "ma[de] no explicit reference to the Second World War, but its cynical tone, brutal violence, and shadowy visual style all suggest the bleak realities of a world at war."[186] While the films were not directly about the war in any way, they reflected the bleaker worldview that came out of it.

The popularity of Raymond Chandler's detective character Philip Marlowe helped to re-popularize the tough, violent loner character in film. Marlowe and similar archetypes closely resembled the morally ambiguous protagonists of the gangster films discussed in Chapter 1, but whereas gangster films were condemned and ultimately banned by Hollywood and the PCA, the Film Noirs were not.[187] Marlowe resonated with war veterans because he reflected their experiences with wartime trauma and postwar readjustment. He was emotionally troubled, self-destructive and a heavy drinker, but he was also strong and chivalrous. Marlowe's actions

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this is a unique film, or the beginning of a new genre. That title was applied to it years later. "'The Maltese Falcon,' a Fast Mystery-Thriller With Quality and Charm, at the Strand," *New York Times*, October 4, 1941.

[183] Biesen, *Blackout*, 8.

[184] William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *World War II and the Postwar Years in America: A Historical and Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC., 2010)*,* 387.

[185] The hard-boiled formula detective novel was most popular from 1927 to 1955. These novels were mostly defined by their use of violence and cynicism, and typically featured male detectives as protagonists. Lewis D. Moore, *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006): 7-23.

[186] Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Black Out: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1.

[187] News about gangsters was quite popular in postwar Hollywood. For example, famous gangster Bugsy Siegel was murdered in his Beverly Hills home on June 20, 1947 . Around the same time, Johnny Roselli returned to Hollywood after serving half of his six-year sentence for involvement in the Bioff-Browne-Schenk extortion and racketeering scandal that affected the film industry. Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940s*, 183.

appealed to returning veterans due to his ambivalent relationships with independent women;

Marlowe was always attracted to but never manipulated by women, thus representing

masculinity as independent rather than domesticated.[188] In other Film Noirs, femme fatales

regularly tricked men into doing their dirty work, which reflected anxieties concerning changing

gender roles, but Marlowe was not as easily manipulated. Chandler's private detective novels

strongly influenced Film Noir, and along with Dashiell Hammett's novel *Maltese Falcon* are

considered to have largely inspired the genre. The reason *Double Indemnity* is better classified as

the first true Film Noir rather than *Maltese Falcon* is its focus on an actual murder.[189] While

Maltese Falcon has a morally ambiguous protagonist and murder was part of the plot, the topic

of murdering someone is not central to the film. *Double Indemnity* marks the first time

Hollywood dealt with the morality of committing a murder. The motivating question of the film

was whether or not the main characters, Phyllis Dietrichson (played Barbara Stanwyck) and

Walter Neff (played Fred MacMurray), could kill a man and not get caught. *Double Indemnity*

dealt with the morality of murder in a way that the Production Code would not have allowed in

the pre-war years.[190] Several years earlier, the PCA had prevented *Double Indemnity* from being

made. Joseph Breen, head of the PCA, had warned the studios not to bother making the film in a

letter:

> The general low tone and sordid flavor of this story makes it, in our judgment,
> thoroughly unacceptable for screen presentation before mixed audiences in the theater. I
> am sure you will agree that it is most important…to avoid what the code calls 'the

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[188] Philippa Gates, "Chandler, Raymond (1888-1959)," in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, *Volume 1,* edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2004), 132.
[189] William Hare, *Early Film Noir: Greed, Lust, and Murder Hollywood Style* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2003), 24.
[190] Biesen, *Blackout*, 97.

hardening of audiences,' especially those who are young and impressionable, to the thought and fact of crime.[191]

Three years later the film was produced, and it openly dealt with the topic of murder and was not censored. This turnaround demonstrates just how much power the Production Code had lost during the war. The film was met with critical praise and financial success, assuring that it would not be the last time murder was dealt with onscreen.[192] Clearly audiences were not concerned about being hardened towards the 'thought and fact of crime' as Breen had feared.

While the relationship between the OWI and the Hollywood studios was coming to an end by 1945, the office's influence continued to be felt. The war forced the PCA to lift its ban on depicting atrocities and war-related crimes. Newsreels openly showed violence, challenging the censorship of onscreen violence that Hollywood had upheld prior to the war.[193] As the PCA's moralistic censorship waned, depictions of extramarital affairs, domestic murders, and crime increased in non-combat films. After the war, the Production Code was challenged by the increasingly violent images in films, beginning with *Double Indemnity*, but continuing in later Film Noirs like *Gun Crazy* (1950) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955). These films overtly challenged the conventions and values of 'Classical Hollywood' that had been maintained by both the Production Code and the studios (as discussed in Chapter 1). The typical downbeat and pessimistic style of Film Noirs would likely have been more cynical if the Production Code had not forced studios to justify the films' violence with moralistic endings. Nevertheless, the hopelessness of Film Noirs remains one of their few consistent traits. Film historian David Cook points out that postwar Hollywood provided "a cinema of disillusionment and searching which

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[191] Qtd. in Kevin Lally, *Wilder Times: The Life of Billy Wilder* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 125-126.
[192] Biesen, *Blackout*, 194.
[193] Stephen Prince, *Classical Film Violence: Designing and Regulating Brutality in Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1968* (United States of America: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 151.

rejected the epic heroes and callow idealism of World War II films."[194] Films such as *Double Indemnity* "held up a dark mirror to postwar America and reflected its moral anarchy."[195] While private eye roles were popular in Film Noirs, their reasons for killing were not the same as soldiers. The roles in Film Noirs were also not fixed character types like the criminals in gangster films had been. As a result the Film Noir genre made a wider group of people potentially capable of violence than had been the case in Hollywood films before the war, or even during the war when it was mostly soldiers performing violence and being glorified for doing so.

The Film Noir genre was a reaction to the battle-hardened men returning home after the war ended, and it reflected social anxieties about changing gender roles.[196] One of the more exceptional aspects of Film Noir was that violence could be performed by both men and women. *Double Indemnity* established the femme fatale with the character of Phyllis, but its influence would not have been the same had it not been emulated by successive films like *Gilda, The Postman Always Rings Twice,* and *The Killers*, all released in 1946.[197] While female characters were not seen holding guns or being physically violent, they were often involved in planning the murders, like Phyllis in *Double Indemnity.* The character of Phyllis challenged the notion that violence was only a male act, as did other Film Noirs that would come out after the war. The trope of the femme fatale developed after 1945, and was used to characterize certain types of women (often scorned wives) as sexual threats and deviants. [198] According to Chinen Biesen, the genre grew out of a "postwar male psyche destabilized by shifting gender roles, by changing

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[194] David Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, 3rd. ed. (New York: Norton, 1981), 452.
[195] Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, 452-453.
[196] Biesen, *Blackout*, 40.
[197] Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 163.
[198] Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America*, 163.

notions of masculinity, and by new rules of sexuality after World War II".[199] These women often used sexuality to manipulate the naïve heroes into following their schemes because women needed men to perform violence for them. [200]

Gender roles changed during the war. Men were recruited in large numbers to become soldiers, while women were recruited for positions in factories that had previously been closed to them. This dramatic shift in society worried more traditionally minded Americans.[201] Concerns surrounding the increased acceptance of violence, and changing gender roles (mainly the new freedom given to women) were the unspoken influence on many Film Noirs. Mike Chopra-Gant claims that much of the academic writing on film noir "connects the construction of women characters… to male anxieties which centre on a sexually-aggressive figure of womanhood, who represents the threat of castration".[202] The anxieties felt by men about the new independence given to women that had previously relied on the male breadwinner presented itself through the aggressively sexual women of the Film Noir.

Although the popularity of the combat film declined after the war, violence in film did not. Many returning soldiers maintained the violent behavior that combat situations had taught them, which combined with Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome led to concerns about the mental stability of these veterans. Hollywood films tried to address domestic violence indirectly during this period. According to Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, authors of *A Panorama of American Film Noir: 1941-1953*, Film Noir represented "an intermingling of social realism and oneirism, an erotic treatment of violence, and a feeling of psychological disorientation, as if

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[199] Biesen, *Blackout*, 8.
[200] Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America*, 163.
[201] Biesen, *Blackout*, 40.
[202] Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America*, 163.

capitalist and puritan values were being systematically inverted".[203] Violence was eroticized

through the femme fatales. The violence in Film Noir was primarily due to its desire for realism;

even in peacetime there were brutalities in everyday life.[204] Film Noir worked in tandem with the

combat films to weaken popular prejudice against the depiction of violence. The realistic

portrayal of the victims of violence in films like *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Men*

especially helped to erode the censorship of violence, alongside *Maltese Falcon* and *Double*

Indemnity and their successors. For the typical American, violence had come to be seen as a fact

of life, and it would have seemed unrealistic to avoid it.

Film noirs also dealt with the issue of returning veterans. Another Raymond Chandler

crime thriller, *The Blue Dahlia*, directed by George Marshall and released by Paramount, tells

the story of returning war veteran Johnny Morrison (Alan Ladd) and his badly wounded comrade

Buzz Wanchek (William Bendix). When Morrison's wife Helen (Doris Dowling) is murdered,

first Morrison and then Wanchek become suspects. While the studios had initially planned for

Wanchek to be the killer, the PCA vetoed the idea because it was considered inappropriate to

portray a veteran as a murderer.[205] Instead, the character of "Dad" Newell (Will Wright) was

made the killer. Both his nickname of "Dad" and his constant moralizing make him the film's

patriarchal figure. Newell's crime became a sharp commentary on the institution of patriarchy in

American society.

The contrast between the intended murderer in *Blue Dahlia* and the war heroes of *The*

Best Years illustrates the fact that Hollywood had not yet decided how to treat 'damaged'

veterans. Their disabilities made it easier to view them as victims rather than heroes. As we saw

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[203] Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, *A Panorama of American Film Noir, 1941-1953* (Sanfransisco, CA: City Lights Books, 2002), 1-4.
[204] Ibid., 147.
[205] Dixon, *American Cinema of the 1940's*, 174.

with films like *The Men*, the issue continued to be relevant years after the war ended. Although

The Blue Dahlia does not deal with the war in any way, it appealed to a postwar audience that

was more desensitized to death. The critical and box office success of films like *The Best Years*

of Our Lives and *Double Indemnity* showed that there was an audience interested in films that

portrayed American life in a more realistic and violent way. The idealistic charm of 'Classic

Hollywood' films made between 1934 and 1942, the height of the Production Code's power, was

now gone. Hollywood now offered audiences something very different, with plots that involved

dangerous and risqué situations, adult conflicts, and morally ambiguous leading characters that

were motivated by desperation or greed to commit criminal acts.[206]

The Production Code and Censorship after the War

While the Production Code was supported by Hollywood it had no legal power, and it

was not the only censorship board that existed. Other less official boards such as the Catholic

Legion of Decency (discussed in Chapter 1) released their own film ratings that influenced many

viewers.[207] Some local censors also pressured theatres on a city-by-city basis.[208] A *LIFE*

magazine article from 1949 that featured a round table discussion by prominent figures in the

film industry[209] discussed the issue of film censorship, and defined it as:

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[206] Hare, *Early Film Noir*, 78.

[207] Jay Carr, *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' 100 Essential Films*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 233.

[208] In one case, the film Scarlet Street was banned in New York by the Board of Review of the Motion Picture Division of the New York State Department of Education. This even though it had been passed by the Johnston (formerly Hays) Office, as well as given a "B" rating by the Catholic Legion of Decency, meaning it was only "objectionable in part". This was a rare case, however, as only 20 films in 4 years were banned in this manner. "'Scarlet Street' Banned; A tale of illicit love runs afoul of New York censors," *LIFE*, 2 January 1946, 73.

[209] Along with moderator Eric Higgins, the roundtable was made up of M.I.T. dean John Ely Burchard, film scholar Charles A. Siepmann, head of New York University's Film Libary, newspaperman Alistair Cooke, consumer Meredith Nicholson Jr., movie designer William Cameron Menzies, publicist Paul MacNamara, actors Agnes Moorehead, Martha Scott, Claire Trevor, Robert Young, financier N. Peter Rathvon, studio head at MGM Dore

the most confusing word in the layman's lexicon of the movies. It may mean the operations of a) informal small-town movie councils with censorious longings; b) actual municipal censor boards; c) police and license regulations; d) state censor boards, of which there are seven; e) the "Production Code," a group of self-imposed regulations administered for the industry by the eminent Catholic layman, Mr. Joseph I. Breen; f) pressure groups with infinitely various industrial, racial or religious axes to grind.[210]

The Catholic Legion of Decency undoubtedly fell under the last category of pressure group, rather than formal censor board. The same article claimed that: "Among all pressure groups the Legion of Decency is the one with teeth – the group that can hurt your picture very much. A C rating for a picture is death".[211] Hollywood still had to concern itself with these pressure groups that indirectly censored films. The roundtable concluded that:

> There are times when the code bears heavily on a script writer or director – but the experienced movie-makers at the Table, regardless of other divergences of opinion, accept the code as a haven of refuge – refuge from a censoriousness in the American public which might otherwise, long before this, have stifled them altogether – and was on its way to doing that when the code was first drawn. As to the Legion of Decency, the mundane situation is that it holds the whip hand over Hollywood, and nothing can be done about it.[212]

The Legion of Decency strongly influenced the movie-going habits of the 26 million Catholics in the United States.[213] Much like the Production Code, the concern of the Legion was that "evil be presented as evil, and good as good, and that the evil, even if condemned, be not presented

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Schary, directors Robert Rossen, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, and John Huston, and producers Jerry Wald and Hal Wallis.

[210] Eric Hodgins, "A Round Table on the Movies; Hollywood and *LIFE* thrash out the tough problems of making films you see – or hope to see," *LIFE*, 27 June, 1949, 100.

[211] Ibid., 104.

[212] Hodgins, "A Round Table on the Movies," 104.

[213] "Hollywood Fights Back; the film people are fed up with criticism of their morals, politics and pictures," *Changing Times: The Kiplinger Magazine*, July 1950, 31.

alluringly."[214] The Legion did not approve of the moral ambiguity of films like *Maltese Falcon* or *Double Indemnity*. In another roundtable by *LIFE* the previous year, the conclusion was that:

> insofar as censorship and other factors prevent motion pictures from dealing in truth, and require them to deal only in daydreams and fiction, they are detriments to the real pursuit of happiness and dangerous to the maintenance of a healthy democratic society. The preservation of the Third Right bequeathed to use by Jefferson requires their revision.[215]

Clearly there was public criticism of censorship going on in the postwar years, which complicated the PCA's legitimacy. In regards to the presentation of violence and many criminal acts, Hollywood was much freer after the war, but there were still restrictions on what could be put onscreen due to the HUAC in cooperation with the now less powerful PCA. By the 1950's, however, the HUAC's presence in Hollywood began to wane, and was almost powerless by 1960.[216] When they had precedents like the combat films to fall back on the studios could continue to show violence, but aside from the Film Noirs the films of the late 1940's did not do much to push the limits of what could be shown.

Although the Production Code did not disappear until 1968, Hollywood had begun to ignore it much earlier. By the late 1940's the PCA was increasingly unable to restrict onscreen violence, as filmmakers often relied on the excuse that showing violence was essential to the film's plot and message. For instance, the producers of *The Blue Dahlia*, which featured four fights, two murders, and several sluggings, claimed all the violence was "'essential' to the

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[214] Hodgins, "A Round Table on the Movies,", 104.
[215] Russell W. Davenport, "The Report of the Round Table," *LIFE*, 12 July, 1948, 104.
[216] Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War: Second Edition* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 149.

plot."[217] The Production Code's ban on violence was clearly being stretched in order to allow films to represent the 'new' society that was emerging, in which violence was a more acknowledged fact of life.[218] It did not mean that the increased violence in film directly corresponded with increased violence in the United States, but rather that audiences were more aware of this violence.

Both the HUAC and the PCA's control was almost entirely gone by the time the courtroom crime drama *Anatomy of a Murder* was released by Columbia Pictures in 1959. The film was sexually explicit for its time, dealing with issues of sex and rape.[219] While released with approval of the PCA, it was likely only allowed because Preminger had successfully released two previous films without code approval (*The Moon is Blue* in 1953 and *The Man with the Golden Arm* in 1955) and the PCA was worried about what would happen if he released a third film the same way.[220] The Legion of Decency also saw its fangs removed in 1957 when Pope Pius XII called for the Legion to start promoting good movies instead of condemning bad ones.[221] The Legion did not completely disappear until 1975, but its influence started to fade much earlier, decreasing the Church's sway over Hollywood.[222] The final blow to the Production Code came with the release of the film adaptation of the Broadway play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1966, which came towards the end of Jack Warner's reign as a studio mogul. The film maintained the profanity and sexual implications that made the play controversial. The release of

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[217] "Movie Censorship; It confuses British movie makers but U.S. producers get around it," *LIFE*, 28 October 1946, 79.
[218] Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Postwar America*, 3.
[219] William K. Zinsser, "The Bold and Risky World of 'Adult' Movies, in *LIFE*, 29 Feb, 1960, 79.
[220] Black, *The Catholic Crusade Against the Movies,* 124.
[221] Ibid*.,* 179.
[222] Leonard J. Leff and Jerold Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 238.

Virginia Woolf led Martin Quigley Jr. to write an article entitled "The Code is Dead". [223] The

article claimed that "it [was] pointless to consider whether the Code expired when the decision

was made to film *Virginia Woolf* without regard to the Code, or when the decision was made by

the Review Board to grant the picture an 'exemption' from the Code".[224] Regardless of 'the

official time of death,' the Production Code was replaced in 1968 by a new rating system created

by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).[225] The MPAA created a tiered rating

system that was less restrictive for films and effectively removed the last restrictions on showing

violence.

Postwar America in Summary

The war and its aftermath forced Hollywood to find new ways of representing

masculinity, as was the case with disabled veterans. The films about returning soldiers and their

disabilities were part of the maturation of American society following the war, and aided in the

broadening of what was considered masculine.[226] This changing representation can be seen in the

struggles soldiers faced in *The Best Years of Our Lives, Pride of the Marines,* and *The Men*.

Another consequence of the war was a society that was more desensitized to violence, and in

which gender roles had been changed, as reflected in *Double Indemnity* and the *Blue Dahlia*.

Men were trained to go overseas and kill their enemies, while women were trained to work in

factories to support the war effort. After the war, these men were expected to return to their

civilian lives, and women were expected to give up their factory job, and return to the household.

By illustrating these social problems on the big screen, Hollywood was creating a picture of a

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[223] Martin Quigley Jr., "The Code is Dead," in Leonard J. Leff, "A Test of American Film Censorship: *'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*' in *Cinema Journal* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1980), 51.
[224] Ibid., 51.
[225] Prince, *Screening Violence*, 7.
[226] Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History*, 9.

nation that was trying to move forward out of an era defined by violence and suffering.[227] The

United States had in many ways failed its people; while it had won the war, it failed to deliver

the postwar dream that its soldiers had fought for. Democratic values like the equality of gender,

race, and class had been reconstructed in order to support the war effort. Labour shortages had

meant that both men and women were allowed—indeed, encouraged—to work in industries

previously closed to them. Equality was emphasized by the military in their recruitment of

soldiers, as men of different races and classes were shown fighting together in the war (even

though segregated units still existed), further breaking down barriers. The equality of gender,

race and class were used as motivation towards the war effort. Even if equality had not become a

reality, it became part of the national myth, and this created further division between the postwar

dream and the postwar reality. There were many complications between the ideals and the reality

of American society in the mid to late 1940's. At the same time Hollywood's social problem and

Film Noir genres created an image of the nation marked by fear and uncertainty, making

American society seem darker than it had before. Many of the films looked back on a nostalgic

prewar America that only ever existed on the big screen, where violence did not seem to exist yet

– a time when the PCA's 'Classical Hollywood' did not allow violence and immoral protagonists

to be shown onscreen.

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[227] Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History*, 105.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have questioned how World War II changed Hollywood studios and the films they made. I argue that after the bombing of Pearl Harbor the studios quickly converted to producing predominantly war-based films, which started a trend towards exceedingly masculine combat films that portrayed violence to a degree that Hollywood had not previously witnessed. As a result, masculinity became seen as inherently more violent than it had been in the interwar period. This shift was encouraged by the American government, but it was not driven by it alone. Audience appeal was Hollywood's main concern when it came to producing films, and would continue to be so throughout the war. Ticket sales drove the Hollywood economy. As such, it was audience appeal that influenced what kind of films were made and that explains why the combat films of the war period changed in a number of dramatic ways. The increasing amount of violence in Hollywood films was due to audiences' desires to see the war realistically portrayed. While the Production Code Administration had strongly censored most violence prior to the war, they only had the power to do so because Hollywood allowed it.

Definitions of class and race were altered by both the Great Depression and World War II, but their relationship to masculinity did not change dramatically, and reverted back to 'normal' shortly after the war ended. Youth was privileged during the war, but the return to consumerism and the emphasis on the breadwinner quickly reverted America to a 1920's treatment of masculinity that again favored fathers. The war had, in a way, been fought to protect the American way of life, and as such it defended the values of the prewar years. The association between violence and masculinity was one of Hollywood's major long-term trends that can clearly be traced to the war.

The shift in Hollywood films immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor is easy to trace, but the long term effects of this shift are harder to prove. The Office of War Information (OWI) lifted its ban on Hollywood films depicting war-related violence for two obvious reasons: first, the newsreels were already showing this violence overseas so audiences were accustomed to it; and second, Hollywood needed to be able to depict what the Allies were fighting for in order to support the war effort. As the censorship of films waned during the war, depictions of affairs, domestic murders, and crime increased. This change was seen most obviously in the Film Noirs made after 1945, but I assert that it stemmed from changes brought about by the war. The increasing portrayal of violence and immoral or criminal acts was due in large part to the weakening power of the PCA. The Production Code had previously limited violence to only those films where strong morals won out in the end. Soldiers were hardened by what they had seen overseas, and the moralistic films made from 1933 to 1942 held little appeal for a postwar America.

Hollywood reflected the postwar era's troubled and violent masculinity with the Film Noir. Film Noir was largely the reaction to changing gender roles and the redefinition of masculinity and sexuality in postwar America. Many women were pushed out of their wartime professions to make room for men, even though they had proven their ability to do the job as well as men. Many were reluctant to return to the patriarchal society of the 1930's, creating anxieties about the sexual division of the public and private spheres, and challenging gender expectations. While the first Film Noir, *Maltese Falcon*, appeared in 1941, the genre as a whole was largely influenced by the war. The onscreen violence and moral ambiguity of the protagonists that characterized Film Noir could not have existed when the Production Code was firmly entrenched in the Hollywood system during the 1930's. The PCA had banned the gangster

films of the early1930's, and Film Noirs were no less violent or immoral. The shift in film

morality and violence could not have happened without a major cultural shift of some kind, and

the bombing of Pearl Harbor instigated that shift.

While the combat films made from 1942 to 1945 are unique because they were directly

influenced by the ongoing war, they were not completely new cultural creations. They built on

themes and motifs popular before the United States entered the war, but they had a different

message from the earlier war films. From 1936 on, Hollywood largely avoided portraying the

war going on overseas, so as to not alienate their European markets. Aside from Warner Bros.,

few films were released between 1939 and 1942 that dealt with the war, and those that were

released condemned the war as unnecessary and unfortunate. After 1942, however, Hollywood

took it upon itself to promote the war effort, and thus needed to portray both World Wars as

necessary battles against the evils of fascism. The popularity of *All Quiet on the Western Front*

makes it the best example of the strong anti-war sentiment that Hollywood had pushed in the

1930's. The presentation of World War I was radically different once the United States entered

the war, however. While *Sergeant York* was actually released in 1941, it exemplified the

treatment World War I would receive during the war. It was now seen as a noble and justified

war, rather than a tragic necessity as it had been portrayed in *All Quiet* and *The Fighting 69th*.

Another obvious change for films brought about by the war was the demand for realism.

The introduction of documentaries spurred this on, but there was also a major emphasis on the

fact that the war had to be portrayed seriously. As I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, for films

before the war, realism was not as important as excitement. Audiences were more interested in

the fantasy of films and escaping their daily lives for a short time. This changed in regards to war

films after 1942. Real events were being portrayed in these war films, and the subject matter

needed to be treated with respect. Because the war was so violent, out of necessity the films had to be more violent as well, and this forced Hollywood to push the limits of what could be shown onscreen in order to meet audience expectations.

Masculinity was changed by the war itself, largely through its association with the military and combat. While physically fit men were required for the war, they also needed to be mentally able to deal with violence as well. They were expected to be stoic and unflinching, and this meant that men were seen as emotionally devoid in many of the war films. While men were expected to take part in the killing, women were expected to take part in the mental and physical healing process of injured and returning soldiers. This continued to be the expectation after the war, when women were expected to help readjust a new and pervasive abject masculinity, the heroic disabled.[1] Many returning soldiers had been irreversibly changed by their experiences in the war, and the United States treated the large numbers of physically and mentally disabled veterans as a living reminder of the high cost of war. The heroic disabled like Al Schmid challenged the ideal presentation of World War II servicemen that served as a template for masculinity after the war.[2] Without the war, there was no defining occupation for American men, and masculinity went through a phase of redefinition, during which there was an attempt to reclaim the domesticated father figure of the 1920's. There was a desire to return to the 'innocence' of the pre-war era, which Hollywood represented through a nostalgia for the 1920's and 1930's,[3] but the violence of the war did not disappear.

The end of the war did not signal the end of violence in cinema. The PCA attempted to revert to their pre-war level of control, but the Hollywood studios did not want to forfeit the

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[1] Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History*, 105.
[2] Jarvis, *Male Body at War*, 4.
[3] M. Keith Booker, *Postmodern Hollywood: What's New in Film and Why it Makes Us Feel So Strange* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 73.

gains they had made during the war. The studios were willing to listen to the demands of the

HUAC, because it was a federal government committee, but the PCA no longer had the same

authority it once did. Hollywood had only censored themselves in order to not alienate

audiences, but the increased levels of violence shown during the war proved that audiences were

not as squeamish as Hollywood had believed. As the combat films did well throughout the war,

audiences proved that they were receptive to films with violence, and Hollywood trends followed

what audiences most wanted. Violence was sensational, and sensationalism sold pictures. The

popularity of the Film Noir was the most apparent sign that violence would not disappear, but

other genres would soon follow suit. World War II had irrevocably changed American society,

and the acceptance of violence was reflected in Hollywood films regardless of the PCA's

objections.

Many of the characteristics of masculinity exemplified during World War II continued to

be stressed in the decades that followed. The constant fear of Communist subversion meant men

were no longer allowed to show off their independence. Much like the breadwinner model of the

turn-of-the-century, men identified themselves as consumers and active participants in the

domestic sphere.[4] The emphasis on a hard masculinity did not go away after the war, and instead

underwent further reorganization during the first decade of the Cold War (1947-1956). The era

was shaped by anxieties concerning gender, sexuality and the male self. Due to the perceived

threat of Communism, concepts like hard masculinity, inflated male bravado, hypermasculinity,

and a rejection of the feminine were arguably even more exaggerated after World War II had

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[4] Robert J. Corber, "Cold War Masculinity," in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1,* edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2004), 162.

ended.[5] The continued emphasis on hard masculinity was intended to maintain political and

economic stability, and if they appeared soft they risked being viewed as a threat to national

security.[6] This 'threat' dominated cultural and political life throughout the 1940's and 1950's,

encouraging Americans to promote masculine toughness, capitalism, and the male breadwinner

ideal.[7] The violence of World War II had a lasting impact on American society, and masculinity

had been radically altered by the war.

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[5] K.A. Cuordileone, "'Politics in an Age of Anxiety': Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960," in *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (Sep., 2000), 522.
[6] Ibid. 516.
[7] Bret E. Carroll, *American Masculinities*, 118.

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